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Engaging with the Political: Examining the Interface of NGOs, Panchayati Raj Institutions and Poor People in Two Indian States

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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August 2009
I hereby declare that this thesis has not been submitted, either in the same or different form, to this or any other University for a degree.

Signature:
SUMMARY

This thesis is a study of the interface of NGOs, local government institutions and poor people. It uses the experiences of poor people as a lens to examine the nature and consequences of the interactions between these elements, identify the factors that influence the dynamics and outcomes at the intersection, and assess the intervention and impact of NGOs that work at the grassroots on issues relating to local government. The thesis builds on existing literature that analyses these interactions, and makes a contribution to the debates on NGO relationships with politics, democracy and local government.

The study uses mixed-research methods and an interdisciplinary framework to compare and assess the experiences of poor people in rural India with respect to their interactions with Panchayati Raj Institutions and NGOs, within sixteen case-study gram panchayats. It covers the time period 1994 to 2006, and examines four grassroots-NGOs in the two states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The experiences of the poor are analysed along two dimensions – political capabilities and material benefits. Patterns and trends are identified through a systematic comparison of the sixteen case-studies.

The research reveals that apart from the two factors that formed the initial focus of the study (the nature of NGO interventions and political opportunity spaces), the intensity and pattern of interactions is moulded by the presence of four other factors - the nature of democratic institutions; the strategies, actions and collective strength of sangha (group associated with NGO) members; nature of political competition; and the content and extent of implementation of the Janmabhoomi programme. The thesis demonstrates that the extent to which the interactions are beneficial for poor people is influenced by the interplay of these six key factors. It also brings out the importance of poor people actively engaging with politics, and argues that NGOs that choose to engage strongly with the political have the potential to facilitate wider societal change. In doing so, the thesis highlights the relevance of politics in the day-to-day life of poor people, and draws attention to the importance of leadership, advocacy and collective action.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ................................................................. vii
List of Tables, Figures and Maps ................................................................. ix
List of Abbreviations ........................................................................ x
Glossary ......................................................................................... xi

CHAPTER 1 ........................................................................................................ 2
INTRODUCTION: LOCATING THE POLITICAL ................................................................. 2

1.1 BACKGROUND: CONTEXT, RELEVANCE AND KEY DEFINITIONS .............................. 4
1.1.1 Relevance of the research in the international context .................................................. 4
1.1.2 Relevance of the research in India ............................................................................... 6
1.2 Details of the research ................................................................................................. 12
1.3 Preview of findings ..................................................................................................... 18
1.4 Outline of thesis ........................................................................................................ 20

CHAPTER 2 ............................................................................................................. 23
METHODOLOGY AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: MAPPING THE POLITICAL ............. 23

2.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................. 23
2.2 Overview of research methodology ........................................................................... 23
2.2.1 The first stage: Finalising research design based on preliminary fieldwork findings 25
2.2.2 The main period of fieldwork: how, when, where ..................................................... 30
2.2.2.1 Delineating the sampling approach ....................................................................... 30
2.2.2.2 Habitation-level research methodology and experience ....................................... 32
2.2.2.3 Challenges and limitations associated with fieldwork-related research .............. 36
2.2.3 The follow-up stage of fieldwork and iterative analysis: importance and challenges .................................................................................................................. 38
2.3 Unpacking the analytical framework ........................................................................ 41
2.3.1 PRI-related political opportunity spaces and NGO interventions .............................. 41
2.3.2 PRI-related political capabilities and material benefits .......................................... 43
2.3.3 Using the analytical framework ............................................................................... 47
2.4 Conclusion ............................................................................................................... 49

CHAPTER 3 ............................................................................................................. 51
NGOS, PANCHAYATS AND POLITICS IN INDIA: SITUATING THE POLITICAL ............ 51

3.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................. 51
3.2 Overarching debates ............................................................................................... 51
3.2.1 Contextualising the debates ..................................................................................... 51
3.2.2 NGOs ..................................................................................................................... 53
3.2.3 Democracy and decentralisation ............................................................................. 54
3.3 NGOs, Panchayats and politics in post-colonial India: situating their evolution and unravelling inter-relationships .................................................................................................................. 57
3.3.1 The first phase: 1947 to mid-1960s – relative calm and stability .............................. 59
3.3.2 The second phase: late 1960s till the end of the 1970s – emergence of antagonism .................................................................................................................. 60
3.3.3 The third phase: 1980s – deepening conflict and competition .............................. 61
3.3.4 The fourth phase: 1990s up to the present – coalitions and cleavages ............. 63
CHAPTER 4

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SIXTEEN GRAM PANCHAYATS: UNPACKING THE POLITICAL

4.1 INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 74
4.2 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND TO KOLAR AND ANANTAPUR DISTRICTS .......... 75
4.3 UNPACKING THE OVERALL PATTERNS AND TRENDS ......................................... 76
4.3.1 POLITICAL CAPABILITIES ....................................................... 77
4.3.2 MATERIAL BENEFITS ............................................................ 84
4.4 EXAMINING DATA BASED ON INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS OF POOR PEOPLE .......... 87
4.4.1 GENDER ................................................................. 87
4.4.2 CASTE/RELIGION ....................................................... 88
4.4.3 EDUCATION ........................................................... 89
4.4.4 AGE ................................................................. 89
4.5 EXAMINING THE GP-LEVEL DATA ........................................................................... 90
4.5.1 OVERVIEW OF TRENDS IN INTER-GP VARIATIONS ........................................... 91
4.5.1.1 Political Capabilities ....................................................... 91
4.5.1.2 Material Benefits ............................................................ 94
4.5.1.3 Examining Ranking of Individual Categories and Overall Ranking ......................... 95
4.5.2 DETAILED QUALITATIVE EXAMINATION OF PATTERNS IN INTER-GP VARIATIONS ................. 104
4.5.2.1 Four Contrasting Qualitative Overviews ....................................................... 105
4.5.2.2 Possible Factors Associated with Variations between GPs ................................. 115
4.5.3 POSSIBLE FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH TRENDS AND PATTERNS IN THE TOP-EIGHT GPs 118
4.6 CONCLUSION ................................................................................. 119

CHAPTER 5

HIGH POLITICS: SHAPING THE POLITICAL? ................................................... 121

5.1 INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 121
5.2 NGOs, PANCHAYATS AND STATE POLITICS IN KARNATAKA AND ANDHRA PRADESH .... 122
5.2.1 1994 TO 2006 ..................................................................... 124
5.2.1.1 From 1994 to 1998 ............................................................. 124
5.2.1.2 From 1999 to 2006 ............................................................. 126
5.2.2 VARIATIONS IN PANCHAYAT-RELATED NGO INTERVENTIONS ......................... 129
5.2.3 COMPARING POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY SPACES IN THE TWO STATES ................. 130
5.3 EXAMINING THE ROLE OF POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY SPACES IN THE TWO DISTRICTS .... 135
5.3.1 POLITICS AND PANCHAYATS IN KOLAR AND ANANTAPUR 1994-2006 .................... 135
5.3.2 COMPARING EXPERIENCES OF POOR PEOPLE BETWEEN DISTRICTS .............. 136
5.3.2.1 Comparing Overall Trends and Patterns in Kolar and Anantapur ......................... 137
5.3.2.2 Comparison between GPs within Kolar and Anantapur ....................................... 141
5.4 EXAMINING THE ROLE OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN THE FOUR LEGISLATIVE CONSTITUENCIES ........................................................ 142
5.4.1 COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW OF LEGISLATIVE CONSTITUENCIES IN KOLAR AND ANANTAPUR 142
5.4.1.1 Maddilpalli and Reddapalli in Kolar .................................................................... 142
5.4.1.2 Yellapalli and Bhushanapalli in Anantapur ......................................................... 145
5.4.2 COMPARING EXPERIENCES OF POOR PEOPLE IN THE FOUR LICS .............................. 147
5.4.2.1 Comparing Experiences of Poor People between Legislative Constituencies .......... 147
5.4.2.2 Comparing Experiences of Poor People within Legislative Constituencies .......... 149
5.5 CONCLUSION ................................................................................. 149
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List of Tables, Figures and Maps

List of Tables in Main Text

Chapter 2
Table 2.1: Summary of interviews across different stages of fieldwork in 2005-2006...........25
Table 2.2: Comparative Typology of the four grassroots-NGOs as of 2006.........................28
Table 2.3: GP-wise summary of semi-structured interviews and group discussions (GDs)....35
Table 2.4: Connections between Components of Analytical Framework...........................48

Chapter 3
Table 3.1: Key features of 73rd Amendment........................................................................67

Chapter 4
Table 4.1: Frequency percentages indicating proportion of GPs (out of a total of sixteen) in relation to Twenty Key Questions.................................................................92
Table 4.2a: Awareness – Aggregate ranking of GPs..............................................................96
Table 4.2b: Voice – Aggregate ranking of GPs.................................................................98
Table 4.2c: Influence – Aggregate ranking of GPs.............................................................99
Table 4.2d: Material Benefits – Aggregate ranking of GPs.................................................101
Table 4.2e: Overall GP Ranking Combining Four Categories..........................................103

Chapter 5
Table 5.1: Similarities in Political Trajectory of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh...............122
Table 5.2: Comparing Political Opportunity Space for PRIs provided by state governments of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh as of 2006.........................................................131
Table 5.3: Distribution of Top and Bottom-Eight GPs across Two Districts......................137
Table 5.4: Distribution of Top and Bottom-Eight GPs between Legislative Constituencies ...147

Chapter 6
Table 6.1: Distribution of Top and Bottom-eight GPs across NGO-operational and non-NGO Operational GPs.................................................................161
Table 6.2: Comparing experiences of NGO-affiliated respondents with respect to the 2000 GP term in K (plus one year of the 2005 GP term) and 2001 GP term in AP...........169
Table 6.3: Comparing the relative strength of key factors that strengthen the intervention of Grassroots-NGOs working on PRI-related issues.................................................172

Chapter 7
Table 7.1: Extent of Democratic Political Competition in the Sixteen GPs (1994-2006)........179
Table 7.2: Distribution of Top and Bottom-eight GPs as of 2006 across Average to Above - average and Below-average levels of Democratic Political Competition....................182
Table 7.3: Details about GP Presidents from 1994-2006......................................................184
Table 7.4: Comparison of Sangha’s Position in Six Gram Panchayats with respect to the 2000 GP term in K (plus one year of the 2005 GP term) and 2001 GP term in AP.............193

Chapter 8
Table 8.1: Assessing Sixteen GPs across Six Factors with respect to the 2000 GP term in K (plus one year of the 2005 GP term) and 2001 GP term in AP.................................201

List of Figures in Main Text

Chapter 2
Figure 2.1: GP Sampling Approach.....................................................................................31
Figure 2.2: Sketch of Analytical Framework.......................................................................46

Chapter 8
Figure 8.1: Delineating Political Interplay........................................................................205

List of Maps in Main Text

Chapter 1
Map 1.1: Maps of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.........................................................1
List of Tables in Appendices

Chapter 1
Appendix 1.1: A Comparative Overview of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh across select indicators as of 2001…………………………………………………………………244

Chapter 2
Appendix 2.1: Historical Origin of districts in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh along with associated maps……………………………………………………………………245
Appendix 2.2: A Comparative Profile of Kolar and Anantapur Districts as of 2001…………….247

Chapter 4
Appendix 4.1: Caste/Religion Classification and Percentage within Population in K and AP…248
Appendix 4.2: Broad qualitative trends across 16 GPs for 2000 GP term in K (includes first year of 2005 GP term) and 2001 GP term in AP …………………………… ………... 250

Chapter 5
Appendix 5.1: Break-up of results in Parliamentary and Assembly Elections of AP, K, Anantapur and Kolar districts from 1991-2006………………………………………………………252
Appendix 5.2: Comparing favourable responses in relation to Political Capabilities across district and legislative constituencies…………………………………………………………254
Appendix 5.3: Comparing favourable responses in relation to material benefits from PRIs across districts and legislative constituencies…………………………………………………………256
Appendix 5.4: A Comparative Overview of Legislative Constituencies (LC 1 to LC 4) and Intermediate Panchayats under study (IP 1 and IP2 in K and IP3 to IP 6 in AP), as of 2001………………………………………………………257

Chapter 6
Appendix 6.1: Comparing favourable responses in relation to Political Capabilities between NGO-operational and non-NGO operational GPs………………………………258
Appendix 6.2: Comparing favourable responses in relation to material benefits across NGO-operational and non-NGO operational GPs………………………………259
Appendix 6.3: GP-wise disaggregated scores across NGO-affiliated and non-affiliated respondents…………………………………………………………………………260
## List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APARD</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh Academy of Rural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>Backward Caste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>Bharatiya Janata Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPL</td>
<td>Below Poverty Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDP</td>
<td>Community Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI (M)/ CPM</td>
<td>Communist Party of India (Marxist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSSs</td>
<td>Centrally Sponsored Schemes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>Deputy Commissioner in K and District Collector in AP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPC</td>
<td>District Planning Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRDA</td>
<td>District Rural Development Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EO</td>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC</td>
<td>Forward Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCRA</td>
<td>Foreign Contribution Regulation Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GD</td>
<td>Group Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>GO</td>
<td>Government Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>Gram Panchayat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAS</td>
<td>Indian Administrative Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INC</td>
<td>Indian National Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>Intermediate Panchayat</td>
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<tr>
<td>JD(S)</td>
<td>Janata Dal (Secular)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Karnataka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC</td>
<td>Legislative Constituency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MJF</td>
<td>Maha Jana Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLA</td>
<td>Member of Legislative Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLC</td>
<td>Member of Legislative Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoPR</td>
<td>Ministry of Panchayati Raj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPDO</td>
<td>Mandal Parishad Development Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NREGA</td>
<td>National Rural Employment Guarantee Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTR</td>
<td>N. T. Rama Rao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBC</td>
<td>Other Backward Classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRI</td>
<td>Panchayati Raj Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDPR</td>
<td>Rural Development and Panchayati Raj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs.</td>
<td>Rupees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSS</td>
<td>Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Scheduled Caste</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>State Election Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFC</td>
<td>State Finance Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGRY</td>
<td>Sampoorna Gram Rozgar Yogana – central government sponsored wage-employment programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHG</td>
<td>Self-Help Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIRD</td>
<td>State Institute of Rural Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Scheduled Tribe</td>
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<tr>
<td>TDP</td>
<td>Telugu Desam Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>VHP</td>
<td>Vishwa Hindu Parishad</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZP</td>
<td>Zilla Panchayat</td>
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Glossary

Adivasi
Indigenous people/ Tribal people

Anganwadi
Literally courtyard play centre. Government-run centre which delivers education, nutrition and health services to children below six years of age, and pregnant and nursing mothers

Antha Rajkiyam
It is all politics

Bajra
Pearl millet

Bhoodan
Voluntary donation of land

Chikunguniya
Mosquito-borne viral fever

Dalit
Literally oppressed. Refers to members (former untouchables) of the Scheduled Castes

Dharnas
Sit-ins

Ekagriyam
Unanimous

Galata
Fight

Garibi Hatao
Remove poverty

Gram
Village

Hindutva
Loosely translated as Hinduness

Jamabandhi
Social audit in Karnataka

Janmabhoomi
Literally land of one's birth. State-sponsored development programme initiated under the TDP regime in Andhra Pradesh

Jowar
Sorghum

Lakh
One hundred thousand (normally Rupees)

Lokayukta
Ombudsman at state level

Mahalwari
Village-based land revenue system

Mandal
Sub-district unit

Nizam
Title of the rulers of the princely state of Hyderabad

Naxalites
Refers to groups waging a violent struggle on behalf of landless labourers and tribals against the oppression of landlords and other powerful groups and individuals

Naya Neta
New Leader

Padayatra
Travel by foot

Panchayat
Council

Peddol
Literally big people, meaning traditional elites

Prajala vaddaku palana
Administration at the doorstep of the people

Pucca
Permanent

Ragi
 Finger millet

Ryotwari
Peasant proprietor-based land revenue system

Sabha
Assembly

Sangh Parivar
Family of associations

Sangha
Literally group. Refers to membership-based groups associated with the study-NGO

Sarpanch
President of the gram panchayat

Sarvodaya
Upliftment of all

Shramadhanam
Voluntary contribution of labour

Taluk
Sub-district unit

Vana samrakshana samithis
Forest protection committees

Varna
Four-fold hierarchical classification of castes

Vidya
Education

Zamindari
Landlord-based land revenue system

Zilla
District
Map 1.1: Maps of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh

A: Map of India highlighting Karnataka and Kolar district

B: Map of India highlighting Andhra Pradesh and Anantapur District

Source: (Government of India, 2001a)
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: LOCATING THE POLITICAL

“In a fundamental sense, India does not ‘merely’ have politics but is actually constituted by politics…(p)olitics at once divides the country and constitutes it as a single, shared, crowded space, proliferating voices and claims and forcing negotiation and accommodation. It is through politics that Indians are entering the contemporary world.” (Khilnani, 2003: 9)

This thesis is a study of the interface\(^1\) of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), local government institutions and poor people. It uses the experiences of poor people as a lens to examine critically the nature and consequences of the interactions between these elements, identify the factors that influence the dynamics and outcomes at the intersection, and assess the intervention and impact of NGOs that work at the grassroots on the subject of local government. In doing so, it helps to expose the complexities and interconnections at this interface, and highlights the potential of grassroots-NGOs to facilitate wider societal change.

The thesis makes a contribution to the small but growing body of literature on NGO inter-relationships with politics, democracy and local government. The detailed comparative case-studies also build on the existing literature by: documenting the nature of interactions between NGOs, poor people and democratically decentralised institutions; drawing out the implications of these interactions for poor people, local government institutions and the wider society; and linking diverse bodies of literature (NGOs, democratic decentralisation and capabilities).

The research process began by examining whether grassroots-NGO interventions in relation to local government are beneficial for poor people. As fieldwork and data analysis progressed, it became evident that aside from the nature of NGO intervention and the quality of local government legislation and implementation, the experiences of the poor and the impact of grassroots interventions were moderated by the influence of a variety of other factors associated with the interface, such as the policies of higher tiers of governments, the nature of political competition at the grassroots, and the collective strength of the poor. These factors led to the formulation of a more open-ended set of research questions, which allowed for a detailed examination of the interplay and associations between these factors. The overarching questions that frame this thesis are the following:

\(^1\) Following Long, an ‘interface’ is defined as occurring at points where “different, and often conflicting life-worlds” or social fields intersect, interact and interpenetrate (1992: 6, 1999: 1).
1) What is the nature of interactions between NGOs, local government institutions and poor people?
2) What are the factors that help to explain variations in the interactions?
3) Are these interactions beneficial for poor people?

In order to answer the overarching questions, the thesis uses mixed-methods\(^2\), foregrounds the perceptions of poor people, and takes the following approach.

Firstly, it unpacks the experiences of poor people in relation to the political capabilities (knowledge and skills) and material benefits that they acquire at the interface of grassroots-NGOs and local government institutions. This provides an in-depth understanding of the interactions between the main constituents of the study (NGO, local government institutions and the poor), and the implications for poor people at a point in time (2005-06 when fieldwork was conducted). It also helps to identify the key factors that are associated with varying levels of political capabilities and material benefits. In doing so, the thesis highlights the ways and means by which these factors influence the levels of political capabilities and material benefits acquired by vulnerable and marginalised people.

Secondly, it examines how everyday village life and the experiences of poor people have changed over the time period 1994-2006, especially in reference to the interface with NGOs and local government institutions. This description of change over time helps to contextualise the findings and draws attention to the actors that influence dynamics at the grassroots.

India provides a promising context for understanding the ways in which NGOs and poor people engage with local government (Panchayati Raj) institutions. The federal structure of the country, varied experiments with democratic decentralisation, and the presence of NGOs that work on issues relating to local government make it an ideal ‘laboratory’ (Kohli, 1987) for undertaking comparative studies, while also providing fertile ground for research\(^3\).

The thesis is set in the two south Indian states (provinces) of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. During the study time-period, governments in these two states have taken

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\(^2\) In this thesis, ‘mixed-methods’ or ‘mixed-research methods’ is understood to mean the simultaneous use of both qualitative (e.g. semi-structured interviews) and quantitative techniques (structured surveys); to collect, analyse and interpret different types of data. Details in chapter 2.

\(^3\) India has a Westminster-styled parliamentary democracy with a bicameral legislature. It is a federal republic, which has strong unitary features that privilege the role and powers of the union (central / national) government over state governments. As of 2009, it comprises of 28 states and seven union territories.
contrasting stands on democratic decentralisation and related NGO interventions (details in section 1.2). This offers opportunities for comparative research across states and NGOs.

In this introductory chapter, I provide an overview of the research (background, details and preview of findings) and an outline of the thesis.

1.1 Background: Context, Relevance and Key Definitions

1.1.1 Relevance of the Research in the International Context

In recent years, NGOs\(^4\) have begun to play a more explicit role in matters relating to politics, democracy and local government (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Ulvila and Hossain, 2002; Hilhorst, 2003; Centre for World Solidarity, 2004). For some NGOs located at the grassroots, greater involvement in these issues has been stimulated by the opportunities afforded by government initiatives in democratic decentralisation\(^5\) (Estrella and Iszatt, 2004). In turn, this engagement with the political appears to have the potential to be beneficial for poor people (Webster, 2002). However, to the best of my knowledge, there are no detailed comparative studies that examine this engagement and its implications for the poor.

Such a study would be able to shed light on the different ways in which NGOs interact with local government institutions and with poor people on issues relating to democratic decentralisation. It would be able to highlight the challenges, limitations and benefits associated with these interactions. In addition, it would be able to reveal and elucidate the role of other factors that influence the dynamics at the interface. This would be

\(\textit{NGOs are defined here as “self-governing, private, not-for-profit organisations that are geared to improving the quality of life of disadvantaged people” (Vakil, 1997: 2060). This definition places emphasis on the ‘developmental’ role of NGOs and excludes organisations such as “business, professional, recreational, cultural and strictly religious organisations that are usually considered as part of the non-profit sector” (Ibid). The immense diversity in organisations that form part of the NGO universe has meant that efforts at defining and classifying NGOs (Vakil, 1997; Martens, 2002) remain contested and unresolved. Debates in relation to NGOs are discussed in more detail in chapter 3.}

\(\textit{In this thesis, democratic decentralisation or devolution refers to “the transfer of resources and power (and often, tasks)” to lower level authorities (elected bodies and related functionaries and bureaucrats) “which are largely or wholly independent of higher levels of government, and which are democratic in some way and to some degree” (Manor, 1999: 6). Two other forms of decentralisation that are observed in political systems are: deconcentration or administrative decentralisation, which implies a shifting of functions and personnel from higher levels of government to lower levels; and fiscal decentralisation, which relates to the transfer of finances and financial decision- making powers relating to budgets to lower levels. In order to be viable, democratic decentralisation needs to be accompanied by a measure of administrative and fiscal decentralisation (Ibid: 7). Debates in relation to decentralisation are discussed in chapter 3.}\)
useful for practitioners (within and outside government), donors, poor people, policy
makers and academics.

For NGOs, it would highlight the effective and viable means and methods that they can
employ to work with poor people, governments and practitioners on issues relating to
politics, democracy and local governance. The study would also illuminate the role of
other factors that NGOs would need to take into account while working on these
issues. Further, it would bring to light the shortcomings in organisational set-up,
policies and activities that hamper their efforts. If their interventions are able to make a
difference in the lives of poor people, it would encourage other NGOs and donors who
have remained aloof to invest efforts in working with democratically decentralised
institutions. Donors would gain an insight into the nature of funding strategies that
would best support these NGO interventions.

For poor people, it would call attention to the knowledge, skills, strategies and actions
that would give them greater leverage over the functioning of local government
institutions. Elected functionaries and officials within governments would benefit from
a greater understanding of the potential and drawbacks of government policies, local
government institutions and NGOs that work on issues relating to local government
(especially, in terms of their impact on poor people). Policy makers and academics
would gain from a nuanced insight into the challenges, limitations and dynamics at the
interface across different political settings.

Such a study is of particular importance in the context of India, but before I describe its
relevance in more detail, I would like to expand briefly on my own reasons for
undertaking this research project. Prior to starting the doctoral degree, I worked in India
with one of the NGOs that formed part of this study on issues relating to rural
development and *panchayats*. My experience with this NGO gave me an insight into
the interactions between NGOs, poor people and local government in rural arenas. It
also left me with questions that I wished to explore within a more academic context.

I wished to learn about the experiences of other NGOs that chose to engage with
politics and local government, and understand how this had shaped the lives of the
villagers they worked with and wider village society. From my own experience, it
seemed that poor people were able to have greater influence over the functioning of

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6 Following Jenkins, governance is understood as “the prevailing patterns by which public power
is exercised in a given social context” (2002: 485).

7 In this thesis, I use the word ‘officials’ to refer to bureaucrats (non-elected functionaries) who
work within government.
local government institutions if they acted collectively, and actively participated in its activities - especially those relating to electoral politics. I wanted to know whether this was true in other rural settings; and whether it was influenced by the extent to which NGOs were able to build the knowledge and organisational skills of the poor, or did it depend on other factors, such as the content of the local government legislation. I also wanted to gauge if there were differences in the experiences of poor people in areas where NGOs operated as opposed to those where they did not operate.

1.1.2 Relevance of the Research in India

Seventeen years ago, a landmark constitutional amendment paved the way for a system of three-tiered decentralised government in rural India. In the intervening period, many studies have examined the performance of panchayats in relation to political participation, poverty reduction, democratisation and local governance (Mathew and Buch, 2000; Alsop et al., 2001; Jain, 2005; Jayal et al., 2006). On balance, the record is mixed. While it is more complimentary about the democratic and participatory accomplishments of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), it is less sanguine about its material and operational achievements. In particular, it is argued that panchayats have brought little change in the lives of poor people. Factors at both the high-end of state government machinations and the deep-end of everyday village politics play a role in perpetuating their exclusion.

In India, state governments have constitutional responsibility for decentralisation and are free to determine the design, scope and extent of devolution of resources and power – provided they adhere to a set of uniform requirements. As a result, attempts at decentralisation have varied across the Indian states.

In the literature, it is argued that panchayats have performed relatively well mainly in states that are governed by a pro-poor political party, whose policies and organisational strength help to mobilise the poor and prevent elite-capture (Crook and Sverrisson, 2001; Heller, 2001). In India, this equates to one political party - Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI (M)], which has formed the state government in just three states – West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. Amongst the three, only West Bengal and Kerala

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8 In 1992, the 73rd constitutional amendment paved the way for the Indian system of three-tiered decentralised government within rural parts of an individual state – district (zilla panchayat), sub-district or intermediate (taluk panchayat in Karnataka and mandal panchayat in Andhra Pradesh) and village (gram panchayat). The term Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) includes all three tiers of panchayats. All references to 'panchayat' refer to the statutory panchayats.

9 In this thesis, the term ‘elites’ refers to individuals and groups amongst whom “power (or influence, or capacity to make and take decisions) is concentrated” (adapted from Hossain, 2003: 6).
have relatively strong panchayats (Government of India, 2008b)\textsuperscript{10}. However, both these states have certain unique features that distinguish them from most other states in India. Kerala’s socio-economic conditions make it an exception on many fronts, evidenced in its impressive human development indicators (Ramachandran, 1996; Government of India, 2002a). As for West Bengal, unlike any other state in India, the current state government has been continuously in power for over 30 years - a factor that has helped to provide long-term stability to the reform process\textsuperscript{11}.

These conditions are not found in other states of India\textsuperscript{12}, but in many states of India, NGOs are increasingly working with marginalised sections of society on issues relating to PRIs (Rai et al., 2001; Centre for World Solidarity, 2004). This has picked up pace in the light of the sizeable devolution of funds to gram panchayats under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGA) of 2006 (Das, 2007; PRIA, 2008). In addition, the national government is moving towards a process of ‘convergence’ of the NREGA programme with other rural development programmes, on the understanding that all these programmes will be routed through PRIs (Government of India, 2008a). This will further widen the scope for NGO interaction with panchayats.

NGOs have the potential to influence the day-to-day experiences of citizens and elected functionaries in relation to panchayats, while also affecting the policies and functioning of politicians and bureaucrats at different tiers of governments. Aside from building the political awareness of citizens and elected functionaries, these groups can help to mobilise the participation of vulnerable and marginalised people in panchayat activities. NGO interventions in this vein could strengthen the abilities of poor people to challenge vested interests. The impact and importance of grassroots mobilisation, and the influence of non-state actors like social movements and NGOs, has been brought out in the ‘people’s campaign for decentralised planning’ organised by the Kerala state government (Heller et al., 2007), and the right-to-information campaign in the state of Rajasthan (Jenkins and Goetz, 1999).

However, at the grassroots, NGO efforts to build the knowledge and organisational skills of poor people can also deepen existing divisions between sections of the poor and non-poor. It can also lead to a negative backlash, which could affect their

\textsuperscript{10} Despite their achievements, the performance of panchayats in both states has also been the subject of detailed critiques (Das, 2000; Bhattacharya, 2002).

\textsuperscript{11} The strong organisational base of the CPI (M) has been instrumental in helping it to retain political power.

\textsuperscript{12} They are also not found in most parts of the developing world where democratic decentralisation is taking place (Gaventa, 2001: 6).
livelihoods and survival. In addition, NGOs themselves are not uniform entities (Hamilton and Shutt, 2008). Some are interested in maintaining the status quo (Ndegwa, 1996) and most are susceptible to various outside pressures (Tvedt, 1998). Thus, there is a need to examine critically the ‘interface’ of citizens, NGOs and PRIs. Following Long, an ‘interface’ is defined as occurring at points where “different, and often conflicting life-worlds” or social fields intersect, interact and interpenetrate (1992: 6, 1999: 1). Examining an interface,

...can bring out the dynamics of the interactions taking place and show how the goals, perceptions, interests and relationships of the various parties may be reshaped as a result of their interaction (Long, 1989: 2).

Although there are some studies that look at the role of NGOs in relation to the empowerment and political participation of marginalised groups in India (Viswanath, 1991; Sommer, 2001; Kamat, 2002; Kilby, 2006); after 1992, there are only a few studies that have examined the role of grassroots-NGOs that work on panchayat-related issues with poor people (Rajasekhar, 1995, 1999a; Webster, 2002; Kudva, 2005, 2006). However, these studies do not provide a detailed comparative analysis (intra or inter-state) of the nature of poor people’s (both men and women) experiences (in terms of both material and non-material gains) at the interface. In addition, these studies do not assess whether there are variations in experiences of the poor - in areas where the grassroots-NGOs operate as opposed to non-operational areas.

This level of in-depth analysis in relation to the situation of poor people is also not observed in studies that examine the impact of state-level NGOs working on panchayat issues (F. Stephen and N. Rajasekaran, 2001; Behar and Kumar, 2002; Centre for World Solidarity, 2004; Kulkarni, 2007). Studies conducted by national-level NGOs that work on issues relating to PRIs also have not provided this kind of analysis (Rai et al., 2001; The Hunger Project, 2006).

Many of the early studies amongst those mentioned above were largely limited to the examination of NGO interventions in relation to the ‘capacity-building’ of elected representatives from marginalised communities (mainly women), and their functioning in panchayats. Only a few looked at strategies to increase the participation of citizens in electoral activities. Since the late 1990s, there has been a gradual increase in

13 I define these as NGOs that operate in a specific geographical arena, namely - the sub-district administrative division.
14 There have been some attempts to assess whether an NGO or quasi-NGO intervention (in relation to local government) has produced better results in areas where they operate vis-à-vis non-operational areas, but the focus is largely on the functioning of women elected representatives (Hansen, 1999; Agrawal, 2006).
grassroots-NGO involvement on *panchayat*-related issues which goes beyond capacity-building to addressing more systemic issues through redistributive politics (Webster, 2002; Chhotray, 2008). There is some indication that participation of marginalised communities in *panchayats* has improved when NGOs adopt a more ‘political’ approach to their interactions with PRIs (Hansen, 1999), while another study suggests that it is the interplay of factors at multiple levels which shapes the experience of poor people at the NGO-local government interface (Webster, 2002).

In addition, there is evidence that NGOs working on PRI issues at the grassroots can help to build the leadership of elected representatives belonging to poorer sections of society (F. Stephen and N. Rajasekaran, 2001; The Hunger Project, 2006). By building networks amongst themselves and amongst elected functionaries, NGOs can also put pressure on state governments to devolve powers to PRIs (Behar and Aiyar, 2003). In addition, NGO interventions can have indirect effects on local politics. Krishna’s study highlights how ‘*naya netas*’ (new leaders) hailing from marginalised backgrounds have obtained skills and contacts in and through their association with NGOs (2002). Further, with the regular conduct of *panchayat* elections, politicians might have greater incentives to woo NGOs and their constituencies (Jenkins, forthcoming). This could have potential pay-offs for the poor. Hence, there is a need to undertake a more systematic and critical assessment of the poor people’s experiences (in relation to both material and non-material dimensions) at this interface.

Further, over the last decade, an increasing number of studies have illustrated the value of examining the ‘everyday State and society in modern India’ (Fuller and Bénéï, 2000; Corbridge et al., 2005). These studies reveal that the State\textsuperscript{15} is not a discrete, uniform entity; and that there are multiple social forces in society. They also indicate that “the modern State is not incompatible with the structure of Indian society…(in fact,) ordinary people…are mostly not resisting the State, but using the ‘system’ as best they can” (Fuller and Harriss, 2000: 24-25).

Within the vast literature on the constitutionally mandated *panchayats*, there have been some studies that have evaluated the experiences of citizens in relation to their political participation (Bryld, 2001; Rai et al., 2001), while others have assessed the quality and extent of material benefits that they obtain (Gaiha et al., 1998). Some scholars have adopted a more comprehensive approach that examines their position both in relation

\textsuperscript{15} In this thesis, the term ‘State’ refers to the set of formal governing institutions which have sovereignty over a given territory. On the other hand, the term ‘state’ or ‘state government/s’ refers to secondary tiers of government within the Indian federal structure.
to political participation and the acquisition of material benefits (Alsop et al., 2001; Crook and Sverrisson, 2001; Kumar, 2006; Besley et al., 2007). Although much of this research assesses the situation of the average citizen, only a few studies focus on the experiences of poor people.

The literature also suggests that examining the experiences of poor people requires a holistic understanding of the multiple ways in which they are marginalised. As Bratton argues, poverty has both political and material dimensions:

(It) arises because people do not have access to power; that is, the capacity to do what they want and win compliance from others. Poor people have little or no control over the material and institutional conditions under which they exist. They experience great difficulty in making decisions about their lives. In short, the poor lack the political 'clout' to make their preferences 'stick' (1990: 90).

Moreover, for impoverished sections of society, the “unwillingness to challenge” the status-quo is often a combination of the desire to safeguard “what little security they might have,” and the lack of awareness about their rights and privileges (Kabeer, 2003: 5). Hence, unpacking experiences of poor people in relation to panchayats requires an examination of the ways in which they use their knowledge and organisational skills to challenge and alter unequal political spaces, and acquire material benefits.

In this context, I follow Mouffe in differentiating between ‘politics’ and ‘the political’:

‘(T)he political’…refer(s) to the dimension of antagonism that is inherent in all human society, antagonism that…can take many different forms and can emerge in diverse social relations. ‘Politics’ refers to the ensemble of practices, discourses, and institutions which seek to establish a certain order and to organise human coexistence in conditions which are always potentially conflictual because they are affected by the dimension of ‘the political’ (Mouffe, 1995: 262-263).

Within the thesis, I have used the term politics in three different senses. Firstly, I have used it in reference to institutional electoral practices. The two other senses in which I have used it relate to the additional ways in which gram panchayat-level informants interpreted these terms. In the more limited sense, it refers to competition between cliques. In the more substantive sense, it refers to the interplay of interests and forces that seek to control authority in village society in order to gain influence or retain command over decision-making, resources and benefits.

The ‘substantive’ interpretation suggests that an assessment of change in local power-relations would require a longitudinal perspective. As Crook and Sverrisson caution, “It may take at least ten to fifteen years in a context of financial and political stability, for a

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16 This characterisation draws on Manor’s description of politics as “the interplay of interests and forces in pursuit of power, resources, status etc.” (2004b: 205).
(decentralised) system to show any results which can be fairly judged” (2001: 5).

Further, as Corbridge et al. point out:

> It is one thing to provide institutions to promote accountability and decision-making at the *panchayat*, Block and District levels, and quite another to produce men and women who are able to participate effectively in these new or revamped structures. The production of skilled citizens is not something that happens overnight. Men and women have to be educated, they need to develop a broad set of capabilities......and they need to be acquainted with the costs and benefits of new structures of rule (2005: 3).

In the past, attempts at incorporating a longitudinal perspective were restricted to political ethnographies of single villages, which covered the period prior to the constitutional amendment⁷ (Cohn, 1955; Chakravarti, 1975; Robinson, 1988). After the 73rd constitutional amendment, this level of detailed analysis is largely absent⁸. This is partly because many of the studies carried out after 1992 were conducted during or just after the first five-year term of *panchayats*. So, examining experiences over two *panchayat* electoral terms opens up opportunities for a more in-depth analysis. Longer historical accounts of democratic decentralisation are important because they explain how change occurs in hierarchical rural arenas, and highlight the limitations and volatility associated with *panchayats* and politics⁹.

As mentioned earlier, unlike the situation in West Bengal and Kerala, on average, state governments in India have devolved only minimum powers and resources to *panchayats*. So, a study of the experiences of poor people in relation to grassroots-NGOs and PRIs is best undertaken within states that are not at the extremes (in relation to devolution and/or general human development indicators). An examination of such states can show us “what is possible and what has been achieved,” and can give us a more realistic picture of “what is the most we can expect” in India; in the context of political and bureaucratic resistance, and the unequal power-relationships at the grassroots (Vyasulu and Vyasulu, 1999: 3680).

In addition, a *comparison* of such states can highlight variations in state government policy towards NGOs working on PRI-related issues. Contrasts can indicate whether NGOs are able to make a greater contribution at the grassroots in states that support

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⁷ Even in that early phase, these studies indicated that local government institutions provided opportunities for poor people to challenge the traditional authority of the landed elites in both direct and indirect ways.

⁸ For a recent attempt at examining change within a *gram panchayat* using a long-term perspective, see (Chhotray, 2008). This article also brings out the role of NGOs in bringing about change.

⁹ In the case of West Bengal and Kerala, adopting a long term perspective provides a more balanced assessment of their successes and limitations (Chathukulam and John, 2002; Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2004).
NGO engagement with PRIs, as opposed to those that are indifferent or antagonistic.

It is widely acknowledged that differences in state government policy towards PRIs shape the impact at the grassroots (Crook and Sverrisson, 2001; Kumar, 2006). However, it is also argued that even within one state, variations between gram panchayats in relation to local characteristics like political leadership (Banerjee, 1998) and political competition (Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2004) can contribute to a differential impact\(^{20}\). This indicates that a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics at the grassroots requires a comparative study of gram panchayats.

Studies using gram panchayats as the unit of analysis can also make a contribution to the field of inter-state comparative studies on Indian politics. In these writings, the unit of analysis is often the state (Chandra, 2004; Jenkins, 2004). Even, in relation to panchayats, inter-state studies mostly use the state as the unit of analysis (Mathew and Buch, 2000; Rai et al., 2001; Kumar, 2006); but, to the best of my knowledge, after 1993, there are no detailed inter-state comparative studies of PRIs that use gram panchayats as the unit of analysis\(^{21}\).

The discussion above has drawn attention to the need for carrying out a detailed comparative study that examines the experiences of poor people at the interface of grassroots-NGOs and panchayats. It has also brought out the importance of: conducting such research in middle-order states, using gram panchayats as the unit of analysis, taking a longitudinal perspective, and incorporating political and material dimensions while assessing poor people’s experiences. This thesis makes a contribution by presenting the findings from such a study.

1.2 Details of the Research

In this thesis, I use mixed-research methods and an interdisciplinary framework to compare and assess the experiences of poor people in relation to their interactions with Panchayati Raj Institutions and grassroots-NGOs, within sixteen case-study gram

\(^{20}\) Intra-gram panchayat differences (i.e. between habitations) can also contribute to variations (Alsop et al., 2001: 24). This subject requires more detailed research and is beyond the purview of this thesis, which focuses on inter-gram panchayat differences.

\(^{21}\) Some inter-state comparative studies like (Aziz et al., 2002) place an emphasis on differences between states; and use district, intermediate and GP-level data to support their claims. However, this thesis is an inter-state comparative study that places the emphasis on differences between GPs, so as to examine the extent to which factors other than the state also make a difference. Intra-state studies that use gram panchayats as the unit of analysis have been conducted (Lieten, 1996; Lieten and Srivastava, 1999), and some broad comparative conclusions have been drawn (Lieten, 2003).
At the regional level, the research centres on the two state governments of Karnataka (K) and Andhra Pradesh (AP), which have followed different political trajectories in relation to democratic decentralisation. At the local level, the research focuses on four different grassroots-NGOs located across the two contiguous (geographical) districts of Kolar in Karnataka and Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh.

The experiences of poor people are analysed along two dimensions – expanding political capabilities and securing material benefits. Patterns and trends are identified through a systematic comparison of the sixteen case-studies. These comparisons also draw attention to the main factors that are associated with variations in the experiences of poor people. In addition, the thesis highlights how aspects of village life and experiences of the poor change over the time period 1994 to 2006.

Fieldwork commenced in 2005 and covered a period of sixteen months. The research focused heavily but not entirely at the habitation and gram panchayat levels, as the impact of interactions at the citizen-NGO-PRI interface is largely felt at these levels.

The two states under study (Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh) are both middle-order states. These geographically adjacent states have a shared history in terms of administrative sub-divisions and legacies from the colonial period, and also share similarities in the social composition of society (Manor, 1989; Ram Reddy, 1989). The history of party politics in both states also bears distinct resemblances (Manor, 2004a). In addition, both these states experimented with decentralisation in the 1980s. However, during the time period under study, the state governments of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh are fairly mid-range in terms of human development indices. In a comparative study of fifteen major Indian states, the Human Development Index (HDI) ranking for Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in 2001 was 10 and 7 respectively compared to 9 and 7 in 1991 (Government of India, 2001b). Even in terms of PRIs, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh are not ranked at the extremes (like Kerala or Bihar). However, they lie at opposite ends of the spectrum amongst the middle group of states (Government of India, 2001d; Chaudhuri, 2006; Government of India, 2006c).

Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka share a much longer state border as compared to their borders with Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Appendix 1.1 provides a comparative overview of the two states across key indicators, as of 2001.

Detailed information in relation to the socio-economic and political profile of these states and the sub-district entities is provided in chapter 5.
Andhra Pradesh are understood to have had distinctly different approaches to panchayats\textsuperscript{28}.

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government in Andhra Pradesh is meant to have undermined them by orchestrating a parallel form of ‘decentralised’ government through its state-sponsored \textit{Janmabhoomi} programme, and by promoting user-groups and stakeholder-committees (Mathew, 2001; Jayal, 2004; Manor, 2006). The Congress and Janata Dal (Secular) [JD(S)] governments in Karnataka are argued to have adopted a more liberal, hands-off approach; and devolved considerably more funds and powers to lower tiers of government (Mathew and Buch, 2000; Meenakshisundaram, 2005). Thus, a comparison of the impact of contrasting approaches to PRIs in these two states can provide a robust account of the ways and extent to which poor people can harness the potential of panchayats.

The sixteen \textit{gram panchayats} that form the core of the study are split across the two geographically contiguous districts of Kolar in Karnataka and Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh (see Map 1 on page 1). I chose adjoining districts that share a common state boundary as they often have many common features, which makes detecting differences more clear-cut and apparent\textsuperscript{29}. The selection of these two districts was based on a number of factors, which are detailed in the next chapter. The key set of factors is that the historical background\textsuperscript{30}, agricultural systems and practices\textsuperscript{31}, composition of society, culture, language, climatic and topographical features, and party systems in these two districts is fairly similar. In addition, both districts have grassroots-NGOs that are working on issues relating to panchayats. Thus, comparative research in these two districts can yield a clearer and deeper understanding of differences in the experiences of poor people at the interface of grassroots-NGOs and PRIs, without other influences intruding unduly on the analysis\textsuperscript{32}.

\textsuperscript{28} These differences are discussed in more detail in chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{29} For recent studies that have examined contiguous districts in these two states citing similar reasons, see (Ayyangar, 2007; Besley et al., 2007).
\textsuperscript{30} Princely Mysore of which Kolar was a part was run on lines similar to that of the Madras Presidency (British rule) in which Anantapur was included (Manor, 1977).
\textsuperscript{31} Under British rule, there were three main forms of land tenure or land revenue systems in place; \textit{zamindari} (landlord based), the more egalitarian \textit{ryotwari} (peasant proprietor) and \textit{mahalwari} (village based). In the princely state of Mysore and in Rayalseema (which was part of the Madras Presidency), the principal form of land revenue system was \textit{ryotwari} (Thorner et al., 1996).
\textsuperscript{32} There are some factors that are different across the state border. For example, Kolar is closer to the state capital of Bangalore compared to Anantapur, which is much further away from Hyderabad (state capital of Andhra Pradesh).
Of the four grassroots-NGOs that are included in this study, two are located in Kolar district and two in Anantapur district. They work primarily with disadvantaged people on issues relating to development and poverty reduction, within a geographically specific arena - the sub-district. All four share a multi-dimensional understanding of poverty and development, are formal (with salaried employees), mainly donor-funded (international, national or state) collectives that work with poor people in rural areas through the multi-pronged approach of conscientisation, mobilisation, advocacy and service delivery. They all work on issues relating to PRIs but the approach and length of operation varies.

These four grassroots-NGOs are located in different legislative constituencies. Each legislative constituency is associated with an elected Member of the Legislative Assembly or MLA. Within each of the four legislative constituencies, I studied two GPs where the NGO worked and two where they did not. So in all I studied four GPs in each legislative constituency, which adds up to eight GPs in each district.

In each GP, I assessed the experiences of poor people along two dimensions. The first dimension relates to the acquisition of panchayat-related material benefits – both individual and community. The second dimension relates to the expansion of their ‘political capabilities’. Here, I use Sen’s approach to capabilities but focus specifically on capabilities in relation to different forms of political participation. I use the word ‘political’ in relation to capabilities to emphasise the fact that the capabilities that are examined relate specifically to political institutions and practices. Furthermore, these capabilities are assessed only with reference to the constitutionally mandated panchayats and the associated political practices.

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33 The use of these terms in the description is not meant to provide a ‘normative’ slant to the work of NGOs but is used to highlight the broad areas within which they base their work.

34 These grassroots-NGOs have links with NGOs and agencies at higher levels but their core constituency is situated in the sub-district arena. All of them operate only within one district. More details in chapter 2.

35 In this thesis, ‘advocacy’ is defined in relation to the efforts of the study-NGOs as a “set of organised actions aimed at influencing public policies, societal attitudes and socio-political processes that enable and empower the marginalised to speak for themselves” (Samuel, 2007).

36 State governments have a Lower House of directly elected representatives, which forms the legislative assembly. Each member or MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly) is associated with a single-member legislative constituency at the sub-district level and is elected for a period of five years.

37 Broadly speaking, the capability approach, “relates the evaluation of the quality of life to the assessment of the capability to function,” wherein the notion of capability “reflects a person’s freedom to choose between different ways of living” (Sen, 1989: 42-43). More specifically, a capability reflects a person’s ability to achieve a given ‘functioning’. The latter is defined as the “achievement of the person: what she or he manages to do or be” (Clark, 2005). I use the capability approach as it allows for a multi-dimensional understanding of poverty and places importance on the agency of individuals. More details are provided in chapter 2.
Although other scholars have examined ‘political capabilities’ more broadly (Whitehead and Gray-Molina, 2003), I examine and define political capabilities in relation to a specific set of institutions and practices. This is meant to lend focus to my study and is not meant to preclude other definitions. I define political capabilities as the abilities of citizens (either individually or collectively) to participate substantively (genuine, informed and effective) in the activities of formal political institutions. In this thesis, I examine political capabilities in relation to Panchayati Raj Institutions. These abilities relate to the political knowledge and skills that citizens utilise and expand in their interactions with panchayats.

Since it is difficult to assess capabilities per se, most scholars assess the ‘realised achievements’ or functionings. In this thesis, I focus on functionings in relation to political participation. Political capabilities are evaluated by examining ‘functionings’ or achievements with respect to 1) the awareness of poor people in relation to different aspects of PRI-related political participation, 2) the physical practices (for example, voting, contacting elected representatives, petitioning and protesting) associated with this political participation, and 3) the effectiveness of this political participation. In other words, I assess the awareness, voice and influence of poor people.

In order to examine experiences along both dimensions, I develop an analytical framework, which traces the process of expansion of political capabilities of poor people and their acquisition of material benefits in relation to PRI-related ‘political opportunity spaces’ and the interventions of grassroots-NGOs.

I develop the concept of ‘political opportunity space’ by building on DeSouza’s metaphor of “opportunity space” in relation to PRIs (2002: 393), and drawing on the literature relating to political spaces (Engberg-Pedersen and Webster, 2002; Cornwall, 2004a) and political opportunities (Tarrow, 1998; Meyer, 2004). For the purposes of this thesis, I define ‘political opportunity space’ as the environment created by elements (funds, functions, functionaries; and mechanisms in relation to representation, participation, transparency and accountability) of the state government’s panchayat-related legislation, policies and practices. These different elements can constrain or promote the engagement of citizens with panchayat institutions. Political opportunity space is generated by the provisions of the state’s PRI legislation, and it is moulded by the state government’s PRI-related policies and actual implementation practices.

Within the sixteen GPs, the analytical framework is used to compare the ways in which the PRI-related ‘political opportunity space’ afforded by contrasting state governments,
and the intervention of different grassroots-NGOs are able to: build the political capabilities or the ‘awareness, voice and influence’ of citizens from marginalised and vulnerable communities; and enable them to secure material benefits.

Before I go on to highlight the findings of the research, I would like to focus on a few points that specify what the thesis does not cover and highlight some caveats in relation to the conclusions of the thesis.

Firstly, this thesis only examines grassroots-NGOs that have a formal policy about working on panchayat-related issues. It does not examine the work of NGOs (grassroots or otherwise) that work purely on service delivery issues or those that have informal contact and interactions with personnel in PRIs.

Secondly, the findings of the thesis only cover the period up to 2006. I comment on later developments only if they have a direct bearing on the research. For example, I have not looked at the contributions of the NREGA programme (which is routed via PRIs) because it was only operationalised in 2006.

Thirdly, I have not looked at the role of globalisation and the evolving liberal discourse of supranational institutions. Although these ‘international’ influences are important, they are not the subject of this research. Where necessary, I will discuss the relevant debates but the focus is largely on the grassroots dynamics within two Indian states.

Fourthly, I have not analysed the experiences of poor people in relation to their personal circumstances (e.g. sickness, debt, death of a bread-winner, migration), or other external influences (e.g. drought, media and communication, transportation, agricultural developments in relation to new inputs and marketing). In addition, I have not examined the extent to which inter-GP variations in relation to educational attainments, land holdings or wealth have contributed to differences in the experiences of poor people. I acknowledge that all these factors also play a part in the lives of poor people but they are beyond the purview of this research. To some extent, selecting relatively similar contiguous districts, GPs that are all multi-caste and have a significant proportion of poor people, and GPs that are all fairly close to the state border has helped to minimise variations based on external factors. However, if any of these factors had a significant influence on the interface, I have discussed its contribution.

38 However, if these types of NGOs operated in any of the case-study GPs, I ascertained whether their presence had made a difference in the lives of poor people, in relation to PRIs.

39 These include influential players like the World Bank, World Trade Organisation, International Monetary Fund, United Nations and regional banks.
Further, I have not examined differences (in detail) between poor people on the basis of personal characteristics like gender, levels of education, caste/religion and age. These differences are important and they have been discussed in greater detail by other scholars. Although I do disaggregate the data across these personal factors, and discuss the patterns and trends, they do not form the focus of my research.

Finally, I would like to underline that because of the methodology I employed, the findings in the thesis are only statistically generalisable in relation to the sixteen case-study gram panchayats and the four grassroots-NGOs (details in chapter 2). I also acknowledge that the approach taken by this thesis offers one particular vantage point from which to understand the interconnections and complexities at the interface. However, the findings provide a grounded insight into the potential, challenges, limitations and relationships at the interface of local government institutions, NGOs and the poor; and they also set-up hypotheses for scholars to examine - in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, other states of India, and also other parts of the world.

1.3 Preview of Findings

The study exposes a complex web of interactions at the interface of NGOs, local government institutions and poor people. In itself, this revelation about the complexity will not appear to be surprising to scholars and practitioners. However, it is in the description and interpretation of this complexity that the thesis makes an important contribution, as it sheds light on the different factors that are associated with the interface and elucidates how these factors shape the experiences of poor people.

I argue that the web of interactions is complex on two counts. Firstly, the complexity is on account of variations in the nature of interactions – differences in the levels (intensity) and types (pattern) of interactions. Secondly, it is on account of the multiple factors that mould the nature of the interactions. I contend that apart from the two factors that formed part of the initial focus of the study - the form and structure of grassroots-NGO intervention and the quality of the panchayat legislation (and associated state-government policies) and implementation, the intensity and pattern of interactions is also moulded by the presence of four other factors that influence the dynamics at the interface.

The first factor relates to the nature of democratic institutions at the intermediate panchayat level and below. The second relates to the strategies, actions and collective strength of sangha (group associated with NGO) members at the gram panchayat level. The third relates to the nature of political competition at the gram panchayat
level, and the fourth relates to the Janmabhoomi programme – the content and extent of its implementation (only in Andhra Pradesh) at the state level and below.

I argue that it is the interplay of all six factors that helps to explain variations in the intensity and pattern of interactions at the interface. I also establish that differences in the nature of interactions are associated with variations in the experiences of poor people. This helps to demonstrate that the extent to which these interactions are beneficial for poor people is influenced by the interplay of the six key factors located at different tiers of government. In doing so, the description and analysis provide a detailed insight into the role and relevance of politics in shaping the levels of political capabilities and material benefits acquired by poor people, the dynamics at various tiers of government, and the interplay of the key factors associated with the variations.

The thesis reveals that the first factor - the content of the Panchayati Raj legislation (funds, functions, functionaries; and mechanisms in relation to representation, participation, transparency and accountability) and associated state-government policies, and the extent of its implementation plays a critical role in shaping the experiences of poor people and the interventions of NGOs. It also draws attention to the role of chief ministers as they are often instrumental in designing and implementing panchayat-related policies.

The second factor, the nature of NGO intervention – or the structure of the NGO and its panchayat-related policies and activities - is also associated with variations in the experiences of poor people. The thesis highlights that overall grassroots-NGO interventions in relation to panchayats are beneficial for poor people. However, it reveals that these interventions are more beneficial for poor people when NGOs engage substantively with the political. By this I mean that NGOs have a greater impact when they facilitate the participation of poor people in more active electoral practices like contesting elections for the post of GP president or ward member; and build the individual and collective capabilities of the poor in ways that enable them to voice their demands and challenge dominant interests through protests, petitions and other forms of confrontational collective action. In discussing these points, the thesis also draws attention to the role of NGO heads and donors.

Thirdly, the analysis establishes the importance of democratic political institutions at the intermediate-panchayat level and below. It reveals that democratic institutions such as free elections and free speech provide an enabling environment for elected functionaries, officials, NGOs and poor people to engage with panchayats (likewise
their absence or limited presence inhibits engagement). It also underscores the role of the MLA in shaping the nature of democratic institutions within the legislative constituency.

Fourthly, at the grassroots the thesis brings out the value of a membership-based sangha (group associated with the NGO) of the poor. The strategies, actions and collective strength of sangha members can help to increase their influence over the functioning of panchayats. The study underlines the role of sangha functionaries and NGO frontline workers, and draws attention to the importance of building a ‘critical mass’ of members. The fifth factor is also associated with the grassroots – the nature of political competition within the gram panchayat. Poor people are able to expand their political capabilities and secure material benefits to a larger extent when the political competition between key leaders within the GP is fairly democratic (pluralistic and inclusive). Variations in the nature of political competition also highlight the role of the GP president.

The sixth factor relates only to the eight gram panchayats in Anantapur. It sheds light on the influence of the Janmabhoomi programme, which usurped the role of gram panchayats and siphoned part of its funds. Despite these limitations, the study highlights the role of the programme in enhancing the participation of citizens at the grassroots, and draws attention to the enterprising GP presidents (especially, those affiliated to the ruling TDP party) who used their political connections to channel a measure of material benefits to the poor.

By shedding light on the political interplay of these six factors, the thesis draws attention to the importance of politics, leadership and collective action.

1.4 Outline of Thesis

For ease of understanding, I have woven the relevant literature into individual chapters.

Chapter two explains the methodology employed both during fieldwork and during the phase of analysis and writing up. It also highlights the challenges encountered during this period and describes the measures taken to resolve them. In addition, the chapter introduces the four study-NGOs in Kolar and Anantapur, and compares the similarities and differences in their approach, especially in relation to their work on panchayats. It ends by providing details of the analytical framework.

Chapter three examines the evolving nature, role and impact of national politics, panchayats and NGOs within the Indian context. It begins by outlining contemporary
debates on NGOs, decentralisation and democracy. This review helps to frame the discussion in subsequent sections, which focus on the dynamics in the time period under study, and highlight the unsettled relationships between national and state politics and between NGOs and social movements. In doing so, the chapter draws attention to the relationships between national-level politics and grassroots organisations.

Chapter four provides an overview of the findings using qualitative and quantitative data, and identifies the eight *gram panchayats* in which poor people have experienced higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits than in the other eight *gram panchayats*. It begins with a brief overview of the two study-districts – Kolar and Anantapur. This information is used to frame the discussion in relation to the sixteen GPs. The chapter then analyses the quantitative data at two levels. First it provides an overall perspective, and then it disaggregates the data across the sixteen GPs to highlight variations between GPs. In combination with the qualitative data it highlights the eight top-performing GPs and sets up the potential factors that are associated with the observed trends, patterns and variations. The six possible factors are explored in greater detail in the following three chapters.

Chapter five examines the first set of possible factors, which relate to ‘high politics’- politics at the level of state governments and legislative constituencies. In particular, it discusses how the contrasting nature of state politics in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh has influenced policies in relation to *panchayats* and NGOs. This helps to contextualise inter-state differences in relation to *panchayats* and NGOs. This information is used to frame the discussion in relation to the sixteen GPs. In addition, the chapter examines how the state-sponsored *Janmabhoomi programme* in Andhra Pradesh has affected the functioning of PRIs. It also elaborates on the political context in the four legislative constituencies, and brings out the contrasts in the nature of democratic institutions within these four sub-district arenas. These findings are combined with the quantitative data analysis across the two districts and four legislative constituencies to demonstrate that although both the ‘nature of political opportunity spaces’ and the ‘nature of democratic institutions’ are associated with variations in the experiences of the poor, they appear insufficient in explaining variations between GPs. The third explanatory factor, which only relates to the GPs in Andhra Pradesh, also appears inadequate in explaining differences within the Anantapur GPs.

Chapter six considers the relevance of the fourth possible factor – the nature of interventions made by the four grassroots-NGOs in relation to *panchayats*. First, it
compares the levels of political capabilities and material benefits attained by poor people in GPs where these grassroots-NGOs operate with those where they are absent. Second, in those GPs where the NGOs operate, it compares the experiences of poor people who are affiliated to the sangha with those who are not part of the sangha. Third, it compares the role of the four NGOs. These three comparisons are used to bring out the differential impact of the four NGOs, and highlight the PRI-related policies and activities that are more effective than others. The chapter also shows how NGO intervention is mediated by different factors, and demonstrates that their intervention alone is insufficient in explaining inter-GP variations in the experiences of poor people.

Chapter seven evaluates the last set of possible factors, which relate to ‘deep politics’ – politics at the level of gram panchayats. The chapter examines the nature of political competition; and the strategies, actions and collective strength of sangha members across the different GPs. In doing so, it sheds light on the different features that are associated with higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits for the poor, and draws attention to the interplay between the two grassroots-level factors and other factors at higher tiers of government. The chapter goes on to suggest that variations in the experiences of poor people are an outcome of the interplay of factors across different tiers of government.

Chapter eight is the concluding chapter. It pulls together the insights from the different chapters and presents the key findings of the thesis. In doing so, it provides a detailed description of the way in which political interplay unfolds at the interface. The chapter also outlines the contributions of the thesis to theory and practice, and discusses avenues for future research.
Chapter 2

METHODOLOGY AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: MAPPING THE POLITICAL

“Why do you want to stay in the houses of poor people?” (Key informant, 2006)\(^{40}\)

2.1 Introduction
This chapter outlines the research process and elaborates on the analytical framework. It delineates the tools and perspectives that guided and moulded the operationalisation of the research question, and the evaluation of the research findings. Section 2.2 provides an overview of the research methodology and section 2.3 provides details on the analytical framework.

2.2 Overview of Research Methodology
Although I principally draw upon the resources of political science, this thesis also includes elements from anthropology, sociology, economics, geography and history. Cross-disciplinary research has the potential of providing a more holistic understanding of complex and interlinked issues inherent in processes of change (Harriss, 2002; Hulme and Toye, 2006).

In order to gauge and assess overall patterns and trends across the sixteen GPs, the research design incorporates both ‘qualitative and quantitative methods’\(^{41}\) of development research. Although there are differences of opinion in relation to the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches (King et al., 1994; Brady and Collier, 2004), there is a growing body of literature that points to the advantages of using mixed-methods (Carvalho and White, 1997; Kanbur, 2001; Creswell and Tashakkori, 2007; Jones and Sumner, 2009). As mentioned in the introductory chapter, in this study, ‘mixed-methods’ is understood to mean the simultaneous use of both qualitative (for instance, semi-structured interviews) and quantitative techniques (structured surveys); to collect, analyse and interpret different types of data. Further, within the thesis, the usage of the terms qualitative and quantitative methods is indicative of the primary or main association that qualitative and quantitative ‘techniques’ have with the generation of qualitative and quantitative ‘data’ respectively. So for example, surveys are primarily

\(^{40}\) Interview with knowledgeable informant Number 138, 16 February 2006, Anantapur.
\(^{41}\) There is an ongoing debate on the usage of these terms, which calls for a distinction between ‘types of data’ and ‘types of data collection methods’ (Kanbur, 2001). Chambers argues that participatory methods can generate both non-numerical or qualitative, and numerical or quantitative data (2001). Likewise, Hentschel points out that ‘quantitative’ methods of data collection can generate both qualitative and quantitative data (2001).
used for generating overall statistics while semi-structured interviews principally help to draw out non-numerical interpretations.

Although there are risks and issues relating to methodological compatibility and comparability, a systematic integration of these methods can provide both breadth and depth of understanding. In my research, quantitative data has been useful in identifying patterns and trends across gram panchayats, while qualitative data has helped to develop an understanding of complex inter-relationships across and within gram panchayats.

Each GP is a separate case-study. Stake defines the case-study as “both a process of enquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry” (2005: 444). Case-studies have both uses and limitations (Ragin and Becker, 1992; Yin, 2003; Gerring, 2007). For me, the case-study strategy is useful because it helps to capture the dynamics and ‘rich ambiguity’ (Nietzsche and Kaufmann, 1974) of local politics and institutions, while also drawing attention to the ‘backstage’ (Goffman, 1963) machinations. Furthermore, comparing case-studies “not only uncovers differences between social entities, but reveal unique aspects of a particular entity that would be virtually impossible to detect otherwise” (Mills et al., 2006: 621).

The comparative, cross-disciplinary, mixed-methods approach has provided me with an opportunity to apply and enhance my research-related skills. Depending on the phase of research and the fieldwork context, I wore different hats and assumed the role of “detective” (sussing out potential case-studies, data collection, triangulation, analysis and interpretation), “translator” (reframing questions and ideas for diverse groups and individuals) and “diplomat” (securing interviews and negotiating times, venues and home-stays) (adapted from Woolcock, 2007: 55).

At the GP level, collection of primary data involved the concurrent use of both qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews, group discussions, participant observation) and quantitative methods (structured surveys). This was supplemented by secondary data from documentary analyses. Roughly two-thirds of my database consists of qualitative data, as the grassroots qualitative data is complemented by semi-structured interviews at the sub-district, state and national level. A break-up of the total interviews conducted during fieldwork is provided in Table 2.1.

This section is further divided into three sub-sections that trace the research process from desk-based research proposal, to immersion in the field, and finally to the analysis
and writing-up of findings. Fieldwork was split into three stages (preliminary, main and follow-up) and covered a total of sixteen months (spanning 2005-2006).

Table 2.1: Summary of interviews across different stages of fieldwork in 2005-2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of fieldwork</th>
<th>Category and level of interview</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main</td>
<td>Structured surveys with poor people in sixteen GPs</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews with key informants in sixteen GPs</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews at intermediate tier*</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total Interviews in Main Stage</strong></td>
<td>769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews at district level in AP and K</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews at regional level in AP</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews at regional level in K</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews at national level in New Delhi</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total Interviews in Follow-up Stage</strong></td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td><strong>Total Interviews across all stages</strong></td>
<td>946</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Some of the interviews at the intermediate tier were conducted in the follow-up stage. This includes interviews with staff from the four grassroots-NGOs.

** Some of the interviews in the follow-up stage were conducted with interviewees who had also been interviewed in the preliminary stage.

2.2.1 The First Stage: Finalising Research Design based on Preliminary Fieldwork Findings

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, rather than following the usual format of selecting ‘representative’ districts from different agro-climatic regions, I have chosen to focus my energies on a detailed *comparison* of two geographically contiguous districts. Since Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka share a long state border, the choice of contiguous districts is relatively broad. I decided on Kolar and Anantapur for a number of reasons.

Firstly, on the Karnataka side, Southern Karnataka (largely associated with Princely Mysore) has a bigger pool of districts, compared to districts from the erstwhile British-controlled Madras presidency or from Hyderabad Karnataka (governed by the erstwhile *Nizams* of Hyderabad). Similarly, on the Andhra Pradesh side, there is a larger set of districts associated with the Madras presidency. So, I selected Kolar (part of the princely state of Mysore) and Anantapur (part of the Madras Presidency) from the larger pool of districts.

Secondly, Kolar and Anantapur are both largely rural districts that have a high density of NGOs working with vulnerable and marginalised communities. Although the number of NGOs working on *panchayats* is on the rise, NGOs that have been working in this

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42 In each state, there are three such commonly recognised regional divisions. See Appendix 2.1 for more details.

43 Another possible choice was Chittoor district. However, I decided against it in order to reduce bias, as it includes the home constituency of Chandrababu Naidu (the ex-chief minister).
field for a relatively long period of time are few and far between. However, both Kolar and Anantapur have more than one NGO that has worked on PRI-related issues for some length of time\textsuperscript{44}. Equally important was my previous experience of working with an NGO in Kolar. It had equipped me with the relevant language skills, and background knowledge in relation to the socio-political and economic setting in this part of the state.

Discussions with key informants within and outside government also confirmed that these districts had many common features. This pair of contiguous districts has also been the choice of other recent studies that straddle this geographic divide (Baumgartner and Högger, 2004; Sivanna and Reddy, 2007). Moreover, since the research examines the experiences of poor people, Kolar and Anantapur provide a fitting comparison as they are both below median districts (and not extremes) in terms of HDI (Government of Karnataka, 2006: 15; Centre for Economic and Social Studies, 2008: 14). Appendix 2.2 provides a detailed comparative profile of the two districts.

The preliminary phase of fieldwork was spread over three summer months in 2005, covering visits to rural and urban parts of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, and the national capital of New Delhi. This phase was very useful on five counts.

Firstly, I gauged what people felt about the research questions, methodology and field of study. This helped to revise and inform the research strategy. Secondly, I visited the NGOs and potential sites that I was going to examine, and determined the feasibility of carrying out research in those contexts. Where decisions were finalised, I also made informal plans about when I could revisit, which helped to structure my main period of fieldwork. Thirdly, at the grassroots, it gave me the opportunity of asking a variety of people (especially amongst the poor) in different political contexts, what their experiences were in relation to PRIs and what being poor meant to them. In many cases, the aspects of poverty they talked about were not only related to material facets, but also to political dimensions of poverty. Often, the definition incorporated a cluster of multiple issues. These differing perceptions underlined the need to incorporate both political and material dimensions when evaluating the experiences of the poor at the NGO-PRI interface.

Fourthly, it gave me an opportunity to carry out a pilot study, which involved a week long stay in a GP. This was of immense use because it helped me structure the survey questionnaire and finalise the questions for the semi-structured interviews. It also helped me develop the analytical framework, and gave me the opportunity to have a

\textsuperscript{44} Kolar and Anantapur also share a pre-independence history of local representative councils.
rethink about what needed to be researched within the time frame. Moreover, it gave me an idea about the practicalities of conducting fieldwork (e.g. what to wear, eat and drink); potential pitfalls (e.g. limitations of taping interviews and using focus groups); and issues relating to ethics and bias. Lastly, the preliminary phase alerted me to the importance of factoring in the roles of MLAs (or dynamics in different legislative constituencies).

In the final analysis, I decided on four different grassroots-NGOs located in four separate legislative constituencies. Table 2.2 provides a comparative typology of the four study-NGOs. Although the NGOs have some distinct features, they all share some similarities. They are all started by people who were educated in urban or semi-urban areas and come from a middle-class (non-SC/ST) background. All four seek to work with vulnerable and marginalised communities. Although the focus of each NGO’s initiatives is the grassroots, in line with their strategic objectives, they also attempt (extent varies) to influence the formulation and implementation of intra-district and supra-district level government policies. All work on service delivery and advocacy issues but the emphasis and extent varies.

Unlike the two study-NGOs in Kolar district, the two study-NGOs in Anantapur district have sub-contracted development projects from the state government. Of the four, three work through membership-based groups. One NGO works exclusively with women. The NGOs in Kolar are bigger and have a wider coverage than their counterparts in Anantapur. One NGO started work on PRIs in the late 1980s, but the remaining three only started on PRIs from around the 2000 (in Karnataka) and 2001 (Andhra Pradesh) GP terms. However, all four have been in operation for more than a decade.

45 For example, I realised that it was unnecessary to study all the habitations in a GP. Instead, it was better to select a maximum of four habitations based on a set criterion.
46 The politically sensitive nature of questions meant that people often found it hard to publicly voice their grievances or preferences. So, instead of conducting focus-group discussions, my emphasis shifted to individual in camera interviews.
47 In particular, the pilot study confirmed my apprehensions about working with field assistants. Since I wished to employ mixed-methods, base myself in the village and live in the houses of poor people; the difficulties of recruiting and training like-minded field assistants seemed to far outweigh the benefits. George and Bennett argue that “in comparative case-studies, structure and focus are easier to achieve if a single investigator not only plans the study, but also conducts the case studies” (2005: 71).
48 Scheduled Castes (SCs) - (include the former untouchables or outcastes - castes which lie outside the traditional four-fold hierarchy) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) - (indigenous tribes) are accorded special constitutional status in view of the discrimination they have suffered in the past from mainstream Hindu society. Within the SC community, the former untouchables choose to refer to themselves as dalits, which means oppressed.
Table 2.2: Comparative Typology of the four grassroots-NGOs as of 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Study-NGOs in Kolar district of Karnataka</th>
<th>Study-NGOs in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field of work:</td>
<td>NGO Akravati</td>
<td>NGO Teesta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integrated rural community development, rights-based advocacy especially in relation to panchayats, and facilitating the formation of a people’s organisation through sanghas (groups)</td>
<td>Eco-restoration, alternative credit, alternative education, youth and disability issues, awareness building on panchayats, and facilitating the formation of a women’s federation through sanghas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NGO Godavari&lt;sup&gt;49&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women empowerment, micro-credit, sustainable livelihoods, rights-based advocacy, and facilitating the formation of a women’s federation through sanghas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group:</td>
<td>Small and peasant families</td>
<td>Landless, marginal farmers, women, dalits, youth and children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works through membership-based sanghas involving monthly or annual payments per family or individual</td>
<td>Yes, annual payment per family</td>
<td>Yes, monthly per individual but only for micro-credit sangha. Not for the other sanghas working on reforestation and rights issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, fortnightly per individual for micro-credit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal situation of sangha:</td>
<td>The main sangha is a registered entity. Federated sanghas across all taluks are part of this people’s organisation.</td>
<td>Micro-credit sanghas are federated and registered at the mandal level but not across mandals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The main sangha is a registered entity. Federated sanghas across all taluks are affiliated to it.</td>
<td>Not registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of inception and legal status of NGO</td>
<td>1977, registered</td>
<td>1990, registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1994 (offshoot of an NGO established in 1980), registered in 1997</td>
<td>1988, registered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>49</sup> Although the organisation is primarily a federated group of sanghas, it also includes full-time staff that are not part of the sangha. In addition, since it is still finding its feet, it has links (including funding) with the ‘mother’ NGO, which supported the idea of an independent federation. So, in this thesis, I have classified the organisation as an NGO.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Study-NGOs in Kolar district of Karnataka</th>
<th>Study-NGOs in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NGO Akravati</td>
<td>NGO Godavari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geopolitical coverage (within district)</td>
<td>5 Taluks of the district, 913 habitations</td>
<td>4 Taluks of the district, 240 habitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Centralised</td>
<td>Relatively decentralised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of full-time staff in NGO</td>
<td>88 (largely consists of sangha members)</td>
<td>21 full time staff (largely non-sangha) and back-up support from ‘mother’ NGO staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period since work on PRIs began</td>
<td>Late 1980s</td>
<td>Since 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Database on situation of target families</td>
<td>Yes, comprehensive database which is computerised and accessible to sangha members</td>
<td>No, some basic handwritten data largely in relation to micro-credit sanghas plus some computerised data in relation to overall numbers but not disaggregated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency and accountability mechanisms in operation</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks with other NGOs and advocacy organisations at higher tiers</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Donor support</td>
<td>High - international donors</td>
<td>Medium - international and national donors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependence on donor funding for PRI activities</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependence on donor funding for non-PRI activities</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The choice of NGOs pre-determined the pool of legislative constituencies from which selections could be made. In Anantapur, each of the two NGOs worked on PRI-related issues in only one constituency. Within each of these two legislative constituencies two mandals were examined, one where the study-NGO worked and one where they did not. In Kolar, the PRI-related operations of both NGOs were spread over more than one legislative constituency. However, since the length of time they had worked on PRI-related issues varied across the constituencies, I selected the legislative constituency and taluk in which they had worked for the longest period of time.

2.2.2 The Main Period of Fieldwork: How, When, Where

The main period of fieldwork covered eight months from September 2005 to April 2006 and it involved an average stay of eight days in each GP. In between each of these periods of intensive fieldwork, I built in time for transcription, reflection and writing. The next three sub-sections delineate the sampling approach; provide an overview of the methodology employed at the GP level; and lastly, describe the limitations and biases associated with this phase of research.

2.2.2.1 Delineating the Sampling Approach

I used a systematic and detailed methodology to select the GPs and habitations that formed part of the study. This helped in making “structured, focused comparisons” across cases, using largely “standardised” questions across the sixteen GPs (George and Bennett, 2005: 69). The emphasis was not on attributing causation, but on generating robust comparable data that could highlight associations through the detection of similarities and variations in cases. I provide a visual representation of the GP sampling approach in Figure 2.1.

Within each legislative constituency I selected four GPs, two where I could analyse the impact of NGO’s work on panchayat-related issues and two GPs where NGOs were not working. Thus, in each district, I undertook eight case-studies at the GP level, totalling sixteen across the two districts.

Further details on the selected NGOs are provided in chapter 6. In-depth information in relation to legislative constituencies and the relevant mandals / taluks is provided in chapter 5.

The intermediate tier or taluk in Karnataka is larger than its equivalent in Andhra Pradesh - the mandal. A mandal is approximately one-third the size of a taluk in Karnataka. Whereas one legislative constituency can overlap with one taluk in Karnataka, more than one mandal is subsumed within a legislative constituency in Andhra Pradesh. The choice of mandals within a legislative constituency was made with two points in mind – no atypical cases and proximity to the state border. In mandals where the study-NGOs worked, I selected the mandal in which they had worked the longest on PRI-related issues.
I used purposive sampling to select the sixteen GPs. Within each legislative constituency, I selected one NGO-operational GP which was remote and one which was non-remote and the same criterion was used for the two GPs where the study-NGOs did not work. Instead of defining ‘remoteness’ as distance from the intermediate tier (taluk or mandal) headquarters, I used the criteria suggested by local informants – poor access to the GP headquarter village – meaning, limited transport facilities and interior location. This meant that even GPs that were physically quite far from the intermediate tier headquarters, but were situated on a main road and had good transport facilities, qualified as non-remote. GPs where the grassroots-NGOs worked were chosen on the following additional criteria: coverage within habitations of the GP and number of years they had been working on PRI issues in that GP.

**Figure 2.1: GP Sampling Approach**

Within each GP, where possible, I selected a maximum of four multi-caste habitations based on remoteness and size. So aside from the main big habitation or GP headquarter village, I studied one big remote habitation, one small remote habitation and one small non-remote habitation. This helped to ensure that findings were fairly

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52 Although critics argue that non-random sampling of cases can lead to ‘selection bias’ (King et al., 1994), scholars like Ragin explain that even random sampling is not impervious to human error (2004). All GPs that were selected were multi-caste, had a significant proportion of poor people and were located close to the state border.

53 I wanted to examine whether remoteness of the GP was a key factor that shaped the experiences of the poor. A potential list was drawn up in conjunction with senior staff of each NGO. Final decisions were made after visits to the ‘candidate’ GPs and discussions with key informants at the intermediate tier.

54 Interior means - away from a main road or away from a big well-equipped settlement.

55 The size of an average GP in Andhra Pradesh is smaller than that in Karnataka. In Anantapur, it was quite common to find GPs consisting of less than four habitations.
representative of the whole GP. In all, I studied 59 habitations within the sixteen GPs.

2.2.2.2 Habitation-Level Research Methodology and Experience

I had no field assistants, and I lived in the houses of poor people (largely SC/ST) throughout my stay. It was important to situate myself in the village, not only to get a more authentic flavour of the everyday experiences of citizens but also for reasons relating to data collection. Poor people (invariably, daily-wage labourers) would be out on work during the day, and political leaders would be accessible mostly in the late evenings and early mornings.

In NGO-operational GPs, I mainly stayed with members of the associated *sangha* (group). In GPs where they did not work, NGO staff were extremely helpful in introducing me to a base contact. These contacts would then arrange for me to stay with an appropriate person. Often, they would also escort me to other habitations, and introduce me to potential hosts and relevant contacts. In highly politicised environments, these ‘introductions’ were extremely crucial and useful in helping to build trust, and an understanding of my motives for conducting research.

Across all sixteen GPs, I used structured surveys with poor people and semi-structured interviews with key informants, some of whom were poor. The structured survey interviews also included some open-ended questions. Interviews (structured and semi-structured) were mainly conducted in the house of the interviewee. This made for a more relaxed and private interview session. In most cases, I was able to carry out *in camera* interviews, especially with male interviewees. This was extremely crucial because of the politically sensitive nature of the questions. It helped to reduce biases by opening up secure spaces for more objective replies.

In each habitation, I always started with a group discussion. It helped to give me a

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56 Except in very rare cases where it was not feasible to stay in a poor person’s house.
57 At first, most people in the habitations thought that my criterion of wanting to stay with poor people was odd, but they were more sympathetic when I explained that I wanted to have a first-hand understanding of poor people’s experiences.
58 Key informants included political leaders, *sangha* leaders, school teachers, *anganwadi* (preschool centre) teachers, dairy presidents, ration shop dealers, elected PRI functionaries, journalists, contractors, *panchayat* secretaries, bill collectors (local staff who assist *panchayat* secretaries in collection of taxes, levies and fees; associated primarily with Karnataka GPs), other government functionaries and traditional leaders.
59 There were times when people were uncomfortable or ashamed about the condition of their house, but they were more at ease once I explained that this was part of what I wanted to see and learn about.
60 On rare occasions, when cultural demands made it inappropriate for me to be alone with them, then a small child would be sent to sit with me or we would be joined by a lady of the house.
general feel of the prevailing situation and the changes over the study time-period. I asked for details about the various GP members; the benefits these members had provided; the caste break-up and number of households in each caste/religious grouping; the facilities available in the habitation and the pending needs; the nature of benefits provided by MP, MLA, intermediate panchayat and zilla panchayat (district level) members; the names of key informants and the names of the poorest people.

Once I had an initial list of key informants, I used snowball sampling to interview other informants within the habitation. In terms of identifying poor people for survey interviews, I followed a more grounded approach, which focused on foregrounding citizen's own perceptions and experiences of poverty. Before I explain the process, it helps to understand why I adopted such an approach.

There is an ongoing debate about the dimensions of poverty and the ways to 'measure' changes in poverty levels (Narayan et al., 2000; Krishna, 2004; Alkire, 2007; Sumner, 2007). Over the last decade, there has been wider acceptance of the need to adopt a more comprehensive perspective (Green, 2006; UNDP, 2006; Chambers, 2007; Harriss, 2007). These concerns are also reflected in the Indian debate on poverty issues (Jodha, 1988; Harriss et al., 1992; Radhakrishna and Ray, 2005). Furthermore, since the 1990s, the validity of the official headcount ratio or expenditure-oriented income-poverty lines and trends has been increasingly contested (Deaton and Kozel, 2005; Reddy, 2007). It is also argued that the use of state-specific poverty lines has made it hard to make robust comparisons across states (Patnaik, 2007).

So, in this thesis, I have concentrated on using Human Development Index (HDI) indicators for inter and intra-state (district only) comparisons. Although HDI has its own limitations, it provides for a more comprehensive and reliable assessment. At the grassroots, there is no HDI index available for GP or habitation-level comparisons. At these levels, the official tool for identifying poor households is the BPL (Below Poverty Line) list. However, during preliminary fieldwork, I was often told that the official list was not wholly reliable. In addition, the first phase of fieldwork had underlined that people

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61 MP stands for Member of Parliament. These central government ministers are directly elected from single-member territorial constituencies for a five year term. Kolar and Anantapur districts have two MPs each.

62 It refers to the proportion of the population below the poverty line. These ratios are generated through quinquennial household surveys. Broadly speaking, the headcount ratios indicate that since the early 1990s, there is sustained poverty decline across most states and India as a whole (Government of India, 2007b).

63 This was borne out during the main period of fieldwork. Some households, which were worse-off than most other households in the habitation, were not listed as BPL households. These households were identified as 'very poor' by the villagers themselves.
living in poverty experienced multiple forms of deprivation. That phase had also highlighted that some of these experiences were closely connected to the local context. So, in order to accurately identify poor people for survey interviews, I decided to consult with citizens themselves. This is not the first study to have placed value on the perceptions of citizens in relation to poverty issues. Others too have used this approach (Jodha, 1988; Narayan et al., 2000; Hargreaves et al., 2007).

When selecting poor respondents for survey interviews, I followed a three-stage strategy. I would begin by collecting information from a general group discussion about a potential list of interviewees. I would triangulate this information with key informants from both the well-off and poor categories. Finally, I would do a round of the habitation and gauge their situation for myself. This information, in tandem with research criteria, helped to draw up the final list of respondents.64

In each GP, I conducted survey interviews with 20 poor respondents across a maximum of four habitations, covering roughly equal numbers of men and women.65 In GPs where the NGOs worked, I administered these surveys to both sangha (associated with the study-NGO) and non-sangha individuals. In total, I conducted 320 surveys across the sixteen GPs.66 On average, survey interviews lasted about 45 minutes, which included the time it took to introduce myself, explain the research, assure confidentiality, and secure their informed consent. In spite of their extremely busy schedules, most poor people were fairly open to being interviewed.

In addition to the survey interviews, I also interviewed a sizeable number of key informants using a semi-structured interview format. Some of these interviews were more in-depth (varying from an hour to a few hours), and others were much less detailed. Some included oral-histories, and others focused on more general impressions and experiences. The large number of semi-structured interviews that I conducted helped to triangulate (compare and link different perspectives and narratives) responses and minimise biases.

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64 The criteria included: ensuring a rough balance between male and female respondents, including a mix of caste/religious groupings, and interviewing only those citizens who had lived in the habitation for a reasonable length of time (especially as some of the questions related to change over time).
65 On average, this worked out to four to six respondents per habitation.
66 The break-up is as follows: Scheduled Caste – 147 respondents, Scheduled Tribes – 39 respondents, Other Backward Classes [OBCs refers to traditionally marginalised groups having access to reservations (aside from SC/STs), includes Muslims in Karnataka] – 107 respondents and Other Castes/Religious Groupings (aside from SCs, STs and OBCs) – 27 respondents. In terms of main occupation of the survey respondents, the top three categories were: agricultural labourers (56 percent), self-employed in non-agricultural work (17 percent), and unable to do work because of various physical disabilities (13 percent). In terms of dry land ownership, the break-up is as follows: landless (40 percent), less than one acre (12 percent), between one and two acres (28 percent), above two till five acres (20 percent), and above 6 acres (1 percent).
Table 2.3: GP-wise summary of semi-structured interviews and group discussions (GDs)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of GP</th>
<th>No. of GP</th>
<th>Elected Male representatives</th>
<th>Elected Female representatives</th>
<th>Knowledgeable Informant Male**</th>
<th>Knowledgeable Informant Female**</th>
<th>Panchayat Secretary (all male)</th>
<th>Bill Collector (all male)</th>
<th>Total semi-structured interviews</th>
<th>Total GDs ****</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shastripalli</td>
<td>GP 1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adavipalli</td>
<td>GP 2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guttapalli</td>
<td>GP 3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donnapalli</td>
<td>GP 4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gumpalli</td>
<td>GP 5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thathpalli</td>
<td>GP 6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttapalli</td>
<td>GP 7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chowdpalli</td>
<td>GP 8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Beedpalli</td>
<td>GP 9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turpalli</td>
<td>GP 10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandrapalli</td>
<td>GP 11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangapalli</td>
<td>GP 12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gopipalli</td>
<td>GP 13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kokanpalli</td>
<td>GP 14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thimmirpalli</td>
<td>GP 15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rampalli</td>
<td>GP 16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>102</strong></td>
<td><strong>44</strong></td>
<td><strong>174</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total:366</strong></td>
<td><strong>81</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Key informants at the GP level are made up of elected representatives, knowledgeable informants and local officials. The panchayat secretary is a government official attached to the gram panchayat. The jurisdiction, role and responsibilities of these secretaries vary across different states. ** Includes interviews with sangha functionaries. ***Caste-wise break-up of semi-structured interviews: Gen:76; BC:154; SC:74; ST:29; Muslim:27; DK NS:6 (Gen: General implying ‘forward’ castes that are generally not eligible for reservation benefits (varies across the two states). BC: Backward Castes, SC: Scheduled Castes, ST – Scheduled Tribes, DK NS – Don't Know Not Sure). **** Includes discussions with sangha members in sangha meetings, and non-sangha members in micro-credit forums.
Table 2.3 provides a GP-wise listing of semi-structured interviews (totalling 366\textsuperscript{67}) and group discussions. In order to preserve confidentiality and protect the views of interviewees, I have withheld their identities and locations. Although I have anonymised identities, I have provided fictitious names for the NGOs, legislative constituencies, GPs, and some individuals.

Since I was based in the habitation, I was also able to have many informal conversations with a range of people. Some of these informal dialogues provided key insights. In addition, aside from interviews and group discussions, the stay in the habitation provided a few opportunities to observe gram sabhas\textsuperscript{68} in action, the conduct of gram panchayat meetings, and the level of discussion in sangha and non-sangha forums. It also gave me a practical insight into the power dynamics that characterise formal and informal interactions between government functionaries, frontline workers associated with NGOs, traditional village leaders, local political leaders and the poor.

During this phase, I also conducted some semi-structured interviews with key informants located at the sub-district level, alongside interviews with frontline and senior staff associated with the NGOs that I was examining. Where possible, I also collected secondary literature from these sources. In addition, NGO-related secondary material was accessed from other sources, like donor NGOs, and from monographs and articles available in the public domain.

2.2.2.3 Challenges and Limitations associated with Fieldwork-related Research

It was not always smooth sailing in terms of research-related activities. In some habitations, there were times when it was difficult to track down key informants or survey respondents. At other times, the interview process was hampered by time constraints, power cuts or inquisitive family members.

In general, there was generous cooperation from the interviewees, but there were some instances when people were suspicious about participating or unsure about responding. Some respondents gave ‘politically correct’ answers, or under-reported, or made inflated claims. Others were hesitant about assurances of confidentiality, or became disinterested once they realised that there was nothing in it for them. In some instances, my interviews built up an unwarranted sense of expectation in the minds of

\textsuperscript{67} This total does not include less detailed interviews.

\textsuperscript{68} In practice, gram sabhas (GSs) are seldom allowed to play much of a role, but in theory, it is an assembly of all registered village voters, held at least twice a year to discuss and review village development programmes, reports and accounts; select beneficiaries for schemes transferred to PRIs; formulate and review plans for local improvements, economic development and social justice.
poor people, although I had explained that there was nothing concrete to gain from the experience.

Some of the respondents, like well-known political leaders or heads of NGOs, were ‘seasoned’ interviewees. In order to get reliable data, I had to be careful about how I worded my questions and steered the course of the interview. I also had to factor in the positionality of interviewees themselves. So, to reduce biases, I informally ascertained the political leanings and reliability of potential interviewees (wherever possible). To minimise ‘recall’ related biases, I provided a point of reference or memory-aid by mentioning a significant event or individual from the particular period or year.

As the research progressed, I also realised that at times it was difficult to find ‘untouched’ GPs - which had no previous experience with NGOs and which fitted the stringent research criteria of - GPs where no NGOs worked. More often than not, another NGO was working in just one of the habitations or a small selection of habitations in the GP, or had worked in a few habitations in the past. In such cases, I only selected GPs where there was minimal NGO presence and always ensured that the other NGO in question was not involved in PRI-related advocacy.

Government staff and elected functionaries at the GP level were often reticent about sharing minutes, audit reports, baseline data, muster rolls and financial information in relation to PRIs. In many cases, the problem of paucity of information was compounded by the fact that the available material was outdated, missing, ‘lost’, inaccurate, doctored, inconsistent, insufficient or incomplete. So, I was cautious in my use of secondary sources of information. These limitations reinforced the importance of conducting semi-structured interviews. Similarly, obtaining secondary sources of information from the NGOs under study had to be carefully negotiated, and was often contingent on the quality of my personal rapport with senior staff.

I was also aware that my own positionality of being a young, urban, middle-class, educated, married Indian woman, singly researching politically-sensitive issues, would affect the research process. At the same time, being an ‘urban woman student’ had its advantages at the habitation level, in that it had afforded greater in camera access to other women while also allowing fairly open access to interviews with men.

Even though I stressed my ‘independent’ status, at times, I found it hard to convince people that I was not working on behalf of the government or an NGO. In the case of Kolar, my familiarity with the socio-political context and past association with one of the
study-NGOs had its own pros and cons. In order to minimise biases, I selected a different legislative constituency to carry out fieldwork from the one I had worked in intensively as an employee. However, even in the ‘alternative’ constituency there were times when I was ‘automatically’ associated with the NGO, even though I made it clear that I was an independent researcher. In some cases, this association was not a problem as it increased access to and acceptance from respondents. At other times the politically-charged environment meant that it led to misunderstanding and suspicion. On the positive side, my previous grassroots work-experience with this NGO had deepened my understanding of local dynamics and disparities, and also equipped me with the local language skills (Telugu).

I was also aware that my own values, preconceptions, assumptions and abilities could colour the nature and conduct of research. In particular, my “interpretation” of data relating to people’s perception on issues relating to poverty, politics and change was not “untainted” by my own “theoretical, political and personal concerns” (Booth et al., 2006: 3). These ‘concerns’ had the potential to both enrich and bias findings, and so it was often hard to strike the right balance.

Kothari argues that being “objective” in social-science research should not be equated to being “value-free” but should instead be indicative of the “relevance and criticality of problems taken up for research” (2000: 123). Theoretically and methodologically I have been influenced by feminist and post-colonial perspectives. I acknowledge that these “predispositions to select, interpret and frame” also influenced the research process as a whole (Chambers, 2005: 83). Moreover, fieldwork was both physically and mentally gruelling, and this in turn influenced the quality and conduct of interviews.

Lastly, since I have used purposive sampling, the findings from this study cannot be generalised to the state level. However, the systematic selection of case-studies, coupled with an awareness of the associated limitations and biases has helped to develop reasonably robust comparisons. Moreover, the comprehensive data-set provides sufficient opportunity to trace patterns and trends across these sixteen case-studies, and generate relevant insights.

2.2.3 The Follow-up Stage of Fieldwork and Iterative Analysis: Importance and Challenges

It was very useful to have the option of a last phase of fieldwork because it provided an opportunity to discuss some of the emerging ideas and findings with key informants in the field, and at higher levels, while also allowing time to tie-up loose ends.
In this last phase of five months, from end June to early November 2006, I completed the grassroots-level fieldwork, and the pending interviews with NGO staff and key informants at the sub-district tier. The main problem I faced in the field was the rampant spread of a mosquito-borne viral fever called *chikunguniya*, which slowed down progress to some extent.

Subsequently, I conducted interviews with key informants (government personnel, academic scholars, civic activists and development professionals) at district, state and national tiers. The intention was to gain an insight into their differing views on PRI-functioning and its impact on poor people, especially in the context of state-government policies and NGO intervention. Where possible, I also collected secondary research material from both governmental and non-governmental sources in the form of minutes, reports, manuals, articles and documents.

I then headed back to England to complete the process of data analysis and writing. The initial period was spent completing the transcription of qualitative data, and ‘cleaning’ the quantitative survey data. I learnt how to use NVIVO software for coding and analysing my qualitative data, and SPSS for running quantitative tests. Sorting through the large amount of data was both challenging and stimulating. Systematic organisation and ‘processing’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994) of data helped to keep me grounded and focused.

The use of mixed-methods helped to ‘triangulate’ data analysis. The initial focus was on identifying trends in the quantitative data, and the qualitative data was used to explain, enrich, moderate, qualify, corroborate and question some of the survey findings. At other times, both the qualitative and quantitative data provided different opportunities for exploring contradictions and complementarities. As Olsen explains, triangulation can “enrich data analysis” (Olsen, 2004: 213):

> In other words the map changes rather than getting more perfect within a single, narrow perspective. Triangulation is not primarily about accurate or unbiased measurement. It is about learning.

To test the statistical significance of findings in relation to the survey data, I carried out chi-square tests. These statistical tests are used for categorical variables. The test checks if the percentages from two or more sets of data are significantly different to each other. Statistical significance is verified by checking whether the chi-square test

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69 For example, the open-ended questions, and answers to ‘other, specify’ had to be sorted and aggregated.
70 I began with a few pre-determined codes and then expanded the list based on the patterns emerging from the data.
These tests were useful in highlighting associations and patterns between different sets of survey data.

The qualitative data helped to shed light on questions of a more interpretative nature like ‘how and why’ certain patterns applied to a set of cases, and/or attributing meanings to underlying statistical associations. At the GP level, findings from group discussions and semi-structured interviews were used to qualify the survey results and explain why certain associations occurred. These findings served to draw attention to the key factors that were associated with specific trends and patterns in the survey data. This made it possible to identify the six main factors that influenced the nature and extent of political capabilities and material benefits acquired by poor people at the interface. I was able to make this informed value judgement as these six were the ones that commonly featured as the chief factors in the semi-structured interviews. The information obtained through the interviews and discussions also informed the subjective ranking of the principal factors. Further, qualitative data helped to unpack the ways in which these factors interacted with each other in various contexts.

Data from group discussions and semi-structured interviews within GPs was also used to construct a qualitative baseline of the situation in relation to panchayats, role of NGOs and experiences of poor people in the first GP electoral term (1994-1995). This baseline was employed to analyse the nature of change over the study time-period. Information collected through participant observation was utilised to enrich and contextualise both the survey and semi-structured interview findings.

GP-level qualitative data was also useful in generating qualitative indicators of poor people’s experiences, especially in relation to acquiring political capabilities (awareness, voice and influence) and securing material benefits. In addition, the data was helpful in developing qualitative indicators for the nature of political competition; and the strategies, actions and collective strength of sangha members. These indicators informed value judgements made in relation to the qualitative aspects of political capabilities (for example, the kinds of influence that poor people had over the functioning of GPs), the ranking of GPs and the interpretation of these rankings.

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71 If the findings are significant, then it means that there is only 1 chance in 20 or a 5 percent probability that any differences found are not due to the hypothesised reason, but to some other unknown reason or reasons.

72 For example, although many of the top-performing GPs were associated with the study-NGOs, the qualitative data highlighted that in some cases it was not the NGO’s performance, as much as other factors that influenced the experiences of poor people. In another instance, this data helped to explain the variations in survey findings in relation to naming ward members in Kolar and Anantapur districts.
Findings from semi-structured interviews at the intermediate tier and above were used to provide a comprehensive insight into the functioning and impact of the study-NGOs, the dynamics within legislative constituencies, and the policies and practices of different state governments (in relation to PRIs and NGOs) within the study time-period. These insights helped to explain the trends and patterns in the quantitative data; and rank the performance of the study-NGOs, legislative constituencies and state governments.

I also compared and augmented the findings from fieldwork research by dipping into secondary sources like newspaper articles, annual reports of the four grassroots-NGOs, and documents provided by government officials, academic institutions and other NGOs. This in turn helped to draw “petite generalisations” (Stake, 1995: 20) from among the case-studies. As I began the process of detailed writing, I realised that “using writing to think” was a helpful way of structuring my thoughts and analysing data (Richardson and St.Pierre, 2005: 970). So, writing chapters was very much an iterative process. The next section provides details on the analytical framework that I used to process and examine the research findings.

2.3 Unpacking the Analytical Framework

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, this thesis uses the experiences of poor people as a lens to understand the nature of interactions at the interface of poor people, panchayats and grassroots-NGOs. It also utilises these experiences to assess the ways and the extent to which the political opportunity space and grassroots-NGO interventions in relation to panchayats are beneficial for poor people, in terms of the expansion of their political capabilities and the acquisition of material benefits. This section presents details of a framework which enables such an assessment, and which helps to shed light on the interactions. The first two sub-sections discuss the four components of the framework (relating to political opportunity spaces, NGO interventions, political capabilities and material benefits) and highlight the links between them, and the third sub-section explains the way in which the framework is used to analyse data.

2.3.1 PRI-related Political Opportunity Spaces and NGO Interventions

Political Opportunity Spaces
As explained in the previous chapter, I build on DeSouza’s metaphor of ‘opportunity space’ to define ‘political opportunity space’ as the environment created by elements (funds, functions, functionaries; and mechanisms in relation to representation,
participation, transparency and accountability) of the state government’s panchayat-related legislation, policies and practices. These different elements can constrain or promote the engagement of citizens with panchayat institutions.

The imagery of space helps to draw attention to the bounded and dynamic nature (Lefebvre, 1991; Cornwall and Coelho, 2006) of these arenas of participation and contestation. DeSouza argues that these spaces “have created considerable democratic potential” (1999: 143) because the legal structure of PRIs “represents a political opportunity in which representative parliamentary democracy is combined with direct democracy” (2002: 382).

However, in India, state governments have substantial leverage in terms of determining the content and extent of devolution. Governments can provide an enabling environment that “invite(s) action by facilitating access,” and they “can also provoke action by producing unwanted policies” (Kriesi et al. 1995 in Meyer, 2004: 131), or limiting devolution (Special Correspondent, 2004; Staff Reporter, 2006a). These diverse political opportunities offered under different PRI institutional-contexts, can open up ‘new democratic spaces’ (Cornwall, 2004a) that can potentially be harnessed by marginalised citizens for both the expansion of political capabilities and the acquisition of material benefits.

Thus, the concept of ‘political opportunity space’ helps to direct attention to the mobilising potential of PRIs. It also highlights the ‘malleable’ nature of this space. The form and shape of the space can be influenced by the actions of different actors, both within state government and at the grassroots73. In turn, this draws attention to power-relations that “shape” and “pervade” the space (Cornwall, 2002: 8)74.

Although the ‘political opportunities’ (Eisinger, 1973; Tilly, 1978; Tarrow, 1998) literature has evolved largely in relation to social movements, I use the concept in relation to NGOs. Political opportunity space has the potential to influence the interventions of NGOs because the “goals, strategies and tactics” that are deployed are not chosen in a “vacuum” (Meyer, 2004: 127).

73 The use of ‘political space’ frameworks has grown significantly over the last decade (Webster and Engberg-Pedersen, 2002; Cornwall, 2004b; Cornwall and Coelho, 2006). Although perspectives vary among the scholars, they place a similar emphasis on the dynamics of the political arena.
74 For social theorists like Foucault and Bourdieu, “the concept of power and the concept of space are deeply linked” (Gaventa, 2006a: 26).
NGO interventions

NGO interventions in relation to panchayats can take different forms. Some NGOs build the knowledge and skills of elected panchayat functionaries (especially those from marginalised backgrounds) and/or citizens, some are engaged in mobilising the participation of vulnerable and marginalised people, some are engaged in PRI-related policy formulation or campaign for changes in the panchayat legislation (national or state), some work on monitoring and documenting the impact and implementation of the legislation and related policies, and some work on a combination of these issues. These interventions can take place at the national, state, district, sub-district, GP or habitation levels, or at multiple levels.

In this thesis, I consider the work of four NGOs that work primarily at the grassroots and intermediate panchayat level on issues relating to panchayat advocacy. This advocacy involves organised actions that aim at enabling vulnerable and marginalised people to have an influence over the implementation of the panchayat legislation and related policies, and also over wider societal attitudes and socio-political processes. Although these NGOs also work on a variety of other fields, the focus of this study is on their interventions in relation to local government.

In order to understand and assess the nature and impact of these interventions, I examine the different means and methods that the four NGOs use to work with poor people to facilitate the expansion of political capabilities and the acquisition of material benefits. I also investigate whether the different means and methods that these NGOs adopt are influenced by the nature of political opportunity spaces. The different means that the four NGOs could adopt include expanding the political awareness of poor people; building their political, associational, organisational, networking, and leadership skills; and providing PRI-related information. They could also act as pressure groups on different tiers of local government. The methods they could use are - providing opportunities for people to form collectives; providing training, legal and material support, exposure-visits; networking with solidarity groups, and strengthening contacts with higher-level government officials and politicians.

2.3.2 PRI-related Political Capabilities and Material Benefits

Political Capabilities

The capability approach was pioneered by Amartya Sen (1989, 1992, 1999a). It is an evolving approach, which has been expanded on by other scholars (Nussbaum, 2000; Alkire, 2002; Robeyns, 2003). I use the capability approach because it allows for a multi-dimensional perspective when analysing the experiences of the poor and it also
places importance on their agency. However, like other approaches, it has its
limitations and ambiguities. Three of the criticisms levelled against Sen’s approach
are of particular relevance to my own research.

The first relates to the neglect of politics and the political. Scholars point out that Sen
paints an idealised version of democracy, which underplays the role of political power
(Stewart and Deneulin, 2002: 63-64). Corbridge argues that “Sen’s liberalism leaves
him poorly equipped to deal with questions of entrenched power and the politics of
conflict or social mobilisation” (2002: 203). He also highlights that the approach fails to
unpack the role of public “policies” and “capabilities of agencies other than private
individuals” (Ibid: 207). These are important critiques. However, “one of the chief
strengths of Sen’s approach is that it is flexible” (Clark, 2005: 5). It provides
researchers with the space to develop the capability framework, and apply it in different
ways and in diverse settings (Alkire, 2002: 8-11). This is evident in the discussions
relating to the second and third set of critiques.

The second set of critiques relate to the neglect of collective capabilities, and the purely
instrumental view of the role of groups. Some scholars argue that although groups are
acknowledged to have instrumental importance in enlarging individual capabilities, they
also have an intrinsic role, as they influence people’s choices and values (Stewart,
2005: 185). Others highlight that the capability approach primarily places emphasis on
individual capabilities and neglects the important role of collective capabilities (Ibrahim,
2006; Ballet et al., 2007). They assert that collective capabilities are different from
individual capabilities, and expand the framework by developing the concept of
collective capabilities. In this thesis, I follow Ibrahim by defining collective capabilities of
citizens as the:

(n)ewly generated capabilities attained by virtue of their engagement in a
collective action or their membership in a social network that helps them
achieve the lives they value. They are not simply the sum (or average) of
individual capabilities, but rather new capabilities that the individual alone would
neither have nor be able to achieve, if he/she did not join a collectivity…(T)here
are two main criteria that distinguish ‘collective’ capabilities from ‘individual’
capabilities. First, collective capabilities are only present through a process of
collective action. Secondly, the collectivity at large — and not simply a single
individual — can benefit from these newly generated capabilities (emphasis

75 For a review see (Clark, 2005).
76 For example, the role and capabilities of political parties that implement pro-poor policies.
77 Sen has responded to some of these critiques (Sen, 2002).
78 Stewart acknowledges that groups can have both negative and positive influences, and points
out that the capability approach differentiates between those capabilities that people have
reason to value and those they do not value.
The third set of critiques point out that Sen does not specify a unique list of capabilities (Nussbaum, 1988; Qizilbash, 1998). Sen argues that this is because the choice of capabilities is context specific, in that it “must relate to the underlying motivation of the exercise” while also “dealing with the social values involved” (in Fukuda-Parr, 2003: 305). Invariably, capabilities that are “given priority by public policy will change over time and from one community to another” (Ibid: 306). This openness has allowed many scholars to identify different lists of capabilities based on the subject and context of the research.

My thesis contributes to these three discussions by examining the role of political capabilities. As explained in section 1.2 of the first chapter, I define political capabilities as the abilities of citizens (either individually or collectively) to participate substantively (genuine, informed and effective) in the activities of formal political institutions. In order to lend focus to my research, I examine political capabilities only in relation to Panchayati Raj Institutions. These political capabilities are evaluated by examining ‘functionings’ or achievements with respect to 1) the awareness of poor people in relation to different aspects of PRI-related political participation, 2) the physical practices associated with this political participation, and 3) the effectiveness of this political participation. In other words, I assess the awareness, voice and influence of poor people.

The list of ‘valued’ achievements was delineated both by incorporating perspectives from citizens at the grassroots during the preliminary phase of fieldwork, and also by drawing on the existing literature on political participation in relation to PRIs (Alsop et al., 2000; F. Stephen and N. Rajasekaran; Mohan et al., 2004). Questions in both the survey and semi-structured interviews examined the individual and collective achievements of poor people, in relation to panchayat-related political participation:

1. Political awareness [knowledge of panchayat functions, functionaries, funding and activities]
2. Electoral practices [voting, campaigning/canvassing, contesting]
3. General political practices [contacting, petitioning, attending, deliberating, protesting]

Expanding capabilities is also argued to have both intrinsic and instrumental value. For example, acquiring the capabilities to have “improved health or knowledge” is intrinsically valuable in itself, but utilising these capabilities in turn, to secure material benefits or for “work and leisure” is also instrumentally significant (my emphasis, 79 There are very few studies that have examined political capabilities, and the definitions vary according to the context and topic of the study (Whitehead and Gray-Molina, 2003; De Herdt and Abega, 2007).
UNDP, 1990: 10-11). So, I also examine the role that the political capabilities (individual and collective) of poor people play in relation to securing material benefits.

**Material Benefits**

The material benefits that are available from *panchayats* (different tiers) include both individual and collective benefits. I primarily examine benefits that are provided by *gram panchayats*. Individual benefits include houses, pensions and daily-wage labour on various employment projects. Collective benefits include the provision of roads, potable water facilities and street lights.

I examine the different ways in which poor people acquire benefits and the nature of benefits (for instance, are they largely individual or collective) that they acquire at the interface. The different ways could include directly voicing their demands (for instance, contacting individuals, making an application in the *gram sabha* or undertaking protests) or indirectly through the demands and recommendations of others (for instance, when the benefit is a collective service demanded by the non-poor or other sections amongst the poor). I also consider the extent to which the success of these endeavours is influenced by the nature of political opportunity spaces (for example, the kind of benefits that are under the purview of *panchayats* in the two states) and NGO interventions (for example, the extent to which NGOs organise and mobilise poor people to make demands on *panchayats*).

In Figure 2.2, I provide a schematic of the framework. The figure highlights the connections between the four components that are examined in the thesis – the ways and the extent to which the nature of political opportunity spaces and the nature of PRI-related NGO interventions benefit poor people, in terms of the expansion of political capabilities and the acquisition of material benefits. In the next sub-section, I explain how the framework is used to analyse the data.

**Figure 2.2: Sketch of Analytical Framework**

![Diagram of Analytical Framework]

- Nature of Political Opportunity Spaces
- Nature of NGO interventions in relation to PRIs
- Expanding Political Capabilities of poor people in relation to political participation
- Enabling poor people to Secure Material Benefits
2.3.3 Using the Analytical Framework

Table 2.4 provides a description of the connections between the four components of the analytical framework. The first column lists the different dimensions of political opportunity spaces. The second column describes the various means and methods that are employed by NGOs to work on each of these dimensions. The next column describes the process of the expansion of political capabilities from awareness to voice to influence, with respect to each of the dimensions and the interventions of the NGO. The last column indicates whether poor people are able to secure material benefits in relation to these dimensions (for instance, the nature of devolution in relation to funds opens up possibilities for poor people to acquire individual and/or collective material benefits), NGO interventions (for example, the provision of information in relation to various material benefits on offer can help poor people make informed demands about these benefits), and the expansion of political capabilities [for example, various kinds of ‘voice’ (contacting, petitioning and protesting) can help poor people make individual and collective demands in relation to material benefits].

Since I have discussed the individual components in the previous two sub-sections, in this sub-section, I mainly provide details on my interpretation of the terms ‘awareness, voice and influence’ in relation to political capabilities. This graded understanding of the expansion of political capabilities has been synthesised from a framework introduced by Goetz and Gaventa (2001) to link citizen voice and responsive government, and expanded on by Goetz to capture political effectiveness of citizens (2003).

Although I draw on these authors’ frameworks, I have modified and extended them in relation to the research questions. Most importantly, the definitions I use for the ‘levels’ are different from those used by them. As discussed earlier (section 2.3.2), in relation to political capabilities, I examine the ways, and the extent to which poor people are able to participate substantively in the activities of panchayats. So, my definitions are developed with these considerations in mind.

1. **Awareness** – in relation to different aspects of panchayat-related political participation - implies knowing or being aware about panchayat-related funds, functions, functionaries, activities; and opportunities to participate or make a choice in relation to PRIs. For example, an opportunity provided through affirmative provisions might remain un-utilised if poor people are not aware of its existence. Being aware does not imply that individuals have ‘complete’ knowledge or are able to make independent decisions, but it indicates that they have enough awareness to contemplate utilising options. However, poor people can have awareness but have no (or limited) voice. This leads us to the next stage.
Table 2.4: Connections between Components of Analytical Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Political Opportunity Spaces</th>
<th>Nature of NGO Interventions in relation to <em>panchayats</em> – Means and Methods</th>
<th>EXPANSION OF POLITICAL CAPABILITIES OF POOR PEOPLE AT THE INTERFACE OF NGOs AND PRIs</th>
<th>Material Benefits secured by Poor People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Electoral Criteria and Practices</td>
<td>Building political, associational, organisational, networking and leadership skills; providing information about contestants, reservations, booths, election dates, election procedures and practices; - through meetings, trainings, exposure-visits, distribution of pamphlets, songs/staging skits/screening films</td>
<td>Being aware about electoral procedures</td>
<td>Influencing conduct and outcome of elections; influencing others to vote/campaign or contest in elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of devolution of funds, functions and functionaries</td>
<td>Building political, associational, organisational, networking and collective-action skills; providing information about PRI-related funds, functions, functionaries, activities; and supporting poor people’s efforts to secure benefits and information - through meetings, trainings, pamphlets, accompanying them to <em>panchayat</em> or government offices, songs/staging skits/screening films</td>
<td>Being aware of PRI funds, functions, functionaries, activities; and opportunities to contact/petition government officials and elected functionaries</td>
<td>Influencing actions and decisions of citizens, officials, leaders and/or elected functionaries; contacting/petitioning/negotiating on behalf of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of provisions and procedures in relation to <em>gram sabhas</em> (GSs)</td>
<td>Building political skills; providing information about dates of <em>gram sabha</em> (GS), procedures to be followed, purpose of GS, GP-related budget and financial allocations, and criteria and procedures for distribution and implementation of material benefits - through meetings, trainings, pamphlets, songs/staging skits/screening films</td>
<td>Being aware of provisions (financial allocations, criteria and procedures for distribution and implementation), procedures, and opportunities to attend GSs</td>
<td>Influencing actions and decisions of citizens, officials, leaders and/or elected functionaries; influencing others to attend; influencing allocation and implementation decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of provisions &amp; procedures for transparency and accountability</td>
<td>Building political, associational, organisational, networking and collective-action skills; providing support and information for carrying out strikes and placing official complaints - through meetings, legal aid, networking with solidarity groups, accompanying citizens to PRI-related offices</td>
<td>Being aware about procedures and provisions to protest, and to hold officials and elected functionaries to account</td>
<td>Influencing actions and decisions of citizens, officials, leaders and/or elected functionaries; protesting on behalf of others in support of others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. **Voice** - physical practices associated with this political participation - implies articulating awareness. It involves ‘physically’ exercising awareness in relation to *panchayats*. In other words, awareness is translated into a ‘tangible’ impact, like voting, contacting, or protesting. It can also include informal, subtle and largely intangible aspects like negotiating, manipulating and resisting; but my focus has largely been on tangible aspects.

3. **Influence** - the effectiveness of this political participation - implies assessing whether the active utilisation of voice has helped to shape the dynamics within the GP or the decisions and practices of individuals (citizens, elected functionaries, leaders and officials) and groups. For poor people, the outcome of a more active or deliberate utilisation of voice can range from little or no influence to moderate or substantive influence over the dynamics and functioning of *panchayats*. Influence can be exerted by both individuals and collectives. For example, individual poor people can influence other voters to vote in favour of a particular individual or party in *panchayat* elections. In other instances, poor people can exert influence by collectively pressurising an elected functionary to meet their demands in relation to individual and collective material benefits. In the thesis, influence is measured by developing qualitative indicators with respect to impact over electoral outcomes and the general functioning of PRIs (relating to improved transparency, accountability, conduct of *panchayat* forums, attendance of staff, and distribution and implementation of material benefits).

The distinctions between awareness, voice and influence “are designed to emphasise that the creation of opportunities” does not automatically lead to substantive participation (Goetz and Gaventa, 2001: 9). The three parts are not meant to be rigid or water-tight containers but are crafted to provide analytical clarity. Each level is a continuum. For example, the extent of poor people’s awareness can range from basic knowledge to a more sophisticated understanding of the opportunities, roles and responsibilities in relation to *panchayats*. Similarly, ‘voice’ can range from relatively less active or non-confrontational (voting, contacting) forms to more active or confrontational (campaigning, protesting) activities.

The process is also not meant to imply linearity but is ‘circular’, with increased influence providing better or new awareness, voice and influence. It also helps to highlight that the “learning phase” takes time (Vyasulu, 2002: 2871).

**2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided details about the methodology that has been employed during fieldwork, analysis and writing. It has also described the analytical framework

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80. For example, in relation to electoral outcomes, I examine whether and to what extent poor people are able to elect individuals who come from vulnerable and marginalised backgrounds, or who support the issues and demands of the poor. In relation to the general functioning of *panchayats*, I assess how the actions and decisions of poor people have improved the conduct of council meetings and village assemblies. Discussed in more detail in chapter 4, section 4.5.1.
and drawn out the links between the various components. In the next chapter, I examine some of the key debates that speak to this research topic, and provide an overview of the relationship between politics, *panchayats* and NGOs in India.
Chapter 3

NGOS, PANCHAYATS AND POLITICS IN INDIA:
SITUATING THE POLITICAL

“As a common signifier of the non-political domain of civil society, NGOs have over the past twenty years ended up playing a central, if indirect, role in India’s politics.” (Jenkins, forthcoming)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter argues that the role, accomplishments and limitations of NGOs and panchayats during the study time-period are bound-up with the changing nature of Indian politics at the national and state levels. Understanding these inter-relationships requires an examination of evolving State-society relationships in post-colonial India. The chapter is divided into four sections. Section 3.2 elaborates on some of the key theoretical debates that frame the discussion of this chapter and the thesis. Section 3.3 unpacks the evolution of NGOs and panchayats by examining the iterative nature of politics and State-society relationships in post-colonial India. Section 3.4 provides an overview of the functioning and impact of PRIs, after 1993. The final section (3.5) sums up the key arguments of the chapter.

3.2 Overarching Debates

I begin by providing a contextual background to these debates. This is followed by two more sub-sections that examine the debates relating to NGOs, democracy and decentralisation.

3.2.1 Contextualising the Debates

In the face of much sentiment against the centralised State, the 1980s marked the rise of neo-liberal thinking, which proclaimed the efficiencies of the market, the need for ‘rolling back the State’, and implementing Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). Decentralisation was advocated as an institutional means of adapting service delivery to local diversity, and hence improving efficiency and effectiveness.

By the end of the 1980s, the limited success of SAPs, and the rise of popular movements and grassroots organisations, helped to turn the “spotlight” on “civil society”\(^{81}\) as a counterweight to the “authoritarian excesses” of the State, and a site for

\(^{81}\) Civil society is an amorphous and much contested concept. In this thesis, following Manor et. al., it is understood to be the intermediate associational realm situated between the State and the household; and is made up of organised groups or associations with significant autonomy from the State, which are formed voluntarily by members of society to protect or extend their interests, values and identities (1999).
people-centred development (Howell and Pearce, 2001: 90). In its new\textsuperscript{82} avatar, civil society was often presented as an apolitical technical fix that stood apart from the State and market.

Further, in the dominant developmental discourse, civil society ended up being reduced to NGOs (Howell and Pearce, 2001: 91). In turn, NGOs were viewed as ‘doing good’ (Fisher, 1997), having a comparative advantage over States, and being an effective medium for ‘building’ social capital, ‘promoting’ democracy and ‘delivering’ services at the grassroots. Multilateral institutions, donor agencies and individual States channelled increasing sums of aid (accompanied by conditionalities) through these institutions. This instrumental and normative bias helped to fuel the exponential rise of the NGOs in the 1990s. It also attracted much criticism, especially with respect to the ‘depoliticising’ tendencies of the development paradigm (Ferguson, 1994; Harriss, 2001a). However, as will be discussed in the next sub-section, these critiques have their own shortcomings.

In the face of continuing problems, the neo-liberal framework underwent some changes in the 1990s. This involved calls for ‘bringing the State back in’ (World Bank, 1997), and the shift was couched in the vocabulary of ‘participation’, ‘decentralisation’, ‘community’ and ‘empowerment’. Poor people were positioned as the “main actors in the fights against poverty” (World Bank, 2000/2001: 12), and were expected to draw support from community networks to enhance their access to markets.

This market-friendly interpretation reduced citizens to customers or clients (Cornwall, 2000; Mohan and Stokke, 2000), and communities to user-groups or stakeholder-committees (Manor, 2004b). It also encouraged a new version of clientelistic politics at the grassroots (Kakarala, 2004: 31). Thus, “participation” meant that citizens could be involved in “programme implementation but not in policy design” and that citizenship itself “cease(d) to mean the ‘right to have rights’ and instead (became) the right to receive targeted subsidies from government poverty-reduction programmes” (Bebbington et al., 2008: 20, quoting Dagnino).

Over time, these criticisms have helped to refocus efforts on working with the State. NGOs, donors and multilateral institutions are now increasingly aiming for a more “explicit engagement with the ‘governmental’ in development policy” (Lewis and Opoku-Mensah, 2006: 667).

\textsuperscript{82} The idea of ‘civil society’ is not a recent addition to academic thinking. For a critique of the dominant apolitical interpretation see Chandhoke (2003).
3.2.2 NGOs

An important criticism levelled against NGOs\textsuperscript{83} is that instead of providing an ‘alternative’ approach, their policies and activities have been dictated by the mainstream neo-liberal agenda (Tandon, 1996; Manji and Coill, 2002). In particular, a steady stream of literature has critiqued their ‘depoliticised’ approach to development (Ferguson, 1994; Stewart, 1997; Tvedt, 1998; Chandhoke, 2003). However, much of this literature ignores differences across and within NGOs, and often paints a generalised and simplistic picture of NGO and donor agendas\textsuperscript{84}.

These generalisations serve to hide the fluid, complex, diverse and often contradictory nature of NGO relationships and processes (Wallace et al., 2006). They neglect the influence and interplay of “multiple” discourses on the agency of NGOs, and also ignore the vernacular interpretation of these discourses (Hilhorst, 2003: 9-10). More importantly, they fail to highlight the ways in which some NGOs are resisting pressures (Townsend et al., 2004) or are finding new means of challenging the prevailing orthodoxy (Chhotray, 2008).

They overlook the efforts of NGOs that have chosen to work on more systemic, struggle-based issues. This neglect reflects the ‘instrumental’ bias that pervades the dominant discourse on NGOs. Even though the literature extols the democratising virtues of NGOs, few analysts have examined whether NGOs have contributed to political change and democratising processes (Fisher, 1997: 444). Instead, the emphasis is largely limited to evaluating their role in relation to socio-economic change (Devine, 2006: 77). Much of the donor funding is channelled towards ‘service-delivery’ or ‘operational’ NGOs as opposed to ‘advocacy’ NGOs. This false dichotomy helps to perpetuate the myth that ‘operational’ NGOs are apolitical. In reality, although many NGOs work primarily on aspects of ‘service-delivery’, some NGOs have combined these initiatives with efforts to engage with the political – both in terms of formal politics and also in terms of challenging unequal power relationships.

There have been some attempts to examine the inter-relationships between NGOs and politics (Clarke, 1995; Ndegwa, 1996; Hilhorst, 2003; Devine, 2006; Feher, 2007), and also NGOs and local government (Engberg-Pedersen, 2002; Ulvila and Hossain, 2002; Estrella and Iszatt, 2004). These discussions highlight the debates that surround the

\textsuperscript{83} NGOs are not a new phenomenon. For a more detailed discussion on the evolution of the NGO universe and its association with ‘development’ see (Edwards and Hulme, 1992; Lewis, 2005; Bebbington et al., 2008).

\textsuperscript{84} For a detailed critique, see (Hamilton and Shutt, 2008).
role and impact of NGOs in influencing legislation, public policy and democratisation. They also help to underscore the “political nature of NGO work” and bring out the fact that NGOs are “not just the product of interrelating international and national developments and politics, they also play a role in such politics” (Hilhorst, 2003: 4). This perspective has gained momentum in more recent years with the rise of advocacy and rights-based approaches (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Eade, 2002; VeneKlasen et al., 2004; Chapman et al., 2005; Parks, 2008). These approaches also reflect the shift in donor perceptions - in terms of recognising the limitations of NGOs, grasping the advantages of working with governments, and acknowledging the importance of adopting a more political stance.

At the same time, the focus of multilateral institutions and donor agencies over the last decade has widened to include a more explicit focus on “poverty reduction and new security agendas” (Bebbington et al., 2008: 15). In turn, the expanding poverty reduction agenda has meant that “as aid becomes far more oriented to measurable poverty reduction, it has led NGOs away from relations with social movements, and towards more narrowly drawn specific targeted development interventions” (Ibid: 16). This marginalisation of their political role is a serious drawback because NGOs have not only initiated and sustained social movements, but have also doubled as the “institutional vehicles that articulate protest and collective action” (Fisher, 1997: 451).

Aside from a critical assessment of the nature of interventions undertaken by NGOs, the literature also highlights a critique of the academic research that examines the role and relevance of NGOs. It is argued that academic research on NGOs often involves an “excessive emphasis on technical/organisational issues and a lack of theoretical-contextual analysis” (Lewis and Opoku-Mensah, 2006: 670). Although some studies have attempted to break the mould (Hilhorst, 2003; Bebbington et al., 2008), these examples remain few and far between.

3.2.3 Democracy and Decentralisation

Historically, the concept of democracy has emerged out of “social struggles” which has helped to “bestow an aura of legitimacy” (Held, 1987: 1) on it. Thus, democratic politics has given rise to democratic institutions (amongst others, the institutions of free
elections, free speech, free press, free organisation and assembly, and political and civil rights protected by the rule of law); and paradoxically it is the rise of these institutions that has curtailed the element of contestation associated with democratic politics (Luckham et al., 2003).

When compared to Athenian democracy, liberal representative democracy favoured institutions, individual rights and the passivity of citizens. However, developments in the twentieth century, especially in relation to grassroots mobilisation, have opened up spaces for the amalgam of popular politics and representative institutions. This has helped to recast the role of citizens as more active participants in the democratic process, with a claim on not just political, but also social and economic entitlements (ibid).

However, often, there is little opportunity for the groundswell of democratic politics because of ‘democratic deficits’ like non-transparent voting practices, non-accountable bureaucracies and under-representation of the minorities (Beetham, 1994). In countries like India, this is accentuated at the grassroots. Here, an often hierarchical local environment coupled with the weight of reciprocal ties and the tussle of multiple identities has meant that people living in poverty are in an inherently disadvantaged position to participate in the democratic process. So, substantive democracy with its emphasis on a redistribution of power (Kaldor and Vejvoda, 1997), tolerance and greater citizen engagement has been harder to achieve even in countries like India, which are celebrated for the relative resilience and dynamism of their formal institutions and procedures (Jayal, 2001).

Thus, scholars have argued for a ‘deepening’ of democracy by focusing on inclusive, deliberative and participatory processes (Heller, 2001; Avritzer, 2002; Fung and Wright, 2003; Gaventa, 2006b). This requires working on both sides of the equation – “strengthening the processes of citizen participation…(and) strengthening the accountability and responsiveness of (formal democratic) institutions and (associated) policies“ (Gaventa, 2001: 2). However, some analysts contend that the ‘deepening democracy’ literature often “assumes” that individuals are “equally endowed with the basic opportunity to associate,” and equipped with the necessary skills in relation to political activities (Chaudhuri and Heller, 2003: 1-2).

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87 Luckham et. al. argue that democratic institutions mirror formal or procedural democracy while democratic politics “parallels” substantive democracy that enables more citizen involvement (2003: 19).

88 Those in favour of substantive democracy argue that formal institutions and procedures are necessary but insufficient to bring about democratic outcomes.
Further, the question of whether formal democracy can contribute to altering embedded power relationships and reducing socio-economic disparities is highly contested and the debate is inconclusive (Almond and Verba, 1963; Robinson and White, 1998; Sen, 1999a; Przeworski et al., 2000; Leftwich, 2005). For developing countries, democracy can be a time-consuming and inefficient path to follow, it can foster particularistic pressures and lead to demand overload. However, the alternatives under authoritarian or more centralised rule can imply a severe curtailment of freedoms and rights, with no guarantees that redistribution will favour the marginalised. Scholars argue that in spite of democracy’s limitations, the opportunities that it provides for challenging the authority of regimes in power through “cohesive competitive politics,” coupled with the “space” that it affords “for people to organise within civil society” could, potentially, be translated into real gains for poor people (Moore and Putzel, 1999: 13).

Democracies can also enhance the potential for decentralisation to bring about change in the lives of its citizens (Manor, 1999). Decentralisation is generally understood to mean a transfer of power and resources away from a central/national authority to lower levels in a territorial hierarchy (Smith, 1985). It “is by definition political” as it “affects the relative power of different social classes or groups” (Schonwalder, 1997: 758). It can be used to achieve objectives that lie between the extremes of genuine empowerment and that of partisan advantage (Manor, 1999).

Much of the early literature on decentralisation reflected the neo-liberal ‘instrumentalist’ stance. It was argued that decentralisation can “accelerate the pace and spread the benefits of growth... and use scarce resources more efficiently to promote development” (Rondinelli, 1980: 133). Over time, this discourse has influenced decentralisation initiatives both within and outside the purview of governments.

Decentralisation ‘outside government’ has been on the rise from the mid-1990s as witnessed in the ubiquitous expansion of user-groups and stakeholder committees. This apolitical interpretation of decentralisation has come in for sharp criticism (Harriss, 2001b; Manor, 2004b). Even ‘within government,’ scholars argue for a greater emphasis on politics. Manor asserts that for decentralisation to be effective in democratic systems it is politics and not bureaucratic regulation that is crucial (1999: 67). Tornquist contends that for decentralisation to be more inclusive and genuine, citizens, especially those from traditionally marginalised backgrounds, need to be politically aware, engaged and mobilised (2002).
Though decentralisation can foster participation in decision-making forums (Heller, 2001), links between decentralisation and poverty reduction are in general tenuous (Moore and Putzel, 1999; Crook and Sverrisson, 2001). Researchers argue that pro-poor decentralisation would require curbing the discretionary and disruptive powers of local elites, and warrants the presence of a strong central government that is able to devise effective pro-poor strategies and policies (Crook and Sverrisson, 2001). This is borne out in Tendler’s study, which demonstrates that the synergy of three actors (provincial government, local government and civil society) was effective largely because the provincial government in Ceara crafted strategies and procedures that acted as an effective countervail to influential politicians at lower levels (1997).

Aside from factoring in the political and local context, the impact and potential of decentralisation is also circumscribed by the “type” of power-sharing arrangements and the “level” of implementation (Meenakshisundaram, 1994: 11). As pointed out in the introductory chapter, within political systems, democratic decentralisation offers greater opportunities for citizen engagement than administrative or fiscal decentralisation alone.

Thus, the discussion in this sub-section highlights the importance of ‘politicising democracy’ (Harriss et al., 2004), and politicising decentralisation. It also indicates that decentralisation on its own does not have the capacity to bring about substantive change. However, in combination with other factors it has the potential to bring about change, but this potential varies according to the form of decentralisation that is implemented.

3.3 NGOs, Panchayats and Politics in Post-colonial India: Situating their Evolution and Unravelling Inter-relationships

The main focus of this section relates to the dynamics in the study time-period. However, in order to understand the role and position of NGOs and PRIs in this period, it is important to place their evolution in historical perspective. This contextualisation highlights the link between their evolution, and the changing nature of politics and State-society relationships in post-colonial India.

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89 Participation in decentralised settings would include opportunities for augmenting political capabilities afforded by both electoral practices of representative democracy and the popular, direct practices of participative democracy. These practices could range from voting, contesting, contacting, campaigning, demonstrating and lobbying to attending meetings, deliberating, auditing and planning.

90 For example, it can be shared with a regional, sub-regional, local tier or all lower levels. Each level has its own dynamics, potential and limitations.

91 However, without adequate powers and resources, its potential is limited (Manor, 1999).
Since independence, India has had fifteen general (national) elections, and a large number of states have had at least ten state (assembly) elections. Many authors have documented the evolution of multi-party systems at both central and state levels (Brass, 1994; Chatterjee, 1997; Kohli, 2001; Vora and Palshikar, 2004; DeSouza and Sridharan, 2006). The political history spans six decades and can be divided into four phases: 1947 - mid 1960s, late 1960s to the end of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s up to the present. *Panchayats* and NGOs have been a feature in each of the four phases.

India’s political traditions and Gandhian ideas have ensured a slightly wider acceptance of democratic decentralisation in India than in most other countries. Unlike the international surge of interest in decentralisation during the 1980’s and 1990s, in India, democratic decentralisation has enjoyed varying degrees of support since independence (Manor, forthcoming). However, since *panchayats* are a state subject, in each of the four phases, it is the evolving centre-state-society relationships that have shaped the content, form and practice of PRIs across the differing political landscapes.

In addition, unlike many developing countries, India has a fairly long tradition of “modern indigenous forms of voluntary organisations” (Sen, 1999b: 331). Dating back to the 19th century, these issue-based associations initially focused on social and religious reform, but over time, some of them also began organising for political change in the colonial State. Thus, from their inception, NGOs have had some form of relationship with the State. Moreover, “disagreements over (their) relationship to political activity were present from the start” (Jenkins, forthcoming). With respect to post-colonial NGO-State relationships, another prickly point relates to issues of NGO funding (sources, extent, utilisation and regulation). Although, the not-for-profit sector is relatively big in India, its financial input into the development process is still relatively small compared to that of the Indian State (Kudva, 2005: 234).

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92 For a more detailed historical account of the evolution of PRIs in India see (Mathew, 1994), (Jha and Mathur, 1999) and (Bates, 2005).

93 The constitution distributes legislative powers and responsibilities amongst the union (central government), state (regional or provincial government) and concurrent (both centre and state) lists. *Panchayats* come under the state list, which means that responsibility for devolution rests with state governments.

94 In India, the term ‘voluntary-organisations’ has broadly alluded to the not-for-profit sector and not necessarily to NGOs per se. The not-for-profit sector consists of groups that can register themselves as a society, trust, trade union, company or cooperative, all of which add to the amorphous and often contested understanding of what constitutes as an ‘NGO’ in modern-day India. To complicate matters, states in India interpret the registration Acts differently (see Sen, 1993, for more details). In this thesis, I will use the term ‘voluntary-organisations’ to indicate the not-for-profit sector and ‘NGOs’ to highlight organisations with a primarily ‘development’ orientation (as defined in the introductory chapter).

95 The sector is made up of about 1.2 million groups, more than half are rural-based, and it generates about Rs.179 billion in receipts - of which 51% is self-generated, 36% is funded by...
The long and often uneasy relationship between NGOs and the multi-tiered State in modern India has been captured in-depth by other writers (Sheth and Sethi, 1991; Sen, 1999b; Kamat, 2002; Tandon, 2002a; Kudva, 2005; Alikhan et al., 2007; Nair, 2007; Jenkins, forthcoming). Their reflections highlight that in each of the four phases, the evolving dynamics of national, provincial and grassroots politics have shaped the nature of NGO-State-society relationships; and the patterns of engagement, especially, in relation to panchayats. In order to unpack these inter-relationships, this section is divided into four sub-sections that trace the evolution of NGOs and panchayats during the four phases. The first three sub-sections provide a short summary while the fourth sub-section presents a more detailed account.

3.3.1 The First Phase: 1947 to mid-1960s – Relative Calm and Stability

During this period, democracy remained fairly under-developed, society continued to be largely hierarchical, and there was limited impetus for political mobilisation.

The debates that accompanied the framing of the Indian constitution indicate that right from the beginning, there were diverging viewpoints on the importance and usefulness of local government (Government of India, 1947-1948). Finally, instead of acquiring legally-abiding status panchayats were reduced to a 'guideline,' in the form of Article 40 within the Directive Principles of State Policy.

Politically, this period was characterised by relative stability, the dominance of the ruling Indian National Congress party, the considerable autonomy and influence of state party-units, and the accommodation of regional elites.

In the early 1950s, Nehru, independent India’s first prime minister introduced the Community Development Programme (CDP). However, it was soon recognised that in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness at the village level, a grassroots agency

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96 Article 40 in Part IV of the constitution: “The State shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government” (emphasis mine, Government of India, 2004: 18).

97 In the early 1950s, there was widespread agitation for linguistic-based regional autonomy in certain parts of south India. This culminated in extensive changes incorporated under the States Reorganisation Act of 1956. Amongst other states, the Act led to the formation of the states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in 1956.

98 Hereafter referred to as the Congress.

99 CDP was introduced nationwide in 1952 with a view to involving local ‘communities’ in implementing development initiatives.
like *panchayats* needed to be constituted. So, the Balwantrai Committee was set up in 1957 to examine possibilities for decentralisation. It recommended a three-tier decentralised framework – district, block (sub-district) and village, and emphasised administrative decentralisation and greater responsibilities for the middle tier (my emphasis, Gaiha et al., 2000). Many states erected the basic framework, but most were disinclined to devolve essential funds or even conduct basic elections. Since there was no constitutional obligation to do so, they let *panchayats* languish.

In certain pockets of India, Vinobha Bhave’s *Sarvodaya* (upliftment of all) movement made attempts to organise a non-political version of participatory democracy at the grassroots. This was complemented by Vinobha’s *Bhoodan* (voluntary donation of land) movement, which built-up pressure for land reform. In addition, other voluntary organisations (mainly Gandhian and religious groups) also worked in close “cooperation” with the national government on issues relating to relief, welfare and economic development (Sen, 1999b: 334). The period was marked by minimal opposition and conflict as most groups adhered to the Nehruvian “master frame of democratic socialism” (Ray and Katzenstein, 2005).

### 3.3.2 The Second Phase: Late 1960s till the end of the 1970s – Emergence of Antagonism

The general election of 1967 signalled the first steps in the collapse of one-party dominance. Congress retained power at the centre under the leadership of Nehru’s daughter Indira Gandhi but lost out in some important state elections\(^1\). Under Indira, this phase was characterised by plebiscitary politics (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1987)\(^2\). Her partisan and centralised approach contributed to the gradual emasculation of the Congress party, especially, with respect to the autonomy of state party-units. There was much infighting and the period saw two splits within the party. To consolidate her weakening grip, Mrs. Gandhi adopted populist slogans like ‘*garibi hatao*’ (remove poverty), and implemented programmes that targeted marginalised groups like the SC/STs.

The civil services\(^3\) were given a central role at the expense of political institutions, resulting in the further neglect of *panchayats*. Mrs Gandhi’s centralised approach also

\(^1\) However, most opposition state governments were made up of unstable coalitions.

\(^2\) This break with the past was in turn partly influenced by the rise of ‘demand politics’ as opposed to the dominance of ‘command politics’ in the Nehruvian era (Ibid).

\(^3\) Though the civil service is made up of different ‘types’ of services, it primarily refers to India’s elite Indian Administrative Services (IAS), which forms the national ‘frame’ of government bureaucracy.
influenced regional politics. By postponing *panchayat* elections, MLAs too attempted to centralise power and reduce sub-regional competitive politics (Mitra, 2001).

The political turbulence at the national level was also reflected in the socio-economic turmoil at the grassroots. In the West Bengal village of Naxalbari, political mobilisation in the form of a peasant uprising against the feudal order gave birth to the *naxalite* movement in 1967. Violent unrest was also witnessed in the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh, as part of the student-led agitation for a separate state. Food shortages, unemployment and persistent poverty fomented dissatisfaction and dissenion. This grassroots unrest helped to fan the anti-State sentiment, and gave rise to a broad range of ‘Action groups’ that operated outside considerations of capturing State power (Sethi, 1993). Many of these groups worked with poor people on issues relating to conscientisation and mobilisation

Finally, the implementation of the infamous national ‘emergency’ (1975-77) sealed the trend of Congress dominance. The general elections in 1977 witnessed large-scale grassroots agitation culminating in the victory of the first non-Congress government at the centre. Democracy had begun to put-down roots. Competitive politics also helped to reduce the hold that elites had on their traditional vote-banks.

Although they were in power only till 1979, the Janata party-led coalition strongly promoted the work of ‘developmental’ NGOs (Franda, 1983), partly because many of these groups had supported the campaign to oust Mrs Gandhi. They also appointed the Ashok Mehta committee in a second bid to revitalise *panchayats*. It advocated a more political role for *panchayats*, and the setting up of a two-tiered (district and sub-district) form of local government with an emphasis on the district tier (Meenakshisundaram, 1994). However, after the initial show of interest, not much was done to carry the process forward.

3.3.3 The Third Phase: 1980s – Deepening Conflict and Competition

In the general elections of 1980, a divided opposition helped the Congress (under Indira) regain power, but there was no change in the personality and patronage-based politics within the Congress party. Dissatisfaction with the ruling Congress also contributed to the emergence of new regional political parties (like the Telugu Desam)
Party in Andhra Pradesh). Further, unlike Congress-ruled states, in some non-
Congress ruled states, such as Karnataka, visionary political leaders experimented with
progressive *panchayat* legislations (Mathew, 2000).

After Mrs. Gandhi’s assassination in 1984, her son Rajiv Gandhi became prime
minister of India. This transition did not amount to much change as there was no
substantial deviation from policies and strategies endorsed by Mrs Gandhi. However,
Rajiv Gandhi is credited with rejuvenating interest in *panchayats*.

The support for devolution was not extended to NGOs. Throughout this decade, the
Congress government at the centre initiated a series of programmes, proposals and
legislations to clamp down on the ‘activist’ or ‘empowerment’ role of NGOs. This was in
addition to laws that required NGOs to abstain from involvement in party politics
(Kudva, 2005: 237). These measures were also fuelled by the rise of more aggressive
movements (separatist, ethnic and fundamentalist) within the country, some of which
had “organisational offshoots” in the not-for-profit sector (Sen, 1999b: 351).

At the same time, the government was keen on involving NGOs in its populist anti-
poverty programmes and development initiatives, provided the participating NGOs
were willing to toe the line of government. This instrumental understanding of NGOs
was clearly evident in the Seventh Plan’s\(^{105}\) definition of NGOs, which portrayed them
as ‘politically neutral’ developmental organisations that would ‘help’ the government in
its rural development programmes (my emphasis, Government of India, 1985).
Increased government funding spawned a diverse range of supposedly ‘neutral’ NGOs
that acted as the service provision and service delivery arm of the government\(^{106}\). With
the rise of the neo-liberal agenda, attempts at co-opting NGOs became even more
pronounced\(^{107}\).

This provided adequate fodder for leftist parties that accused NGOs of being foreign
agents who deliberately diluted the vanguard role of political parties in mass-
mobilisation (Karat, 1984). Karat’s criticism added force to the apolitical, instrumental
conception of NGOs, and helped to propagate the false dichotomy that “movements
were political, NGOs depoliticising”\(^{108}\) (Jenkins, forthcoming). This dismissive portrayal

\(^{105}\) The government’s five year projection for the period from 1985 to 1990.
\(^{106}\) In reality, some of these ‘neutral’ organisations were set up by politicians.
\(^{107}\) Unlike other developing countries, in India, bilateral and multilateral donors did not bypass
the government in favour of NGOs, which made it even easier for the government to manipulate
the channelling of funds to its chosen recipients.
\(^{108}\) The stringent critique of NGO association with “foreign funding” prompted civic groups to
access funding through “intermediary” sources, which in turn were characterised as being
of NGOs failed to acknowledge the Indian tradition of “combining radical social action with hands-on development” (Ibid). In addition, as Sethi points out:

Constructive work activity has a value not only in itself, or in providing an entry point for more radical work, or in generating cadres for organisation and political activity, or in supporting the work done by more overtly political action groups and parties, but very much because such groups offer the possibility of experimentation with alternative styles of doing things, and with different organisation models and processes (1993: 235).

In many ways, the new generation of NGOs differed in character from their ‘activist’ predecessors. Firstly, NGOs began to be formed by businessmen, retired bureaucrats and politicians - who were more concerned with job security and partisan gains; and secondly, younger professionals often joined the NGO sector “motivated by job prospects” (Sen, 1999b: 340). Although many of the more radical ‘action groups’ ceased to exist by the mid-1980s, some continued to “oppose the State” (Ibid: 341). These action groups together with new ‘movement groups’ like the Tarun Bharat Sangh and the Narmada Bachao Andolan helped to keep the grassroots activism alive.

By the end of the decade, the Congress was mired in allegations of corruption and faced much internal discord. This helped to boost the electoral prospects of opposition parties. The 1989 general elections resulted in the victory of the ‘National Front’ coalition that was led by the Janata Dal party, and supported on the outside by the Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) and the left parties.

3.3.4 The Fourth Phase: 1990s up to the Present – Coalitions and Cleavages

The fourth phase begins in the decade of the 1990s and is characterised by the consolidation of formal democracy; the growing influence of the centre-right BJP on the ‘hindutva’ plank; and the increasing power, presence and stability of coalition-based political formations within both centre and state governments.

Although the National Front coalition was unable to retain power for long, it tried to implement two major reforms. Both these reforms failed to see the light of day. Nevertheless, they built up momentum for change. Firstly, the coalition introduced a bill to grant constitutional status to panchayats. Secondly, they attempted to implement the

“value-neutral” (Jenkins, forthcoming). This marked the genesis of the “movement-NGO dichotomy” in India (Ibid).

109 As evidenced in Gandhi’s programme of rural development that was launched at Wardha in 1922 (Kudva, 2005: 240).
110 The BJP professes to adhere to the ideology of ‘hindutva’ (loosely translated as hinduness) – interpreted as cultural nationalism (http://www.bjp.org/philo.html - Accessed 28 March 2008). The BJP, with its ideological supporters - including the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and an assortment of other associations forms the ‘sangh parivar,’ literally translated as family of associations.
Mandal Commission\textsuperscript{111} reforms, but this led to widespread agitations amongst the upper-caste youth\textsuperscript{112}.

In the 1991 general elections, the Congress came back to power at the centre. One of their first initiatives was the introduction of economic liberalisation reforms, which resulted in the dismantling of many State subsidies and guarantees. The second key initiative was to secure constitutional approval for the \textit{Panchayati Raj} system. This time round, political compulsions, opportune timing, broad consensus across the party-divide and modifications to accommodate the interests of states; all contributed to securing support from both Houses of Parliament (Sivaramakrishnan, 2000).

Despite their victory at the centre, the Congress was losing its base in many states. By 1995, the declining power of the Congress was mirrored in the success of opposition parties that ruled twelve states (including Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka). This period also witnessed the rise of backward-class politics that moulded political-party dynamics, especially, at the state government level (Jaffrelot, 1999). In addition, the instability of coalition politics was visible in the rapid succession of three consecutive central governments.

However, in the 1999 general elections, the victory of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (coalition of 23 parties including those from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka) and its completion of the full five-year term heralded the era of relatively stable coalition formations at the centre. It also highlighted the growing necessity of accommodating regional interests. These changes are also evident in the results of both the 2004 and 2009 general elections that have seen the return of Congress in a multi-party coalition - the United Progressive Alliance.

In turn, these national developments have also influenced the evolution of NGO-State relationships. The disparate elements of ‘cooperation and antagonism’ that had characterised the relationship between NGOs and the State in the earlier phases

\textsuperscript{111} The Commission was instituted in 1979 under the Janata party government. It recommended the implementation of quotas for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) to help redress traditional social inequalities perpetuated within the caste system. OBCs can be both Hindus and non-Hindus and approximately amount to 52% of the total population of the country (Varshney, 2000). Loosely defined, the Hindu OBCs consist of peasant, service and artisan castes that overlap with the fourth \textit{varna} (hierarchical tier) called Shudra. The traditional four-fold hierarchy consists of four \textit{varnas}: Brahmin (priest), Kshatriya (warrior), Vaishya (merchant) and Shudras (as above). ‘Upper castes’ normally refers to castes belonging to the first three varnas.

\textsuperscript{112} It was only in 1992, under a new government that part of the recommended provisions (27% reservation for OBCs in central governments sponsored services and public service undertakings) were implemented.
began to get more enmeshed with each other. Increasingly, these relationships are
classified by collaboration on some fronts and confrontation on others113.

The changing nature of relationships has been partly influenced by the passage of the
73rd constitutional amendment, which has provided many grassroots-NGOs with a
more direct opportunity to engage with issues relating to PRIs (Singh, 1993; Oldenburg, 1999)114. Up until then, the relationship between NGOs and PRIs was
classified by low levels of interaction, owing to the marginal standing of panchayats
in most states; mutual suspicions between panchayat members and NGOs (Aziz, 1999: 60); and the NGO's need to maintain a 'non-political' status, in order to remain
registered with the central government and qualify for foreign funding.

Aside from national influences, the role and growth of NGOs in the 1990’s was also
shaped by the dominance of neo-liberal policies. These international influences helped
to fuel the proliferation of NGOs in India. Many NGOs took-up the role of public service
contractors. The relative ease of access to funding coupled with the increased levels of
funding from foreign donors, national and state governments encouraged
bureaucratisation and complacency115.

Since the mid-1990s, these differing influences have helped to animate a section of the
NGO community, and encouraged the convergence of “different kinds of groups and
movements” (Sheth, 2005: 9). These groups have aimed to revitalise politics, in order
to repoliticise development and reinvent participatory democracy (Ibid: 14). By
promoting and participating in these initiatives, some NGOs have been drawn into a
deeper engagement with political issues116. Some of these groups are ‘dual-purpose
associations’ comprising an NGO and a movement-styled group117.

113 Throughout this last phase, the Planning Commission (under different central governments)
initiated discussions with NGOs to bring about a closer “collaboration” (Kudva, 2005: 245) and
frame a national policy on the voluntary sector, but it continues to view this link in non-political
terms (Government of India, 2007a: 1).
114 In part, this was because GP elections in many states were formally designated as non-party
based. This made it easier for NGOs to work on ‘political’ issues while maintaining their legally
required apolitical status. Furthermore, some state governments drew on the “social
infrastructure” of NGOs (Rajasekhar, 1999b: 10) to supplement government initiatives to train
the vast numbers of newly elected representatives. For a more detailed explanation of the
differing factors that provided a fillip to NGO engagement with PRIs see (Hansen, 1999: 79-81)
115 In the last phase, the focus of State funding continues to remain on rural development, but
this concern is less prominent in the pattern of overseas funding. For more on the evolving
funding patterns of international and national donors, see (Kudva, 2005: 247-248).
116 Increasingly, these groups are also playing a more direct role in formal politics through
initiatives like ‘election watch-2004’ (Dash, 2004).
117 The “movement-NGO dichotomy” (Jenkins, forthcoming) often hides the more complex inter-
relationships between NGOs and people’s movements. See (Baviskar, 1995; Kamat, 2002;
These inter-relationships between NGOs and social movements are particularly important in the “spheres of fundraising\textsuperscript{118}, outside support, and organising” (Kudva, 2005: 235). This convergence has helped to build broad-based networks of support that has led to the passage of the Right to Information Act of 2005 (Singh, 2007), the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in 2005 (Shah, 2007), and the Forest Rights Act of 2006\textsuperscript{119}.

In addition, the entry of NGOs and movement groups into the arena of party-politics, at the level of PRIs and higher elections (assembly/parliamentary) is gradually gaining momentum. This was evident in the 2004 assembly elections (Godbole and Vira, 2004), the 2005 PRI elections (Dey and Singh, 2005), and in the transformation in 2006 of the Andhra Pradesh-based NGO Lok Satta - into a political party.

In the next section, I provide an overview of the functioning and impact of PRIs after the passage of the 73rd constitutional amendment. The discussion highlights the inter-relationships between panchayats and politics at both the high-end and the deep-end of State-society interactions.

### 3.4 Overview of the Functioning and Impact of constitutionally-mandated Panchayats

#### 3.4.1 Panchayats and High Politics

The metaphors of high and deep politics are borrowed from the work of Lonsdale (1986: 130). In this thesis, they refer respectively to the politics at the level of state governments and legislative constituencies; and politics at the level of gram panchayats\textsuperscript{120}.

Table 3.1 provides a short summary of the key provisions of the 73rd amendment. Although the amendment sets out the range of functions that can be devolved to

\[\text{Kudva, 2006) and (http://www.ektaparishad.com/index.php - Accessed 9 October 2008), for examples on the blurring of boundaries.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{118} Activists from these movement groups often receive stipends from individuals and NGOs based overseas who provide financial support by sponsoring an activist (Personal communication, Suchi Pande, November 2008).}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{119} Supported by the Campaign for Survival and Dignity, see (http://www.forestrightsact.com - Accessed 9 October 2008).}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{120} Lonsdale uses these terms to suggest that it is possible to have more accountable politics at the State level, and yet have severe injustice and irresponsibility in the politics of society. However, my interpretation differs to his. I use the terms high and deep only to highlight the hierarchical levels of government at which the analysis and discussion takes place. They are not used to contrast differences based on the nature of politics (accountable or unjust).}\]
PRIs\textsuperscript{121}, it gives state governments' responsibility for PRIs, so there are limits to what the central government can compel the states to do.

\textbf{Table 3.1: Key features of 73\textsuperscript{rd} Amendment (adapted from DeSouza, 1999: 379-380)}

| 1. | The centrality of the \textit{gram sabha} (village assembly), as a deliberative and decision-making body, for decentralised governance. |
| 2. | A uniform three-tier PRI structure across the country, with the village, block, and district as the appropriate levels. |
| 3. | Direct elections to all seats for all members at all levels. In addition, the chairpersons of the village \textit{panchayats} may be appointed members of the \textit{panchayats} at the intermediate level and chairpersons of \textit{panchayats} at the intermediate level may be members at the district level: MP, MLAs, and MLCs\textsuperscript{122} may also be members of \textit{panchayats} at the intermediate and district levels. |
| 4. | In all \textit{panchayats}, seats are to be reserved for SCs and STs in proportion to their population, and one-third of the total seats to be reserved for women. One-third of the seats reserved for SCs and STs will also be reserved for women. |
| 5. | Offices of the chairpersons of the \textit{panchayats} at all levels will be reserved for SCs and STs in proportion to their population in the state. One-third of the office of chairpersons of \textit{panchayats} at all levels also to be reserved for women. |
| 6. | The legislature of the state is at liberty to provide reservation of seats and offices of chairpersons in \textit{panchayats} in favour of backward classes of citizens. |
| 7. | \textit{Average panchayat} to have a uniform five-year term and elections to constitute new bodies to be completed before the expiry of the term. In the event of dissolution, elections to be compulsorily held within six months. The reconstituted \textit{panchayat} to serve for the remaining period of the five-year term. |
| 8. | It will not be possible to dissolve the existing \textit{panchayats} by amendment of any act before the expiry of its duration. |
| 9. | A person who is disqualified under any law for elections to the legislature of the state or under any law of the state will not be entitled to become a member of a \textit{panchayat}. |
| 10. | An independent State Election Commission (SEC) to be established for superintendence, direction, and control of the electoral process, and preparation of electoral rolls. |
| 11. | Devolution of powers and responsibilities by the state in the preparation and implementation of development plans\textsuperscript{123}. |
| 12. | Setting up of a State Finance Commission (SFC) once in five years to revise the financial position of these PRIs and to make suitable recommendations to the state on the distribution of funds among \textit{panchayats}. |

In addition, the pattern of devolution from the centre to the states has deterred state governments from devolving the already limited revenue-sharing provisions in favour of local bodies\textsuperscript{124} (Oommen, 2005). This has meant that amongst states, there has been

\textsuperscript{121} The 29 subjects or responsibilities that pertain to \textit{panchayats} are listed under the Eleventh Schedule of the Indian constitution. Of these, a majority are related to developmental and welfare functions including, rural infrastructure and services. Collectively, these provisions have the potential to improve the material well-being of people living in poverty.

\textsuperscript{122} Some states have an Upper House called the Legislative Council. Members of the Legislative Council (MLCs) are elected for a staggered term of six years, and have less powers and responsibilities compared to MLAs.

\textsuperscript{123} Although the remit of PRIs in the constitution is ultimately local self-government, the amendment has restricted the interpretation of this remit to the “development motif” of preparation of plans, and implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice (Mukarji, 1993: 859-860). This emphasis on PRIs' development role has led to the neglect of its equally important regulatory role.

\textsuperscript{124} The division of elastic and productive taxes, and revenues, between the union and state governments is skewed in favour of the centre.
a wide variation in both the content of state legislations and its translation into practice (Mathew and Buch, 2000; Chaudhuri, 2006).

Further, over time, within an individual state, the quality and extent of devolution and implementation has varied with the policies adopted by different political regimes that head state government.

In most states, devolution of ‘funds, functions and functionaries’ has been highly inadequate (World Bank, 2000a; Government of India, 2001c, 2001d, 2002d, 2006c, 2008b). This resistance to devolve also reflects the lack of political will amongst politicians at the level of state governments. In general, states have assigned responsibilities without the necessary fiscal and administrative resources.

Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSSs), which are ‘tied’ to certain development programmes and funded by the central government, continue to provide the lion’s share of finances to PRIs. In many states, actual state government devolution of finances is limited in comparison but the overall trend is towards gradual increase (Rai et al., 2001: 164 and 176). Also, across states, panchayats’ own revenue-raising capacities are inadequate in proportion to expenditure requirements, and where efforts have been made, political compulsions and administrative hurdles have often resulted in the net amounts being almost insignificant. Moreover, in general, panchayats lack discretionary powers over spending and staff, leaving them with little autonomy in terms of forecasting, budgeting and implementing development programmes (Oommen and Datta, 1995; Subrahmanyam and Choudhury, 2003).

At the grassroots, this neglect has greatly undermined the ability of gram panchayats to function effectively as a unit of local government, especially in dealing with the needs of poor people. So, in states (like Andhra Pradesh) where government has sidelined these formal institutions, panchayats often appear powerless to the average citizen.

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125 In this thesis, regime is understood as a particular government [“headed by a particular political party or a particular combination of parties or a particular charismatic leader having overwhelming influence over the party in power” (Ghosh and Kumar, 2003: 14)] as opposed to others within the same form of rule (Harriss, 2000).

126 This has increased substantially in the context of NREGA. Revenues for PRIs are derived from a mix of own sources or revenue (taxes and non-taxes), assigned revenues that include share of state government’s taxes and levies, grants from both central government and state government, and lastly through the medium of loans (Oommen and Datta, 1995).

127 This is largely restricted to tax collection at the level of the gram panchayat. Although the range of taxes that can be collected is varied, the assigned taxes are largely inelastic in nature and differ across states. The “tax base covers property, business and persons, with property tax dominating in every state,” and the non-tax revenues “consist of a plethora of fees, fines and penalties, rents, receipts from remunerative enterprises, such as markets, cart stands (and) slaughter houses” (emphasis mine, Oommen, 2005: 242).
(Johnson et al., 2005). For poorer sections of society, the opportunity costs of participating in emasculated institutions can be extremely high (Devendra Babu, 2002). Even states that have legislation that is relatively strong on paper (such as Karnataka), end-up being tight-fisted in practice (Government of Karnataka, 2002).

The functional and financial limitations of PRIs have often meant that forums for direct democracy like *gram sabhas* are unable to attract a critical mass of citizens (World Bank, 2000a: x), which in turn affects deliberation, planning and implementation. In part, this is also because of the unsystematic and non-transparent implementation of *gram sabhas* on the part of both government functionaries and elected representatives (Choudhury and Jain, 1999). Many states do not have provisions for conducting social audits (Government of India, 2008b). Even in states that do, they are seldom conducted according to the guidelines. In addition, GP sub-committees, which provide additional mechanisms for participation, are rarely, if ever, constituted (Ibid).

The ambit of PRIs has also been circumscribed by the presence of ‘parallel’ governance institutions like user-groups or stakeholder-committees that operate within single-sectors (e.g. watershed, forests, and tanks). Their mode of *selection* rather than *election* of members often lacks representativeness, and this limitation is compounded by issues relating to participation, accountability and overlapping jurisdictions with PRIs (my emphasis, Manor, 2004b; Jayal, 2006). Like PRIs, they too are susceptible to elite capture, but the chances are even higher as they are invariably better funded (Manor, 2004b).

Further, in most states, government officials at different tiers of government have sought to control the devolution process and marginalise the role of elected representatives within *panchayats* (Kuhn, 1998; Srivastava, 2006). In particular, the continued existence of the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) in many states has heightened mistrust between the bureaucracy and the *Zilla Panchayat* representatives. This competitive tension is aggravated by coordination failures; the absence of clear lines of accountability; and insufficient demarcation of functional roles, activities, responsibilities and personnel in relation to PRIs and bureaucracy, across different tiers of government (Government of India, 2008b).

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128 DRDAs were established under Mrs Indira Gandhi’s regime. They are the nodal agencies for administering development schemes and programmes in rural areas. After the passage of the 73rd amendment, the central government passed a resolution to bring DRDAs under the control of PRIs but this has not been adhered to in most states (World Bank, 2000a: 30). DRDA directors are called Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and their position, role and powers vis-à-vis ZP presidents vary across different states.
The existence of weak accountability mechanisms has meant that officials at lower tiers of government tend to be accountable to their superiors, rather than elected representatives or citizens. At the GP level, this can reinforce collusion between elites and non-elected functionaries (such as panchayat secretaries).

Elected representatives are also easily able to circumvent accountability to citizens. Thus, bureaucratic and political resistance, mistrust between elected representatives and local officials, and ineffective accountability mechanisms have weakened implementation (Jha, 1999; Behar and Kumar, 2002).

In most states, the inclusion of MLAs and MPs as ex-officio members without voting rights in the intermediate and district-level tiers distorts the autonomy of elected functionaries. The constitution also makes provisions for the creation of a District Planning Committee (DPC) that aims to combine rural and urban decentralised institutional perspectives to provide a unified, coherent approach to development planning in the district. Most state governments have set up DPCs, but their roles and powers have not been clearly defined. Within DPCs, most states have assigned voting rights to nominated members like MLAs, MPs and the Collectors or CEO of the zilla parishad (Government of India, 2008b). Thus, accommodation of state government’s political interests has further diluted the autonomy of PRIs.

In order to build the capacities of elected functionaries, states have set up training institutes or SIRDs (State Institute of Rural Development), but the format and quality of training vary across states. State Election Commissions (SEC) and State Finance Commissions (SFC) have also been set up in most states. However, there are marked differences across the states, in terms of SEC’s actual powers to organise and conduct elections, and the devolution recommendations of SFC reports (Ibid).

Despite drawbacks, the increasing role and relevance of panchayats has been reinforced in the creation of a separate Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) in 2004.

3.4.2 Panchayats and Deep Politics

Apart from the evolving dynamics in the arena of ‘high’ politics, the potential of PRIs is also circumscribed by the nature of politics at the level of gram panchayats. At the grassroots, different barriers combine to ensure that people from vulnerable and marginalised backgrounds remain largely alienated from panchayats. Some studies

129 Almost all states have completed at least one round of elections, and in some cases they have completed a third round of elections.
have identified problems of elite-capture (Gaiha et al., 2000; Inbanathan, 2000),
highlighting that changes in formal institutions have not led to "changes in more
informal customs (and patterns) of power, domination and exclusion" (Johnson, 2003:
30)\(^{130}\). Others point to the politician-bureaucrat-contractor nexus at lower levels of
government that fuels corruption and undermines local governance (Vijayalakshmi,
2006; Das, 2007).

These local impediments have affected impoverished sections of society in two main
ways. Firstly, their acquisition of material benefits (especially in relation to targeted
programmes) from PRIs is extremely dismal (Gaiha et al., 1998; Alsop et al., 2001).
Secondly, these impediments have served to constrain their substantive political
participation in participatory and representative institutions associated with panchayats.
Studies have revealed that in these forums, participation of the average citizen in
relation to voting is largely positive, but is more limited in other forms of political
participation; such as campaigning in elections, contacting elected representatives or
attending village assemblies (Alsop et al., 2001; Kumar, 2006). In relation to both
participation and representation, citizens and elected functionaries from marginalised
communities are hampered by inadequate political knowledge and the persistence of
unequal power-relations in village society (Lieten, 2003: 28). It is also argued that
despite mandated reservations, women elected functionaries are often surrogates for
the more influential men in their families or elites (Tekchandani et al., 1997;
Vijayalakshmi and Chandrashekar, 2001).

Thus, it would appear that people from marginalised and vulnerable backgrounds have
been largely unable to take advantage of the opportunities offered by PRIs, as they
have little involvement and influence over its functioning. However, the literature also
indicates that the ground realities reveal considerable diversity both in the position of
elected representatives and the situation across different gram panchayats (Hansen,
1999; Ghatak and Ghatak, 2002). These 'micro realities' highlight both gains and
drawbacks, thereby challenging the assertions of one-sided 'macro myths' (Banerjee,
1998).

PRIs have helped to widen the democratic base, a process that has multiplied the
channels through which information flows to the public (Mathew and Buch, 2000).
Participation in panchayat elections is fairly buoyant across categories of gender, caste

\(^{130}\) See also Ananthpur (2006), who argues that customary panchayats (she differentiates these
from caste panchayats, which relate to a single caste) continue to influence the functioning of
formal panchayats.
and class (Alsop et al., 2001), and is the highest amongst all tiers of government (Yadav, 2000: 123). A recent study indicates that the landless, illiterate and SC/STs are more likely to participate in gram sabhas than other groups (Besley et al., 2007: 665).

By providing legally sanctioned opportunities, panchayats are gradually enabling people from traditionally marginalised backgrounds to challenge domination in both statutory and non-statutory forums, which in turn is helping to redefine the contours of the local political arena (Jodhka, 2008). As opposed to the traditional emphasis on caste and landholding as the principal influences on political participation in gram panchayats, new research indicates that it is education and access to information that has a significant influence on relative inclusion and exclusion (Alsop et al., 2001).

PRIs have also opened up spaces for the emergence of leaders from the more deprived sections of society (Buch, 2000; Kumar, 2006). Recent evidence indicates that women elected representatives are not just ‘namesake’ members, and evaluating their contribution requires a more gendered understanding of the political arena (Strulik, 2007). Many are first-timers who face a steep and often treacherous learning curve. Their limited success has to be evaluated in terms of the odds stacked against them and the prevalent gender norms. Further, the rotation of reserved seats and chairperson’s posts means that SCs, STs and women are often unable to get re-elected for second terms.

Nevertheless, despite elections being marred by violence, evidence of intimidations, unfair electoral practices, and discriminatory provisions like the two-child norm, each new election has seen a more vigorous contestation of power, especially on the part of traditionally marginalised groups.

Although poor people face challenges in accessing material benefits from PRIs, there are examples of ways in which they voice their demands and put pressure on panchayats to deliver (Narayanan, 2002; Webster, 2002). These examples also draw attention to the importance of expanding the awareness and “active” participation of citizens so that they can apply “pressure from below” more effectively (Deshpande and Venkatesha Murthy, 2002: 1767).

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131 This finding is reinforced by the evidence of other scholars who argue that the breakdown of the closed village economy, the presence of legally-binding affirmative provisions, and the rise of democratic politics has led to: a de-ritualisation of caste (Sheth, 1999) or a decline in the caste ‘system’, an erosion in the power of traditional elite castes (Sahay, 2004), and a rise in caste identities (Gupta, 2005).

132 Panchayat legislations in some states like Andhra Pradesh include provisions that allow for the disqualification of electoral candidates who have more than two children.
3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that the evolving nature of NGOs and *panchayats* in post-colonial India is intertwined with the changing dynamics of politics and State-society interactions. The discussion in the preceding four sections highlights that in the realm of both high and deep politics, the earlier emphasis on domination and centralisation is being increasingly replaced by the idiom of resistance, negotiation and collaboration.

Starting from a Congress one-party dominant system after Independence (Kothari, 1964; Morris-Jones, 1966), the Indian party system at the national level has now come to resemble a “bi-nodal” or “two-coalition” formation (Suri et al., 2006: 7). The two major political parties that anchor the poles around which smaller parties coalesce are the centrist Indian National Congress (INC) and the centre-right Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). These changes reflect the rise of democratic politics, and the increasing leverage commanded by state governments and regional parties. The groundswell of democratic politics is also apparent at the state level, evidenced in the rise of coalitions and new regional political parties.

At the grassroots, the evolution of *panchayats* and their functioning and impact reflect the changing dynamics of politics and State-society interactions. Although most state government regimes are not overtly supportive of PRIs, the fruits of democratisation have ensured that these governments cannot be overtly antagonistic too. In large swathes of rural India, democratic decentralisation is gradually embedding itself in a hierarchical and inegalitarian society, and is helping to reconfigure democratic politics.

Similarly, the changing role, interests and impact of NGOs are linked to the evolving nature of politics and State-society relationships. In particular, the chapter highlights that the passage of the 73rd constitutional amendment has enlarged the opportunities of NGOs to work on issues relating to *panchayats*.

The discussion in this chapter also helps to frame the content of the next chapter, in which I examine the experiences of poor people at the interface of NGOs and PRIs in sixteen GPs located in the contiguous districts of Kolar and Anantapur.
Chapter 4

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SIXTEEN GRAM PANCHAYATS: UNPACKING THE POLITICAL

“It is only after 1994 that awareness has increased and hence more development. It is only when people tasted power themselves, when reservations came, when they had a part to play - only then has awareness increased.” (Key informant, 2006)  

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the experiences of poor people in sixteen gram panchayats in relation to political capabilities and material benefits. Firstly, it highlights the broad trends and patterns in the sixteen GPs as a whole, and secondly, it examines variations in trends and patterns between the sixteen GPs. Throughout this chapter (and the following chapters) the experiences are assessed by focusing on the level of political capabilities and material benefits at a point in time: 2005-2006. These levels relate to the GP term beginning in 2000 in Karnataka (plus first year of 2005 GP term), and 2001 in Andhra Pradesh.

The chapter also uses GP-level data to draw attention to the eight GPs where poor people experience higher levels of political capabilities and material well-being when compared to the other eight GPs. In turn, the top-eight GPs help to highlight the factors that appear to be associated with higher levels of political capabilities and material well-being. The two main factors under study - political opportunity spaces and NGO interventions seem to play an important role, but other factors, such as the nature of democratic institutions and the nature of political competition also appear to play a part. This suggests that it is important to examine these different factors more closely in order to assess the extent of their influence – a task that is taken up in the next three chapters.

The chapter is divided into six sections. Section 4.2 provides a short contextual background to the two districts under study. This helps to situate the findings discussed in the following sections. Section 4.3 unpacks the overall patterns and trends; section 4.4 examines the data in relation to individual characteristics, while section 4.5 identifies variations in the trends and patterns between the sixteen GPs. In sections 4.3, 4.4 and section 4.5, I assess the level of political capabilities and material well-being by drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data. The last section (4.6) sums up the main findings of the chapter.

133 Interview with knowledgeable informant No. 53, 29 August 2006, Kolar.
134 GP elections in Andhra Pradesh were held a year later than in Karnataka.
4.2 Contextual Background to Kolar and Anantapur Districts

Both Kolar and Anantapur are interior, backward, semi-arid and drought-prone districts with a high dependence on well (open and bore) irrigation. There are no major rivers, reservoirs or canals within the districts. Although both have a history of tank irrigation, many of these tanks have fallen into disrepair, and others have dried out because of a drop in the water-table. During the time period under study, governments in both states have invested substantial resources in tank rehabilitation and watershed development projects. The economy is primarily agrarian and the dominant mode is rain-fed agriculture. Quarrying, mining, sericulture, horticulture and dairy are important in some parts of Kolar and Anantapur. The main crops are groundnut, coarse cereals [ragi (finger millet), jowar (sorghum), bajra (pearl millet)], rice and sugarcane.

In terms of major caste groupings, unlike many states in north India, the percentage of Brahmins in south Indian states is fairly small [less than four percent in each of the four states (Manor, 2004a: 257)]. In addition, the “distinctive caste systems” in the states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh resemble each other more closely “than either resembles the systems” in the other south Indian states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu (Ibid). The powerful communities in most local areas of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh are the ‘dominant castes’135. This has helped to create a less hierarchical and more “secular” society in these states compared to Tamil Nadu (Elliott, 1970: 151) and Kerala.

The two dominant castes in Karnataka are the Lingayats and Vokkaligas, and the two in Andhra Pradesh are Kammas and Reddys (Srinivas, 1959; Elliott, 1970). Both sets of dominant castes are peasant farming castes that belong to the Shudra varna. However, since families within these caste groupings are often landed and have significant traditional influence in the village, they have a higher status compared to other castes that fall within the Shudra bracket. The caste/religion break-up in these two states is provided in Appendix 4.1136. In both states, the combined population of OBCs, SCs and STs is over 65 percent137.

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135 Following Srinivas, ‘dominant’ is understood to refer to castes that control a substantial portion of landholdings associated with the village, have a sizeable (does not imply majority) numerical strength within the village that translates into socio-economic standing and control over political patronage, possess the hereditary headman’s post, and enjoy a relatively ‘high’ status within the traditional caste hierarchy (1959).

136 Detailed caste-based enumeration was last carried out in 1931, so the figures in Appendix 4.1 have been compiled from different sources. Since 1951, the decennial census has recorded details of only the ‘reserved’ categories (SCs and STs, 2001 census figures for India as a whole were 16.2% and 8.2% respectively), in accordance with the 1950 Constitution Order, subject to amendments by the centre and states. The order contains separate listings of SCs and STs that
As can be seen from Appendix 4.1, both states have similar caste/religious groupings. These similarities are also broadly reflected in the profile of the two study-districts. Both districts have a high proportion of OBCs (which includes Muslims) relative to all other castes (dominant, forward, SC/STs). However, Kammas form a marginally smaller group compared to Reddys in Anantapur (Ram Reddy, 1989: 270). Similarly, Vokkaligas form the mainstay of the dominant castes in Kolar, as the proportion of Lingayats is almost negligible in the district (Manor, 1977: 30). In Kolar, the proportion of SC/STs is higher than the state average, whereas in Anantapur, the proportion of SC/STs is lower than the state average.

Both districts have not been associated with major agrarian, dalit or separatist movements\textsuperscript{138}. They have a high density of NGOs working on a variety of rural development issues but many of these NGOs are run by fly-by-night operators or are financed by local political leaders\textsuperscript{139}. Most of the ‘credible’ NGOs work on service delivery issues. Politically, Anantapur is known for its factional politics and feuding families, and it also has a naxalite presence\textsuperscript{140}. Kolar is relatively quiet in comparison and there is less ‘fear’ in the air\textsuperscript{141}.

4.3 Unpacking the Overall Patterns and Trends
Antha Rajkiyam (it is all politics)...this oft-repeated phrase (expressed in many interviews during fieldwork), sums up the palpable politicisation of village life across the

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\textsuperscript{137} I use OBCs to mean ‘Other Backward Classes’ (includes Hindus and non-Hindus), and BCs to mean Backward Castes (not including religious minorities or dominant castes). Also, I use the term ‘lower castes’ to include BCs, SCs and STs; the term ‘upper castes’ to refer to the dominant castes and the castes belonging to the top three varnas.

\textsuperscript{138} In Andhra Pradesh, this is unlike districts located in the Telangana region that have witnessed “mobilisation of the rural poor and youth by the radical left on the basis of class,” and those in the developed coastal Andhra region that have seen an “emotional mobilisation on the socio-cultural identity of caste” (Srinivasulu, 2002: 1). In Karnataka, the farmers’ movement does not have significant influence in Kolar district and the separatist moves are restricted to parts of the north.

\textsuperscript{139} In general, factions are defined as “political cliques which struggle amongst themselves for power and whose members hold broadly similar class interests” (Hardiman, 1996: 230). In the context of Anantapur, factions denote rival cliques that are usually headed by dominant castes and are caught up in power-related struggles against each other. They are made-up of members who can belong to different caste or religious groupings, but owe allegiance to one dominant caste leader or household. Factions can exist within one caste or across castes. See (Staff Reporter, 2008, Hindu) and (Special Correspondent, 2006, Hindu) for examples in the context of Anantapur.

\textsuperscript{140} There is no naxalite presence in Kolar.
sixteen case-study gram panchayats. Over the study-period, across the study-GPs, there has been an increase in both political competition and substantive contestation of authority amongst different groups and leaders. This rising politicisation frames the discussion in the two sub-sections, which examine the levels of political capabilities and material benefits attained by poor people at the NGO-PRI interface. Both sub-sections use quantitative and qualitative data to identify the broad patterns and trends for sixteen GPs as a whole. The emphasis throughout this chapter and the next three empirical chapters is on highlighting the perceptions of poor people.

Although I do not have a baseline for the quantitative data (relating to the first GP term in the study time-period), in each of the sixteen GPs, I draw on the qualitative data to provide a baseline of the general situation in relation to poor people’s experiences in the first GP term.

4.3.1 Political Capabilities

Overall, poor people have experienced an expansion in political capabilities in relation to awareness and voice, and are less successful in influencing the functioning of GPs. However, there are variations in the different aspects of awareness and voice.

Poor people have a relatively high degree of awareness in relation to electoral aspects of GP functioning, but they have limited knowledge about the conduct (for instance, awareness about officials that are supposed to attend) and procedures (for instance, the format for selecting beneficiaries) relating to GP meetings and gram sabhas. This is corroborated by the survey data - a fairly large proportion of poor people (81 percent) can name the candidate that they voted for in the most recent GP elections. Many have also heard of more than one political party (88 percent). But they have little knowledge about procedures relating to the functioning of panchayat gram sabhas –

142 From now on, all references to the first GP term refer to the first constitutionally-mandated electoral term in the early 1990s.
143 I acknowledge that even though there are some similarities in the experiences of poor people in the first GP term, these sixteen GPs do not share a common starting point.
144 The percentage is calculated out of 290 (the total respondents who had voted in previous elections). Naming the candidate is an important indicator as it shows that people are conscious of the various options, and they are not engaging in voting as a mechanical exercise.
145 Although poor people are very aware about different political parties and have strong party-affiliations, there is little enthusiasm to become members of political parties. The survey percentage for membership in political parties was 1 percent. These figures are also reflected in other national-level research, “while only about 14 per cent of the people acknowledged being members of a political party...more than 50 per cent identified themselves as being close to one or the other political party” (Palshikar and Kumar, 2004: 5415). In both the Anantapur and Kolar GPs, party-affiliations are fickle and change fast. Although parties have tried to increase grassroots membership (especially, the TDP in Andhra Pradesh), my findings indicate that in the sixteen GPs, they have been largely unable to mobilise membership.
like beneficiary selection for poverty alleviation programmes (2 percent) or the format relating to social audit / review of progress\textsuperscript{146} (1 percent).

The data indicates that the irregular conduct of \textit{gram sabhas} and \textit{gram panchayat} meetings has limited the opportunities for poor people to acquire political awareness, skills and information in relation to PRIs. Aside from traditional elites, even newly elected leaders from traditionally marginalised communities prefer to maintain a veil of secrecy, in order to control fund-flows and limit questioning. As one of the \textit{panchayat} secretaries pointed out:

> I have not seen a proper \textit{gram sabha} being conducted in about ten years. Members prefer not to have \textit{gram sabhas} because citizens’ question, they ask about the last time - what happened to our requests from the previous \textit{gram sabha}?\textsuperscript{147}

However, the electoral awareness of poor people has improved since the first set of constitutionally-mandated GP elections. In particular, decision-making in the first term was heavily influenced by upper caste leaders and traditional village patrons. Over time this influence has gradually eroded and the current circumstances are reflected in the survey percentages. Of the 290 survey respondents who had voted in the most recent GP elections, 63 percent said that the decision to vote for the particular candidate was theirs, while 18 percent said the decision was made by their husband or relative, 4 percent said that the decision was based on the recommendation of a political party representative or leader, and only 3 percent attributed it to the diktat of a traditional village leader or elder\textsuperscript{148}.

The higher levels of awareness (compared to the first GP term) and the increasing politicisation are also reflected in the survey percentages that explain why these respondents voted for a particular candidate - 29 percent voted because they supported the political party that the candidate represented, 27 percent did so because of the personal qualities of the candidate, 5 percent looked at both political party affiliation and personal qualities, 6 percent did so because the sangha was backing a particular candidate\textsuperscript{149}, only 3 percent did so because the candidate was a relative and 1 percent did so because of the candidate’s caste.

\textsuperscript{146} Only eight states have provisions in their PRI legislations for conducting social audit \textit{gram sabhas} (including Karnataka), and four others (including Andhra Pradesh) have provisions for conducting a “review of progress” in \textit{gram sabhas} (Government of India, 2008c: 2).
\textsuperscript{147} Interview with \textit{panchayat} secretary No. 2, 29 September 2005, Kolar.
\textsuperscript{148} These four responses scored the highest percentages.
\textsuperscript{149} These four responses scored the highest percentages. These percentages are supported by other research that has examined reasons for voting in \textit{panchayats} (Powis, 2003: 2619).
Although this section looks at overall findings, I discuss one overall finding about *gram sabhas* that only pertains to the study-GPs in Anantapur. This finding relates to a programme launched by the TDP government in 1997 called *Janmabhoomi* (land of one’s birth). This was the chief minister’s (Chandrababu Naidu) flagship programme and it involved three components a) *prajala vaddaku palana* (administration at the doorstep of the people), b) *shramadhanam* (voluntary contribution of labour), and c) micro planning. All government development programmes were routed through this forum.

The programme was funded by drawing on a variety of sources including *panchayat* funds (World Bank, 2000b: 29 and 36). It was held biannually (initially quarterly). About twenty theme-based (such as health, farmers or women) ‘rounds’ were conducted, each lasting for about seven to ten days. Officials were required to visit habitations and monitor the allocation and distribution of benefits. Naidu personally oversaw its implementation and devised elaborate monitoring and coordination measures to ensure both “control” (Suri, 2006: 291) and accountability of officials. The programme placed special emphasis on collectives and spawned the creation of a range of user-groups; especially micro-credit based Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

Initially the programme generated much enthusiasm within the public but after a few ‘rounds’ it began to become a mere formality (Ayyangar, 2003). Although the programme purported to promote participation of the wider public and increase the accountability of officials to the *gram sabha*, in reality, it was reduced to a forum for welfare distribution and reinforced the old administrative order (World Bank, 2000b; Reddy, 2002); accommodated the interests of the TDP cadre (Srinivasulu, 2004: 3850); politicised development, institutionalised corruption and privileged upward accountability to Naidu (Manor, 2002). However, despite its limitations, some scholars argue that it brought about a measure of change for poor people (Johnson et al., 2005).

My findings indicate that the average citizen in the Anantapur study-GPs equated *Janmabhoomi gram sabhas* with *panchayat gram sabhas*. This conflation was the product of different factors: the *Janmabhoomi gram sabha* was usually held at the *gram panchayat* headquarters, the state-led forum employed similar terminology to that used by constitutionally-legislated forums (i.e. *gram sabha*), *panchayat gram sabhas* were not operational during the *Janmabhoomi* phase, and GP presidents were given a role (however nominal) in the *Janmabhoomi gram sabha*. These findings are also reflected in the survey responses. Of the 160 respondents from Anantapur, only 9 percent can make out the difference between the two *gram sabhas*.
In relation to voice, relatively high levels of political capabilities are evident in relation to more passive or non-confrontational forms of political participation activities like voting, contacting elected representatives and government officials, and attending gram sabhas. Political capabilities in relation to more active or confrontational activities like protesting, petitioning, campaigning for elections and deliberating in gram sabhas are relatively weak. These variations are also observed in the survey percentages. Most respondents have exercised their vote (91 percent) in the most recent GP elections\footnote{150}, and the proportion is higher than those who voted in previous GP elections (68 percent). The main reasons cited by the 30 respondents who did not vote in the previous GP elections are that elections were not held (33 percent) and instead nominations were made (in many cases these nominations were decided by the ruling MLA), or that respondents were not in the village during elections (30 percent), or their name was not on the voter list (17 percent)\footnote{151}.

Compared to the 1993 (in Karnataka) and 1995 (in Andhra Pradesh) terms, nowadays almost all panchayat-related elections are contested, and are held along ‘party’ lines cutting across caste, class and religious affiliations. As one elected ward member remarked, “With or without party symbols, its all about parties in elections”\footnote{152}. These findings are supported by more recent research in the two study-states (Chandrashekhar, 2009; Jairath and Sajja, 2009). Although caste continues to play an important role in village-level politics, its role in gram panchayat elections is often intertwined with political party affiliations. Caste becomes an important mobilising factor at higher level elections, but its potential is more muted at the GP level. Instead, increasingly, in these local elections, even within one family there are divergent party-affiliations.

The higher levels of interest in GP elections also reflect the rise in the number of political aspirants and small-time leaders. Increasingly, political power is dispersed amongst the wider public, including some individuals from traditionally marginalised backgrounds. In particular, young male leaders from the Backward Castes are flexing their muscles and challenging the authority of upper caste leaders. Political competition has increased and in order to fortify their chances of winning panchayat elections, contestants not only have to secure broad support across different caste and religious groupings, but they also have to shore up support amongst both richer and poorer individuals.\footnote{150 These figures are supported by other research that examines political participation in panchayats (Alsop et al., 2001: 10).\footnote{151 These three responses scored the highest percentages.\footnote{152 Interview with elected female member No. 23, 6 January 2006, Anantapur.}}
sections of the habitation or *gram panchayat*. To bolster their chances of success, they increasingly pay for the travel expenses of voters who work away from the village (choice\textsuperscript{153} or distress migration), so that these citizens can temporarily return to cast their vote. In addition, during elections, rivals are much more vigilant about problems relating to bogus voting.

However, the high levels of competitiveness have ensured that election expenses (especially, in relation to disbursement of monetary and non-monetary inducements) have spiralled and this has made it difficult for poor people to contest in elections. If they do contest, they look to local leaders and moneylenders for financial support; and if they win, elected members from marginalised and vulnerable backgrounds are often forced to toe the line of their wealthier benefactors. For example, the bill collector in one GP said:

> This is because political leaders have supported them so these ward members have to pay back for this support by listening to what these leaders suggest and consulting them in whatever they do.\textsuperscript{154}

Nevertheless, increasingly, OBC contestants and relatively well-to-do SC/STs are striking out on their own and reneging on pre-electoral commitments with traditional elites. This has meant that compared to the first term, there is more negotiation and less domination.

In the first term, poor people were often unaware about the powers and responsibilities of GP functionaries. Their own limited political skills, coupled with the inadequate political powers and resources of the *panchayats* acted as an effective deterrent to contacting elected functionaries and government officials. Moreover, GPs were often controlled by local elites who used their socio-economic clout to curtail political competition; and restrict opportunities for poor people to gain political experience, and secure influence over the functioning of GPs. However, over the study time-period, there have been some changes in the aspects listed above, which are also reflected in the recent experiences of survey respondents.

Amongst the survey respondents, 39 percent indicated that the number of times they have *directly* contacted elected representatives and government officials has increased in the last five years, compared to the first GP term. Of the 274 survey respondents who have made contact in the last five years, 59 percent said that they have made

\textsuperscript{153} Some villagers migrate in order to get higher wages, and some of the younger generation citizens migrate in order to look for alternatives to manual employment.

\textsuperscript{154} Interview with bill collector No. 2, 30 September 2005, Kolar.
contact on their own initiative\textsuperscript{155}, 13 percent have done so with the support of the study-NGO and/or the sangha, and 12 percent have done so with the support of political leaders (including panchayat representatives). Out of a total of 46 survey respondents who have not made contact, 39 percent said that they have not done so because they are politically unskilled and uninformed, and a further 37 percent (all female) said that they have not done so because the male member of their household looked after these matters, while 9 percent of the respondents said they have not made contact because it was a waste of time\textsuperscript{156}.

From the survey percentages, it is also evident that over the last five years, poor people have contacted the GP president (49 percent) and GP ward members (41 percent)\textsuperscript{157} to a much larger extent than they have intermediate-tier panchayat members (9 percent) and district-level panchayat members (1 percent), or even non-PRI elected representatives like the MLA (23 percent). Similarly, they have contacted the GP-level panchayat secretary (40 percent) more frequently than the intermediate-tier government officials (14 percent) or the District Collector/Deputy Commissioner\textsuperscript{158} (6 percent). Thus, proximity appears to have provided more opportunities for engagement.

Survey percentages for campaigning in the recent panchayat elections (21 percent)\textsuperscript{159} and participating in protests and strikes within the last five years (8 percent) are relatively low\textsuperscript{160}. In addition, the survey percentages indicate that only 10 percent of the respondents feel that their interest in participating in more active or confrontational political activities like campaigning, making petitions/submitting applications and participating in strikes has increased in the last five years compared to the mid-1990s. This is supported by the qualitative data findings which reveal that overall, except for submitting petitions and applications, interest in participating in campaigning (electoral) and strikes is only marginally better than the first GP term.

\textsuperscript{155} This is a significant finding as the data indicates that in the first GP term (early 1990s) applications were largely routed through traditional elites or political leaders.

\textsuperscript{156} These three responses scored the highest percentages.

\textsuperscript{157} Research conducted in the early part of this decade (in other states of India) found that 35 percent of respondents had contacted panchayat representatives during the previous one year (Alsop et al., 2000: 9). So, the higher levels of my research findings suggest that there have been improvements over the study time-period.

\textsuperscript{158} DC - Deputy Commissioner in Karnataka and District Collector in Andhra Pradesh are the senior-most bureaucrats at the district level.

\textsuperscript{159} This figure is lower than that obtained by other researchers - 43% in the early years of this decade (Alsop et al., 2000: 9). The relatively low percentages for campaigning and contacting (compared to high voting percentages) are not very different to the findings from similar research conducted in developed countries (Ibid: 63).

\textsuperscript{160} Recent research indicates that the all India percentage for participating in protests, struggles or movements is low - 15 percent (CSDS, 2007: 98).
In terms of poor people’s attendance in *gram sabhas* during the last five years, survey percentages are only just above 50 percent (at least once - 51 percent)\(^{161}\). However, the qualitative data indicates that this level of attendance is a sizeable improvement over the first term when even ‘piecemeal’ *gram sabhas* were hardly ever conducted. As one key informant put it, “We had *gram sabhas* in the past but no one came. All decisions were made by B____ Reddy”\(^{162}\). Amongst the survey respondents, of the total 162 respondents who attended *gram sabhas*, 47 percent said that they had attended these forums because of the information disseminated by *panchayat* representatives and staff, 30 percent had done so on their own initiative, and 12 percent had been spurred by the mobilisation efforts of the study-NGO and/or NGO-affiliated *sangha*. Often, these forums are used to make individual or collective petitions (54 percent), but the level of deliberations in relation to beneficiary selection (2 percent\(^{163}\)) and social audits / review of progress (nil percent) is extremely limited. In addition, only 1 percent of survey respondents feel that the quality and conduct of these forums has improved over the situation in the first GP term.

Poor people are largely unable to harness their political capabilities to secure influence over the functioning of *panchayats* (especially in relation to the disbursal of material benefits). In the rare cases where poor people are able to influence the functioning of PRIs, it is largely on account of various collective action strategies and activities (for example, expanding membership base of *sangha* members within the GP, and organising protests), which will be discussed more fully in chapter 7. A *sangha* functionary gave an example of the ways in which *sangha* members’ wielded influence:

> We had a protest to sort out the problem with the government doctor. We locked him up in the room because he was not coming on time or coming at all. We also had a protest about the SC/ST hostel. The warden was not ensuring that the kids got the prescribed food like eggs...there was no variety in the food. So we complained to the Executive Officer at the *taluk* level. He came for an inspection and warned the warden. We also told the school teacher about benefits that should be coming for SC/ST children. \(^{164}\)

Aside from changes in relation to political capabilities, the data also reflects the changing nature of village politics. Apart from their diminishing hold on formal political institutions like PRIs, the authority of traditional village elders has also been challenged

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\(^{161}\) In the eight GPs of Anantapur, attendance in *gram sabhas* almost always meant *Janmabhoomi gram sabhas*, as *panchayat gram sabhas* were not conducted during Naidu’s regime. These percentages are marginally higher than findings from other studies (Alsop et al., 2001: 11; Kumar, 2006: 208).

\(^{162}\) Interview with knowledgeable informant No. 57, 31 August 2006, Kolar.

\(^{163}\) This percentage is out of a total of 162 respondents who had attended *gram sabhas* in the past five years.

\(^{164}\) Interview with *sangha* functionary No. 1, 16 September 2005, Kolar.
in relation to informal dispute resolution. The survey percentages indicate that in order to resolve major disputes (both political and non-political) at the habitation level, poor people now approach local political leaders (including panchayat members) - 33 percent.\footnote{Many of these leaders belong to the lower castes.} Although some poor people continue to approach village elders (22 percent), 26 percent of the respondents indicated that disputes are now taken to the police directly and a further 6 percent indicated that they first approached sangha functionaries.\footnote{These four responses scored the highest percentages.}

In all sixteen study-GPs, I checked for the presence and influence of caste and customary panchayats. Customary panchayats as described by Ananthpur (2006) were a rarity, and when present their influence on the functioning of statutory panchayats was negligible. Caste panchayats continue to exist (only within a few caste groupings), but their authority is limited to the particular caste group. Even within the group their influence is largely restricted to social issues, and is minimal on PRI-related decision-making.\footnote{These findings are corroborated by the views of key informants within the two districts and states, 2005-06.}

Thus, the discussion in this sub-section highlights the gradual expansion in the political capabilities of poor people and the changing nature of grassroots politics. As one informant put it, “because of politics, every single household is more aware, things have improved and people participate, also, there are more galatas (fights) as a result.”\footnote{Interview with knowledgeable informant No. 9, 20 September 2005, Kolar.} Although progress has been uneven, poor people are increasingly able to convert awareness into voice, but they are still largely unable to influence the functioning of GPs. These variations have also shaped their chances of securing material benefits from panchayats.

### 4.3.2 Material Benefits

On the whole, the existing political capabilities of poor people have not enabled them to secure adequate levels of material benefits. Although panchayats are authorised to provide a range of material benefits (individual and collective), in practice, the study-panchayats are often constrained by inadequate powers and resources, poor enforcement of accountability mechanisms, frequent collusion between elected representatives and government officials, and institutionalised corruption. In addition, both elected and government functionaries rarely disseminate information on the
nature of funding, the availability of various schemes and benefits; and the guidelines on eligibility, distribution and implementation.

Nevertheless, compared to the first GP term, overall, there is some improvement. Nowadays, most poor people have a general idea about the main benefits and schemes offered by PRIs. In order to secure material benefits, they are contacting elected and government functionaries to a larger extent than in the first term. However, like the past, there is little awareness about details relating to eligibility, mode of selection and implementation, and stipulated financial disbursements - especially in relation to wage rates.

For poor people, material benefits from panchayats largely take the form of collective benefits - those that assist the public at large, like potable water and street lighting. Although the range of benefits has increased during the study time-period, poor people continue to have little access to ‘individual’ material benefits, like housing and daily-wage employment. Moreover, questions of quality and corruption hinder the provision of both public (collective) and individual benefits. So, overall, only 19 percent of survey respondents felt that material benefits from the GP increased over the last five years compared to the first term. Further, the experiences of poor people in relation to the provision of different types of individual and collective benefits are not uniform.

The survey percentages indicate that over the last five years, poor people express a fairly high degree of satisfaction in relation to the provision of ‘collective’ services relating to potable water (72 percent) and minor roads (53 percent), but are fairly unsatisfied with the provision of street lighting (16 percent).

The difference in these percentages can be partially explained by taking into consideration the geographical and political context in both districts. Both districts are drought-prone and largely rural in nature. So, one of the main demands at the habitation level relates to provision of potable drinking water. Other common demands of the electorate relate to rural connectivity in terms of intra-GP and inter-GP minor roads, and street lighting\textsuperscript{169}. All three services come under the purview of PRIs in both states.

However, as opposed to street lighting, the provision of potable water facilities and minor roads works (primarily mud or concrete) provide sizeable opportunities to make

\textsuperscript{169} The importance of these demands is also reflected in Chattopadhyay and Dufflo’s findings that the two main complaints of women in relation to GPs relate to drinking water and road improvements (quoted in Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2006: 216).
compromises on the quality of construction and funds disbursement. These ‘contracts’ are a prime money-making source for contractors, elected functionaries and political leaders.\textsuperscript{170}

A lot of the contractors have come from politics...it's all in their control. Some work is done but most is eaten up. Every ward has a contractor now, compared to earlier when there were only two contractors in the whole village.\textsuperscript{171}

In order to cut corners, ‘percentages’ or ‘commissions’ are paid to intermediate-level engineers and officials to sign-off low-quality constructions. Often, contrary to regulations, machinery is used in place of manual labour, or construction is carried out by non-resident ‘contract labour’ - employed from other parts of the district, or other districts and states.

Contract labourers are usually employed at lower wage rates (rates that would normally not be acceptable to resident locals), and they are more willing to compromise on quality. Even if labourers are employed from within the gram panchayat or habitation limits, on average, the numbers are small; and they are made-up of core family members, relatives and political party supporters (some of whom might be poor). In addition, even for the locals, wages are often below the stipulated rates, and women receive lower amounts than men. However, there is little outcry as most poor people are unaware about the stipulations and guidelines.

Further, elected PRI functionaries and political leaders prefer to provide community benefits, rather than certain individual benefits like housing and pensions, as the former generates ‘visible’ habitation-wide services. In the last five years, only 26 percent of the survey respondent households have received employment from daily wage-employment programmes like SGRY\textsuperscript{172}, 24 percent have received pensions and 16 percent have received housing\textsuperscript{173}. In order to access these benefits, poor people often

\textsuperscript{170} The dividing line between contractors, panchayat functionaries and political leaders is fairly small.
\textsuperscript{171} Interview with elected male member No. 1, 15 September 2005, Kolar.
\textsuperscript{172} Sampoorna gram rozgar yogana (SGRY) – central government sponsored wage-employment programme that is used to fund public-works like the construction of drinking water facilities and minor roads.
\textsuperscript{173} Some of the respondents who answered in the negative did so because they were not eligible for pensions (i.e. they were not old, single or physically handicapped) and housing (they already had a pucca (permanent) house), or because someone in their household had been sanctioned pensions/housing before the five years under consideration. In both states, housing programmes are distributed through both PRI and MLA channels (extent varies between two states, but in general, MLAs are the main channel); and in Andhra Pradesh, they were also distributed under the aegis of the state-run Janmabhoomi programme. In most cases, respondents were unable to clarify whether they had benefited from PRI or MLA-administered housing programmes. In Andhra, this confusion was compounded by the conflation of panchayat and Janmabhoomi gram sabhas. So, responses to this question include distribution
have to grease the palms of functionaries all along the delivery chain. Despite these limitations, the situation is better than the first term, when there was much less awareness and voice amongst poor people. However, even though the overall trends and patterns provide a broad understanding of poor people’s experiences, they also hide many variations between the sixteen study-GPs. These variations are discussed in greater detail in section 4.5. Prior to that, in the section below, I briefly unpack the nature of poor people’s experiences by examining data across four individual characteristics – gender, caste/religion, education-levels and age-group.

4.4 Examining Data based on Individual Characteristics of Poor People

These characteristics are not the focus of my research, but I provide a short summary of the overall trends (sixteen GPs as a whole), in order to illustrate the pattern of variations within these different groupings.

4.4.1 Gender

Although poor women have an awareness about certain aspects of GP functioning and have made efforts to contact elected representatives and government officials, they have been largely unable to develop their leadership potential within panchayats. However, a more accurate assessment of their current situation requires a gendered understanding of the political arena – an arena that has traditionally been a male (mainly upper caste) preserve. I will discuss this point in more detail in chapter 7. The data also reveals that over the study time-period, women from vulnerable and marginalised backgrounds are playing a more active role within GPs.

These findings are also supported by the trends in the survey percentages. Out of 320 survey respondents, 168 were female (52 percent) and 152 were male (48 percent). In terms of political capabilities, male respondents have the edge over female respondents but in most cases the difference is surprisingly, not large. For example, the frequency percentage for signing petitions/submitting applications are 51 and 58 for female and male respondents and the corresponding percentages for attending gram sabhas are 46 and 55 respectively. In some aspects, differences are sharper. For instance, female respondents do not score as well as the men in relation to ‘electoral’ from all three sources. Pensions are distributed through PRIs only in Karnataka. In the time period under study, pensions in Andhra did not come under the PRIs purview, but were administered by the revenue department. However, in Andhra, applications for pensions need to be approved by GP presidents. In addition, since the state-run Janmabhoomi programme was used as a forum to disperse pensions, there was much confusion in the minds of lay citizens as to whether the pension had links with the revenue department or with panchayats. So, responses to this question include distribution from non-PRIs sources too.
aspects of political participation like - making independent decisions in relation to casting their vote (46 and 82 percent respectively), and participating in electoral campaigns (13 and 30 percent respectively). I have also carried out chi-square statistical tests within the survey data to check whether differences between groups are statistically significant (not likely to have occurred by chance).  

Further, in terms of securing material benefits, though there are no clear-cut trends in the overall survey percentages between male and female respondents, the qualitative data reveals that relatively few women get access to daily-wage labour from panchayats. Women also get lower wages than men in PRI-related employment, and they are often dependent on male members of their households (or extended family) to transact and follow-up PRI-related requests for individual material benefits.

4.4.2 Caste/Religion

In terms of political capabilities, poor people belonging to Other Backward Classes and SC/ST communities have modest levels of awareness and voice, but they continue to lack influence over the functioning of panchayats. However, there are some differences between categories. For instance, in terms of panchayat leadership, poor people (mainly men) from Backward Castes have been able to resist and challenge the domination of traditional elites to a much larger extent than their counterparts from Muslim or SC/ST communities. In addition, categories are not homogenous. Women from traditionally marginalised communities have not acquired the levels of political capabilities and material well-being that men from the same communities have. As one key informant put it, “There is not much change in women’s participation in GP but there is more change in SC/ST participation.”

There are no clear-cut trends between the four main categories in the survey data [OBCs – 107 respondents (33 percent), FC – 27 respondents (9 percent), SC – 147 respondents (46 percent) and ST – 39 respondents (12 percent)]. Yet, in some cases, respondents from SC/ST communities have higher percentages than OBCs and Forward Classes (FCs) - both in relation to political capabilities and access to

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174 The results are not significant for the first two questions (petitions and attendance in GSs), but are significant (p=<0.05) for the next two questions (decision to vote and campaigning).

175 Examples from survey percentages - 54 percent of the female respondents felt that the provision of minor roads was satisfactory/good as compared to 52 percent of male respondents (p>0.05=not significant), corresponding figures for securing daily-wage employment from panchayat programmes were 21 and 32 percent respectively (p<0.05=significant).

176 Interview with knowledgeable informant No. 19, 1 October 2005, Kolar.

177 The category includes both castes and religious groupings. In Karnataka, some religious minority groups and the dominant castes are given reservation status; but in Andhra Pradesh
material benefits. For example, 60 percent of OBC respondents, 44 percent of FC respondents, 68 percent of SCs and 62 percent of ST respondents are able to name their current ward member [p>0.05=not significant (n.s.)]; corresponding percentages for securing PRI-related daily-wage employment in the last five years are 16, 19, 36 and 23 percent respectively (p<0.05=significant).

4.4.3 Education

There are no clear-cut differences in the experiences of poor people who have some level of education and those who have had no schooling. The survey data [schooling (61 respondents – 19 percent) and no schooling (259 respondents – 81 percent)] suggests that the former have the advantage over the latter (more so in relation to expanding political capabilities and less so in relation to securing material benefits). For example, percentages for respondents who are able to name their current ward member are 72 percent for those with some level of education and 60 percent for those with no education (p>0.05=n.s.), corresponding percentages for submitting petitions/making applications are 71 and 51 percent respectively (p<0.05=significant), while those for obtaining daily-wage employment in panchayat programmes are 26 percent each (p>0.05=n.s.).

The lack of schooling has not been a major hindrance for poor people in terms of acquiring material benefits from panchayats, but it has curbed the expansion of political capabilities. Poor people who are functionally literate find it easier to access PRI-related information, make associated demands, and challenge irregularities in PRI functioning. The lack of basic literacy also hampers the functioning of PRI-related elected representatives from vulnerable and marginalised backgrounds, and increases their dependence on literate political leaders and government officials. The situation is particularly difficult for women functionaries. Nevertheless, the data also highlights that over the study period, growing awareness, a more supportive panchayat environment (in relation to formal training and enabling policies of state governments), and the intervention of study-NGOs have lessened the probabilities of their being deceived or taken advantage of. However, this varies across different GPs.

4.4.4 Age

Amongst poor people, the younger generation (18-39) is more involved in the functioning of panchayats, compared to the older generation (aged 40 and above). In
of some GPs, a few people from the younger generation amongst the poor are also becoming ward members and small-time leaders.

The survey percentages suggest that respondents in the age group of 18-41 (170 respondents – 53 percent) have a slight edge in relation to political capabilities compared to respondents in the age group ‘42 and above’ (150 respondents – 47 percent), but they do not have a similar advantage in securing material benefits from PRIs. For example, percentages for naming their GP ward member are 64 percent for respondents in the age group 18-41 and 61 percent for those in the age group 42 and above (p>0.05=n.s.), corresponding percentages for campaigning in PRI elections in the last five years are 23 and 18 percent respectively (p>0.05=n.s.), but for provision of drinking water facilities (percentages for good and satisfactory) are 69 and 76 percent respectively (p>0.05=n.s.).

The discussion above indicates that although citizens who are male, relatively young or have some level of schooling have an advantage over other categories within their grouping, the gap in percentages between traditionally marginalised groups (women, SCs/STs, and people with no schooling) and those respondents who are better-off, is not very wide. The analysis reinforces the importance of factoring in differences within individual characteristics, but it also suggests that more detailed research needs to be conducted to understand the evolving nature of variations within these different groupings. In the next section, I return to the discussion on the sixteen study-GPs and unpack the variations between the GPs.

4.5 Examining the GP-level data

This section is divided into three parts that examine experiences of poor people in relation to political capabilities and material benefits by comparing findings between sixteen gram panchayats. The first sub-section highlights broad differences between the sixteen GPs. It also utilises the trends in the variations to identify the eight GPs where poor people attain higher levels (at a point in time: 2005-2006) of political capabilities and material well-being, in comparison to the other eight GPs. The second sub-section uses detailed qualitative case-studies to provide a more nuanced understanding of the variations, and associated trends and patterns (over the study time-period). The final sub-section highlights the six factors that appear to be associated with higher levels of political capabilities and material well-being.
4.5.1 Overview of Trends in Inter-GP Variations

Table 4.1 presents the trends in inter-GP variations in relation to twenty key questions. These questions provide a comprehensive overview of different aspects relating to political capabilities and material benefits using both quantitative and qualitative data. Most questions relate to the situation in the 2000 GP term (and the start of the 2005 term) in Kolar, and the 2001 GP term in Anantapur.

For each question, the frequency percentages indicate the proportion of GPs (out of sixteen) that fall under each of the five scoring categories\(^{178}\). The break-up highlights the extent of variations (dispersion across the different scoring categories\(^{179}\)) within the twenty questions. Statistical tests for significance (between GPs) were not carried out as the sample size (20 respondents in each GP) is too small to generate valid results.

4.5.1.1 Political Capabilities

Awareness

The degree of variation between GPs is greater in relation to knowledge about electoral dimensions of political participation like naming the person they voted for in the last GP elections, and basic knowledge about the GP like naming their ward member (Q. No. 1 in Table 4.1 - 69 percent of GPs fall in the high and medium-to-low categories, and 31 percent of the GPs are split across the remaining two categories). Inter-GP variations are more limited in relation to awareness about more detailed functional aspects like the extent and range of powers and resources vested in GPs; or knowledge about the conduct of gram panchayat meetings, and procedures of gram sabhas (Q. No. 2 - 81 percent of the GPs fall in the ‘zero’ category).

Question 3 highlights the aggregate qualitative trend in inter-GP variations with respect to awareness about electoral and general aspects of panchayat-related political participation, and aspects of GP functioning (44 percent of GPs fall in the medium-to-high category, 31 percent in the medium-to-low, and 25 percent in the low category)\(^{180}\).

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\(^{178}\) The five categories indicate the proportion of GPs that scored high (76-100%), medium-to-high (51-75%), medium-to-low (26-50%), low (1-25%) and zero. Frequency percentages in each GP are out of a total of twenty respondents, and unless specified, they relate only to ‘yes’ responses.

\(^{179}\) There is wider dispersion when the percentages are not concentrated in one or two categories but spread across four or more categories, or when they are found in both the top and bottom categories.

\(^{180}\) This aggregate indicator is derived from the perspectives shared by key informants and citizens within the GP in semi-structured interviews and group discussions. The situation in an individual GP was assessed by examining the opinions expressed by the informants with respect to questions in relation to poor people’s PRI-related electoral and general awareness.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q. No.</th>
<th>Details of Twenty Key Questions</th>
<th>High **</th>
<th>Medium-to-High</th>
<th>Medium-to-Low</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Zero</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Do you know the name of your present GP ward member?</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do you know about <em>gram sabha</em> procedures relating to beneficiary selection for pov. allev. prog.?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Aggregate Qualitative Trends in inter-GP variations in relation to <em>awareness</em></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Did you vote in the last GP elections (2005 in K or 2001 in AP)?</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>In the last <em>panchayat</em> (any tier) elections in AP/ last 2 in K: Did you campaign/canvass on behalf of any candidate?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Have you voted in previous GP elections in 2000 and 1993 in K, and 1995 in AP? (Answers include percentages for one or more elections)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>In the past 5 years, have you contacted any of the following reps in relation to GP: ward member?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>In the past 5 years, have you contacted any of the following reps in relation to GP: GP President?</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>In the past 5 years, have you contacted any of the following officials in relation to GP: GP sec.?</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Have you participated in any of the following in the last 5 years in relation to PRIs - signed a collective petition outlining demands or submitted an individual petition/application? (both/either)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Have you participated in any of the following in the last 5 years in relation to PRIs – taken part in a protest / strike?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>How often in the last five years have you attended the <em>panchayat gram sabha</em> (GS) (yes implies at least once)?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Have you deliberated on beneficiary selection in relation to poverty alleviation programmes, in <em>gram sabhas</em>, in the last 5 years?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Aggregate Qualitative Trends in inter-GP variations in relation to <em>voice</em></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Aggregate Qualitative Trends in inter-GP variations in relation to <em>influence</em></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Do you think your GP has been satisfactorily addressing the following issues/providing the following local services for you: Potable Water? Yes includes answers for good and satisfactory</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Do you think your GP has been satisfactorily addressing the following issues/providing the following local services for you: Minor Roads? Yes includes answers for good and satisfactory</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Has your household benefited from daily-wage employment programmes like SGRY implemented through <em>panchayats</em> during the last 5 years?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Have services and benefits from the GP increased over the last 5 years compared to the time the <em>panchayat</em> elections started about 10 years ago?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Broad Qualitative Trends in inter-GP variations in relation to material benefits</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Green colour highlights the highest percentage in a row. Statistical tests for significance were not carried out as the sample size (20 respondents in each GP) was too small to generate valid results. ** GPs that scored high (76-100%), medium-to-high (51-75%), medium-to-low (26-50%), low (1-25%) and zero
Voice

In relation to electoral practices, variations between sixteen GPs are smaller in relation to the more passive dimension of voting (Q. No. 4 – 87 percent of GPs fall in the high category – relates to most recent GP election), but variations are wider with respect to more active aspects like campaigning (Q. No. 5 – 63 percent of GPs fall in the low category and 37 percent of the GPs are split across three other categories). In addition, differences between GPs are starker in relation to voting in previous GP elections (Q. No. 6 – 56 percent of GPs fall in the high category and 44 percent of GPs are split across three other categories).

With respect to general political practices, there is wide variation in relation to passive aspects like contacting ward members (Q. No. 7 - four categories contain about 25 percent of GPs each), contacting GP presidents (Q. No. 8 - four categories contain 19 to 38 percent of the GPs each), and contacting the panchayat secretary (Q. No. 9 - three categories contain about 25 to 44 percent of the GPs each). However, inter-GP variation is more limited with respect to poor people’s experiences of contacting higher-level elected representatives and government officials (mandal, taluk or district). Although the number of times poor people have contacted representatives and officials in the last five years compared to the first electoral term has increased (39 percent), the level varies quite widely between GPs. Variations are also visible in the more active aspects of political participation like petitioning (Q. No. 10 – 56 percent of GPs fall in the medium-to-high category, and the remaining 44 percent are split across three other categories), and protesting (Q. No. 11 – 63 percent of GPs fall in the zero category, 25 percent in the low category and 13 percent in the medium to low category).

Further, variations are evident in relation to other passive aspects like attending panchayat gram sabhas. They are wider in relation to attendance (Q. No. 12 - 56 percent of GPs fall in the medium-to-high category, and the remaining 44 percent are split across three other categories); and smaller in relation to more active aspects like deliberation in gram sabhas (Q. No. 13 – 94 percent of the GPs fall in the zero category).

Question 14 highlights the aggregate qualitative finding in relation to the range of physical practices undertaken within individual GPs in respect to panchayat-related political participation (50 percent of GPs are in the medium-to-low category, 25 percent in the low category, but another 25 percent are in the medium-to-high category)\textsuperscript{181}.

\textsuperscript{181}This aggregate indicator is derived from the perspectives shared by key informants and citizens within the GP in semi-structured interviews and group discussions. The situation in
Influence
The extent of poor people’s influence on the dynamics, activities and general functioning of GPs can be ascertained accurately only by examining the qualitative data. The aggregate qualitative finding for influence uses a range of sub-indicators with respect to - electoral conduct and outcomes, conduct and activities in relation to everyday GP functioning, and the decision-making and practices of individuals and groups. As can be seen from question 15, there are variations between GPs - 50 percent fall in the low category, 31 percent in the medium-to-low category, but a few GPs (19 percent) are in the medium-to-high category.

4.5.1.2 Material Benefits
Inter-GP variations are also visible in relation to poor people’s experiences of securing community (like potable drinking water and minor roads) and individual (like daily-wage labour) material benefits from PRIs. Question 16 relates to potable drinking water (69 percent of GPs fall under the medium-to-high category and the remaining 31 percent cover two other categories), while question 17 relates to minor roads (31 percent fall under the high category and 69 percent are split across four other categories). Question 18 looks at securing daily-wage employment from PRIs (56 percent of GPs come under the low category and 44 percent come under the medium-to-low category).

In addition, there are variations in the extent to which poor people feel that services and benefits from the GP have increased over the last five years compared to the first term (Q. No. 19 – 56 percent of GPs fall in the low category, and the remaining 44 percent are split across three other categories).

Question 20 highlights the broad qualitative trends for inter-GP variations with respect to material benefits. Qualitative trends are based on poor people’s experiences (quality of material benefits, nature of payments, level of employment opportunities, process of securing benefit, and extent of consultation in implementation of poverty alleviation programmes) in relation to securing PRI-related community and individual material benefits.

182 This aggregate indicator is derived from the perspectives shared by key informants and citizens within the GP in semi-structured interviews and group discussions. The situation in each GP was assessed by examining the opinions expressed by the informants with respect to questions in relation to poor people’s PRI-related physical practices (which practices were adopted, how often, what it involved, and the quality of the experience).
benefits (81 percent of the GPs fall in the medium-to-low category and 19 percent in the low category).

4.5.1.3 Examining Ranking of Individual Categories and Overall Ranking

Sub-sections 4.5.1.1 and 4.5.1.2 have already listed and discussed the twenty questions spread across the four categories (enumerated in Table 4.1). In this sub-section, I discuss findings in relation to the aggregate scores for each of the four categories – awareness, voice, influence and material benefits; and link the individual category rankings to the overall ranking for each GP. As mentioned earlier, questions in all categories were selected to reflect both quantitative and qualitative aspects. These questions may a priori be seen as important but the discussion in the empirical chapters will show that some are of different practical importance within different contexts.

Since there are a different number of questions in each category (3 for awareness, 11 for voice, 1 for influence and 5 for material benefits), within each category, I have computed the average score for each GP. This average is derived by dividing the total score for all questions within the category by the number of questions in that category. The overall score for each GP is then determined by totalling the average scores for each of the four categories (so each category is given equal weight as it is represented by only one aggregate score).

AWARENESS

Table 4.2a presents the aggregate findings in relation to the three questions pertaining to awareness (discussed in detail earlier in sub-section 4.5.1.1). The rows list the sixteen GPs and the columns lists the GP-wise findings in relation to the three questions.

Two of the questions relate to the survey data (ability to name the GP ward member and knowledge about the conduct of gram sabhas) and the third relates to the aggregate qualitative findings with respect to awareness about electoral and general aspects of panchayat-related political participation, and aspects of GP functioning. The table is divided into two halves, containing the top-eight and bottom-eight GPs.

183 For example, the discussion in chapter 5 will demonstrate that the question relating to naming the GP ward member in the awareness category has different relevance in the GPs of Kolar compared to those in Anantapur.

184 In all four categories, the five rankings of High, Medium-to-High, Medium-to-Low, Low and Nil are based on the gradations generated in Table 4.1.
Table 4.2a: AWARENESS – Aggregate ranking of GPs (in descending order)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GP No.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3 Qual</th>
<th>Total #</th>
<th>Average Score=Total/3</th>
<th>Ranking in descending order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GP 5</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 8</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 1</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 4</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 6</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 3</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 7</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 2</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP13</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP14</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP12</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP10</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP16</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 9</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP11</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP15</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: *** - High, ** - Medium-to-High, * - Medium-to-Low, Nil – Zero (gradation is based on percentages in Table 4.1); Qual – Qualitative Data Related; # T: Total of all stars in a row
In this category, the aggregate scores for the sixteen GPs range from 2.67 to 0.67. The top-eight GPs have scores of 2.67 or 2, while the bottom-eight scores range from 1.67 to 0.67. Within the top-eight GPs, the two leading GPs secure the same rank (GP5 and GP8), and the remaining six (GP1, GP4, GP6, GP3, GP5, GP7) share the second rank.

The aggregate scores are more clearly differentiated within the bottom-eight GPs - three of these GPs share the third rank (GP13, GP14 and GP 12), one the fourth rank (GP 10), two the fifth rank (GP16 and GP9), and two the sixth rank (GP11 and GP15). All of the top-eight GPs are located in Kolar district and within them - the two leading GPs are associated with one of the study-NGOs. Five of the top-eight GPs in this category (GP5, GP8, GP1, GP4 and GP6) also form part of the overall top-ranking GPs (combining all four categories, see Table 4.2e).

VOICE

Table 4.2b presents the aggregate findings in relation to the eleven questions pertaining to voice. As discussed earlier in sub-section 4.5.1.1, these questions cover a broad range of physical practices in relation to political participation, like voting, campaigning, contacting, petitioning, protesting, attending *gram sabhas* and deliberating in these forums. Scores for ten of these questions are based on survey findings and the eleventh question captures the aggregate qualitative findings in relation to the physical practices. The table is divided into two halves, containing the top-eight and bottom-eight GPs.

In this category, the aggregate scores for the sixteen GPs range from 2.82 to 1.36. The top-eight GPs have scores that range from 2.82 to 2 while the bottom-eight scores range from 1.91 to 1.36. Within the top-eight GPs, the leading GP (GP5) is followed by GP8 in second rank, GP4 in third rank, GP13 in fourth rank, GP1 and GP6 share the fifth rank, while GP14 and GP16 share the sixth rank.

Scores are less differentiated within the bottom-eight GPs - four of them share the seventh rank (GP12, GP10, GP3 and GP7), GP2 the eighth rank, GP11 the ninth rank, and at the bottom GP15 and GP9 share the same tenth rank. Five of the top-eight GPs are located in Kolar district and six of them are associated with the study-NGOs. Seven of the top-eight GPs in this category (GP5, GP8, GP4, GP13, GP1, GP6 and GP 14) also form part of the overall top-ranking GPs (combining all four categories, see Table 4.2e).
Table 4.2b: VOICE - Aggregate ranking of GPs (in descending order)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GP No.</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14Qual</th>
<th>Total #</th>
<th>Average Score=Total/11</th>
<th>Ranking in descending order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GP 5</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 8</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
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<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2.64</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 4</td>
<td>***</td>
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<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
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<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 13</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>2.27</td>
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<td>*</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>*</td>
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<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>*</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
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<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Nil</td>
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<td>Nil</td>
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<td>1.91</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>GP 7</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*</td>
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<td>***</td>
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<td>1.91</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>***</td>
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<td>*</td>
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<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 9</td>
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<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
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<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.36</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: *** - High, ** - Medium-to-High, * - Medium-to-Low, * - Low, Nil – Zero (gradation is based on percentages in Table 4.1); Qual – Qualitative Data Related; # T: Total of all stars in a row
### Table 4.2c: INFLUENCE - Aggregate ranking of GPs (in descending order)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GP No.</th>
<th>15 Qual</th>
<th>Total #</th>
<th>Average Score=Total/1</th>
<th>Ranking in descending order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GP 5</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 1</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 4</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 8</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP13</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 6</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP14</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP12</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 2</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 3</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 7</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP10</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP16</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP15</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP11</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 9</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key:** *** - High, ** - Medium-to-High, * - Medium-to-Low, * - Low, Nil – Zero (gradation is based on percentages in Table 4.1); Qual – Qualitative Data Related; # T: Total of all stars in a row
INFLUENCE
Table 4.2c presents the aggregate findings in relation to the one question pertaining to influence. Since it is difficult to measure changes in influence using survey data, I used a number of qualitative indicators which were used to assess the aggregate qualitative findings in relation to influence (relating to electoral outcomes; and improved transparency, accountability, conduct of panchayat forums, attendance of staff, and distribution and implementation of material benefits). The table is divided into two halves, containing the top-eight and bottom-eight GPs.

In this category, the aggregate scores for the sixteen GPs range from 3 to 1. The top-eight GPs have scores that range from 3 to 2 while the bottom-eight GPs score 1. Within the top-eight GPs, three share the top rank (GP5, GP1 and GP4) while five share the second rank (GP8, GP13, GP6, GP14, GP12). Amongst the top-ranking GPs, in GP5, the activities and actions of poor people have improved the conduct of council meetings and gram sabhas, while in GP1 and GP4, the strategies and collective action of sangha members have influenced electoral outcomes through the election of individuals who come from vulnerable and marginalised backgrounds, or from within the sangha, or those who support the issues and demands of the poor.

All the bottom-eight GPs share the same rank (GP2, GP3, GP7, GP10, GP15, GP11 and GP9). Five of the top-eight GPs are located in Kolar district and six of these GPs are NGO-operational. In addition, all the top-eight GPs in this category (GP5, GP1, GP4, GP8, GP13, GP6, GP14 and GP12) also form part of the overall top-ranking GPs (combining all four categories, see Table 4.2e).

MATERIAL BENEFITS
Table 4.2d presents the aggregate findings in relation to five questions relating to material benefits. As discussed in sub-section 4.5.1.2, the questions in this category cover issues which relate to securing community (like potable drinking water and minor roads) and individual (like daily-wage labour) material benefits from PRIs.

Four of the questions are drawn from the survey data; and one question deals with the aggregate qualitative findings based on poor people’s experiences of acquiring PRI-related community and individual material benefits (quality of material benefits, nature of payments, level of employment opportunities, process of securing benefit, and extent of consultation in implementation of poverty alleviation programmes). The table is divided into two parts, containing the top-seven and bottom-nine GPs.
Table 4.2d: MATERIAL BENEFITS- Aggregate ranking of GPs (in descending order)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GP No.</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>20 Qual</th>
<th>Total #</th>
<th>Average Score=Total/5</th>
<th>Ranking in descending order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GP13</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 5</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP10</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 8</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 1</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP14</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP12</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 4</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 6</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 2</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP16</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 3</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 7</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP15</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP11</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 9</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: **** - High, *** - Medium-to-High, ** - Medium-to-Low, * - Low, Nil – Zero (gradation is based on percentages in Table 4.1); Qual – Qualitative Data Related; # T: Total of all stars in a row
In this category, the aggregate scores for the sixteen GPs range from 2.6 to 1.2. The top-seven GPs have scores that range from 2.6 to 2.2 and the bottom-nine GPs have scores that range from 2 to 1.2. Within the top-seven GPs, GP13 secures the top rank, GP5 and GP10 share second place, while the third place is shared by four GPs (8, 1, 14 and 12). Amongst the bottom-nine GPs, fourth place is shared by four GPs (4, 6, 2 and 1), fifth place is shared by three GPs (3, 7 and 15), GP11 secures the sixth rank, and GP9 gets the lowest rank. Four of the top-seven GPs (including the highest ranking GP) are located in Anantapur district and six are associated with the study-NGOs. Six of the top-seven GPs in this category (GP13, GP5, GP10, GP8, GP1, GP14 and GP12) also form part of the overall top-ranking GPs (combining all four categories, see Table 4.2e).

OVERALL RANKING
The inter-GP variations in relation to political capabilities and material benefits (discussed in sub-section 4.5.1.1 and 4.5.1.2), together with the analysis on individual category rankings in the earlier part of this sub-section indicate that there are only some clear-cut trends that cover both dimensions. In terms of survey percentages, GPs that have done relatively well (GP 4, GP 12) in relation to political capabilities (primarily with respect to awareness and voice) have not necessarily done as well as other GPs (GP 3, GP 7, GP 10, GP 16) in terms of material benefits, while some GPs have done relatively well on both fronts (GP 1, GP 5, GP 6, GP 8, GP 13, GP 14). Similarly, the qualitative data reveals that only a few GPs have recorded relatively high levels in relation to both political capabilities and material well-being (GP 1, GP 4, GP 5, GP 12, GP 13, and GP 14).

In order to provide a comprehensive ranking of the GPs, I combined the scores of the sixteen survey questions to develop a simple index\textsuperscript{185} that helped to rank the different GPs\textsuperscript{186}. When these findings were combined with the qualitative trends it helped to generate a list of the eight GPs (GP 1, GP 4, GP 5, GP 6, GP 8, GP 12, GP 13 and GP 14), where poor people have acquired higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits when compared to the other eight GPs. In Table 4.2e, the rows list the sixteen GPs, while the columns highlight the average scores for each category and the overall scores when all four categories are combined.

\textsuperscript{185} The index was developed by assigning the number ‘1’ for all ‘yes’ answers and the number ‘0’ for all other answers. The index adds up all the assigned numbers for each of the sixteen survey questions and generates totals for each of the 320 respondents.

\textsuperscript{186} The ranks were generated using a Kruskal-Wallis test, which was also used to check for statistical significance (p<.05=significant).
Table 4.2e: Overall GP Ranking Combining Four Categories (in descending order)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GP No.</th>
<th>Awareness Average Score</th>
<th>Voice Average Score</th>
<th>Influence Average Score</th>
<th>Material Benefits Average Score</th>
<th>Overall Score for four categories</th>
<th>Overall Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GP 5</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>10.89</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 8</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>9.51</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 1</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>9.38</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 4</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>9.36</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP13</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>8.54</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>GP 6</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP14</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>7.87</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP12</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>7.78</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 2</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 3</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>6.71</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 7</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>6.71</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP10</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>GP16</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP15</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP11</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 9</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The last column provides the overall GP-wise ranks in relation to levels of political capabilities and material benefits attained by poor people in the sixteen GPs. The top half of the table contains the higher performing GPs and the bottom half contains the lower performing GPs (listed in descending order).

A closer examination of the overall trends indicates that the higher performing GPs are not restricted to one district alone (5 are located in Kolar and 3 in Anantapur district), and they also include GPs where NGOs do not operate (GP 6 and GP 12). So, it is important to analyse why some GPs do better than others in similar settings. In addition, assessing the nature of change in the sixteen GPs requires that the current levels of political capabilities and material well-being are situated in the context of the overall study time-period. This suggests that a more nuanced understanding of variations in these levels, the patterns in these variations, and the factors associated with higher levels of political capabilities and material well-being necessitates an in-depth analysis of the situation within each of the sixteen GPs. These detailed qualitative insights are discussed in the next sub-section.

4.5.2 Detailed Qualitative Examination of Patterns in Inter-GP Variations

All sixteen qualitative overviews help to illuminate how variations have occurred in fairly similar settings. Appendix 4.2 provides a comparative overview of the demographic, geographical, political and socio-economic characteristics of the sixteen GPs. In the first part of this sub-section, I offer a flavour of these differences by providing an in-depth qualitative overview of change in four contrasting case-study GPs. These overviews examine change in relation to the overall functioning of the GP, patterns of leadership, and the experiences of both poor and non-poor people. Of the four GPs, two are NGO-operational GPs (GP 5 and GP 14) and two are non-NGO operational GPs (GP 3 and GP 11). GP 3 and GP 5 are based in Kolar, while GP 11 and GP 14 are in Anantapur. All four are located in different legislative constituencies.

The second half of the sub-section highlights the factors that appear to be associated with the variations. Apart from the nature of political opportunity spaces and NGO interventions, other factors that appear to have some association are - the nature of democratic institutions within the legislative constituency; the strategies, actions and collective strength of sangha (group associated with NGO) members; the nature of political competition within GPs; and the content and extent of implementation of the Janmabhoomi programme.
4.5.2.1 Four Contrasting Qualitative Overviews

I selected the following four sample case-studies to provide a deeper insight into the nature and extent of contrasts between the sixteen GPs. Two GPs (GP 5 and GP 14) fall in the top half (higher performing) of Table 4.2 and two (GP 3 and GP 11) fall in the bottom half (lower performing)\(^{187}\).

GP 3 - Guttapalli

Guttapalli is a non-remote, non-NGO operational GP in Kolar district. It covers sixteen habitations (of which four formed part of the study) and 1720 households\(^{188}\). This GP is very well-connected (transportation and roads) and fairly self-sufficient (provides access to major amenities\(^{189}\)). There are no NGOs working on PRI-related issues but the study-NGO Akravati has worked in a few habitations of this GP in the past (before 2000, weak presence)\(^{190}\). The GP has a large concentration of Vokkaligas and Baljiga (both are BCs - Backward Castes) households and many of the powerful taluk-level political leaders come from the GP. This has meant that over time, different MLAs have had to pay more attention to demands from their supporters in this GP.

In the past, right up to the 1994 GP term, the political contest revolved around local leaders from the upper caste. The Janata Dal camp was led by a Brahmin and the Congress was led by a Vaishya. After these leaders passed away the mantle has moved onto Vokkaligas and Baljigas, and the local contest has begun to reflect party politics in the legislative constituency. Thus, the CPM has been making inroads since the 2005 GP term and has replaced the Janata Dal as the main ‘opposition’ party. In addition, the role of Valmikis (STs) and Muslim political leaders is also on the rise.

In the 1994 term, some ward member positions were uncontested, and the lady GP president (BC) was a figurehead for the local Brahmin leader. In the 2000 term (first 30 months), the GP president was a young, highly-educated Vokkaliga (Congress). However, in cohorts with the panchayat secretary (GP presidents in Karnataka have joint cheque-signing authority with panchayat secretaries) he indulged in rampant corruption and ran the GP in a highly non-transparent manner. Since there was no unity amongst the GP members from the Congress, they were unable to ‘control’

\(^{187}\) They include both remote and non-remote GPs.
\(^{188}\) This total was arrived at during fieldwork and relates to divided households (having a separate kitchen). I was not able to compare these to census figures as census data is not available on a GP-level basis.
\(^{189}\) For example, primary health centre, veterinary centre, government high school and banks.
\(^{190}\) However, there are two GP-specific NGOs that work on women’s issues, but they only operate in the main village. They are run by local people and their influence on the GP is minimal.
him. This problem continued in the second part of the term when a Baljiga lady (Congress) was elected as president. Her influential husband ran the show and capitalised on the schisms within the Congress members.

Despite these problems, in the 2005 term, the Congress has managed to retain power. An illiterate SC (Madiga) lady was elected president but she is largely a front for an influential Vokkaliga leader from the same habitation. However, there is an element of change within the SCs. The GP president and her husband have brokered a deal with the influential leader in their habitation, which allows them to implement a small section of the ‘contracts’ in relation to the implementation of community material benefits. In addition, two other male SC (Madiga) ward members (from other habitations) have “negotiated” an agreement with powerful Congress leaders and ward members within the GP, which allows the first 30 months to be split equally between the current lady president and the two other members, amounting to a reduced term of ten months each. However, these reduced terms offer little opportunity for elected representatives to gain experience and skills. They also strengthen the hand of local elites, and government officials like the panchayat secretary and the local bill collector/s. In addition, these shortened terms also offer MLAs a window to influence the functioning of GPs - through panchayat secretaries, as they control the transfers of officials within the legislative constituency.

Compared to the 1994 term, all ward member seats over the past two GP terms have been contested and there have been no cases of ‘unanimous’ candidates, “Ten years ago, there was not much awareness of politics. Most elections were unanimous - not contested. Now, each village has many aspiring leaders, each house has many party-affiliations.” The margin for victory is now reduced to a few votes. As a result the amount spent on elections has “dramatically” increased. Often, elected GP members use the first instalment of GP funds to cover their election expenses or they channel the GP contract to their patron.

However, the rising levels of contestation have not “translated” into significant material benefits for poor people. GP members affiliated to the party-in-power “share” the

191 In Karnataka, GP presidents are elected indirectly by the ward members (from amongst themselves) based on the reservation category allotted for the president’s post. Moreover, the president is invariably elected from the party-in-power, meaning the political party that has the ‘quorum’ - the highest number of elected ward members.

192 Interview with elected male member No. 28, 17 October 2005, Kolar.

193 Interview with knowledgeable informant No. 39, 18 October 2005, Kolar.

194 Interview with knowledgeable informant No. 39, 18 October 2005, Kolar.

195 Interview with knowledgeable informant No. 37, 17 October 2005, Kolar.
total pot of funds equally amongst themselves while the opposition party members are “given” lesser amounts\textsuperscript{196}. As a result, the community works that are undertaken are often piecemeal and of low quality. Although the quantum of funds and range of benefits has increased over the three terms, most citizens feel that they are not provided with detailed information about amenities, funds and benefits that can be accessed from PRIs; nor do they have influence over decision-making in forums like the \textit{gram sabha}. In addition, the economic clout of the Vokkaligas and Baljigas\textsuperscript{197} coupled with the growing political divisions across caste and religion often thwart effective collective mobilisation amongst poor people. Despite these problems, the local presence of \textit{taluk}-level influential leaders, intermediate and \textit{zilla panchayat} members (across almost all three terms) has ensured that a sizeable amount of funds and benefits are channelled to this particular GP.

The intermediate\textit{ panchayat} and \textit{zilla panchayat} members often belong to different political parties\textsuperscript{198}. While this has exacerbated political tension, it has also helped to rein in large-scale corruption. In the 1995 term, with a CPM MLA in power, the intermediate \textit{panchayat} president (Congress) was able to suspend two \textit{taluk}-level engineers for siphoning funds in relation to the construction of a \textit{panchayat} building in this GP. In the 2000 term, the Congress-controlled district \textit{panchayat} sanctioned funds for water supply. These were ‘diverted’ to political party supporters by the local \textit{zilla panchayat} member (CPM), in collusion with the CPM MLA. In response, the Congress GP members [these members had the “quorum” (they were the party-in-power)] made an official complaint to the district \textit{panchayat} and were successful in putting a halt to further dispersals\textsuperscript{199}.

**GP 5 - Gumpalli**

Gumpalli is a remote, NGO-operational GP in Kolar district. The GP has access to most public amenities but it lacks access to some facilities, like a government high school. It covers sixteen habitations and 1570 households. NGO Godavari has been working in this GP since the early 1990s. It now operates in fifteen habitations, and four of these formed part of the study. Initially, NGO Godavari was involved in building the awareness of women on gender-related issues, and improving their financial situation

\textsuperscript{196} GP presidents often ‘take’ or get a larger share. In addition, there is an agreed ‘percentage’ that is given to engineers and the Executive Officer at the \textit{taluk} level, on most GP-related works.

\textsuperscript{197} Powerful leaders from these communities continue to head most of the non-PRI forums like watershed and education committees.

\textsuperscript{198} In both Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, IP and ZP elections are held on a party basis.

\textsuperscript{199} Interview with elected male member No. 21, 12 October 2005, Kolar
by helping to organise micro-credit *sanghas*. Since 2000, NGO Godavari has expanded its focus to include advocacy on PRI-related issues.

Both the Congress and the Janata Dal (Secular) [JD (S)] parties have a strong base within the GP. Further, there is stiff competition between leaders *within* each party, which has meant that PRI elections are highly contested. Most of the powerful political leaders are from the Vokkaliga caste, but increasingly, these traditional leaders have to accommodate the interests of leaders from the Kuruba (BC), Muslim and Valmiki (ST) communities.

This ‘accommodation’ largely began in the 2000 GP term. In the 1994 term, the GP president was an influential Vokkaliga leader from the Janata Dal. Along with a few other powerful Vokkaliga supporters, he controlled all GP-related decisions and disbursements. In the 2000 GP elections, ward member seats were split equally between the Congress and the JD (S), and the GP president’s post was reserved for an SC (with contenders on either side of the party divide). So a ‘lottery’ was conducted and the JD (S) candidate [male, Vadde (SC)] was ‘selected’ as president for the first 30 months. However, he was a front for the influential Vokkaliga ward members from the JD (S). Nevertheless, a high degree of competition between ward members meant that PRI funds were distributed equally across the party-divide. Material benefits were channelled to most habitations but they largely took the form of community ‘works’ like drains and mud/stone-slub roads. In this first 30 months, although *sangha* members were able to pressurise individual ward members to employ poor people in GP works, they were unable to influence the quality and location of the amenities. Neither were they able to redress the issue of lower wage rates offered to women labourers.

However, in the next 30 months they stepped up the pressure by following a three-pronged approach. A delegation of *sangha* representatives (including those from other GPs in the legislative constituency) lobbied state government officials for greater transparency and accountability in GP functioning. Meanwhile at the intermediate *panchayat* level, *sangha* members carried out peaceful “dharnas” (sit-ins) at the *taluk* level. A delegation of *sangha* representatives (including those from other GPs in the legislative constituency) lobbied state government officials for greater transparency and accountability in GP functioning. Meanwhile at the intermediate *panchayat* level, *sangha* members carried out peaceful “dharnas” (sit-ins) at the *taluk* level.

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200 This occurs both across and within caste groupings. These personal divisions have also affected decision-making outside the PRI forum. For example, in relation to decisions about appointing or electing functionaries for school committees, dairy cooperatives or the relatively well-funded watershed programmes.

201 These changes are also evident in the leadership of certain non-PRI forums like education committees and dairy societies.

202 Due to intense competition, the second 30 month period was split between two lady presidents from the Golla (BC) and Muslim communities. However, in the first case, the Golla lady (Congress) was manipulated by the influential Vokkaliga vice-president [JD (S)] and in the second case; the husband [JD (S)] became the *de facto* president.
office demanding material benefits like water tanks, water supply, current connections and drought works. They also directed their demands, in the form of petitions, to the incumbent Congress MLA (he was later on defeated by his JD(S) rival in the 2004 elections).

Thirdly, at the local level, they pressurised influential ward members and political leaders, and the panchayat secretary to conform to the state panchayat Act. This involved actions like “locking up” the GP office, petitioning the GP president, and complaining against the errant panchayat secretary. As a result, a decision was made to leave the GP office open everyday and the secretary was made to report to the office on a more regular basis. The GP office was also made to display important notices and details relating to financial disbursements. An agreement was reached that GP meetings would be conducted regularly, and that women ward members and women presidents would not be represented by their husbands (or any other male relative). However, aside from the general functioning of the GP, the sangha has had limited success in influencing the quality and implementation of material benefits, and the disbursement of wages - cash and rice.

NGO Godavari has also organised PRI-related training sessions and exposure visits for ward members and sangha functionaries. The sangha functionaries were also able to orchestrate the conduct of the first ever ‘ward sabha’ in the legislative constituency, in this GP. They were able to pull this off because of top-down pressure from the state government’s Panchayati Raj department, and also because the Muslim GP president’s husband was quite supportive of these initiatives. Despite these attempts at collective decision-making, “final” decisions continued to be made only at the GP meetings. Sangha members realised that they were unable to ‘collectively’ control the ward members because they lacked political power, in terms of sangha representation within the panchayat council.

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203 Interview with elected male member No. 76, 25 March 2006, Kolar.
204 Interview with sangha functionary No. 13, 26 March 2006, Kolar.
205 Rice was not distributed as part of the wages in any of the eight GPs in Kolar. Only cash was provided, but it was always below the stipulated wage rate. Ward members, political leaders and contractors claimed that they did not disburse rice because of government delays in sanctioning rice. Instead, they only distributed cash and when the rice finally arrived, they sold it in the black market.
206 In the 2000 GP term, the Congress state government made significant ‘positive’ amendments to the state PRI Act. One of these amendments related to the constitution of ward sabhas: ward-level assemblies. Ward sabha decisions are meant to inform decision-making in gram sabhas – the latter are only held in the main headquarters village. However, after the initial euphoria, there has been limited political will to enforce these changes.
207 Interview with elected female member No. 31, 23 March 2006, Kolar.
However, they were also aware that fielding their own sangha members could lead to party divisions within the sangha. So, in the 2005 PRI elections (all tiers), the sangha functionaries decided against aligning themselves with a particular political party. Instead, sanghas in different habitations ‘unofficially’ aligned themselves with certain contestants or agreed to a ‘compromise’ candidate from within the sangha. This strategy has been of little use as they have been unable to capture a ‘critical mass’ of seats within the GP\textsuperscript{208}. Moreover, sanghas have been gradually losing strength. Inadequate staff support, the increasing presence of state-sponsored SHGs and “bad loans” has meant that the sangha has been unable to expand and retain membership\textsuperscript{209}. In addition, political leaders are increasingly wary of the threat that the ‘united’ sangha poses for them. So they have employed divisive strategies to undermine its unity. However, the young GP president [Vokkaliga, JD (S)] in 2005 has been broadly supportive of the sangha’s initiatives because he wants to expand his political support base amongst the sangha members\textsuperscript{210}.

**GP 11 - Chandrapalli**

Chandrapalli is a remote, non-NGO operational GP in Anantapur district. The GP has access to basic public amenities but lacks facilities like a bank, primary health centre, veterinary centre and a government high school. It covers four habitations (all formed part of the study) and 670 households. This gram panchayat has a high concentration of Reddys (dominant caste)\textsuperscript{211}. It has been a Congress bastion in the past and the main political leaders have belonged to the Reddy community. The last decade has seen the rise of many small-time leaders from the Nese and Valmiki castes (BC). Increasingly, political party affiliations cut across the caste-class divide, heightening the level of political competition within the GP. Since the 2001 term, the Nese-Valmiki (many of whom support the TDP) combine has grown to be an effective challenge to the oppressive influence of the landed Reddy families.

This was evident in the elections for GP president in 2001 where the ‘general’ category (unreserved) involved a contest between an aged, illiterate, Reddy lady affiliated to the Congress and a young, highly educated, Valmiki lady from the TDP. They were both

\textsuperscript{208} This would give them more leverage in decision-making.
\textsuperscript{209} Interview with NGO staff No. 27, 30 October 2006, Kolar.
\textsuperscript{210} In both the 2000 and 2005 elections, the JD (S) MLA made the final decision about the GP president, from amongst the JD (S) contenders. Moreover, in the 2005 elections, he split the first 30 months term into two halves to appease the two principal Vokkaliga aspirants.
\textsuperscript{211} Unlike the dominant castes in Karnataka (Vokkaligas and Lingayats), the principal dominant castes in Andhra Pradesh (Reddy and Kamma) are not favoured with reservations. The terms Vokkaliga and Reddy are used interchangeably in the border areas.
‘fronts’ for their influential son\(^{212}\) and husband respectively. In the end, the election was won by a very narrow margin by the Reddy lady. Aside from elections for the president, both \textit{de facto} candidates (son and husband) ‘pre-selected’ a team of ward members, some of whom were pitted against the opposition in an equally close contest\(^{213}\). After the election, successful Congress ward members have ended up being beholden to the \textit{de facto} president as ‘he’ covered most of their election expenses\(^{214}\). Some of the ‘favoured’ Congress ward members were eventually able to secure a few contracts from the president for providing GP community benefits. However, on average, the quality of works that they implement is very poor and the average citizen seldom benefits from these ‘works’.

GP meetings have rarely been conducted and no \textit{panchayat gram sabhas} were held. Power is completely concentrated in the hands of the GP president’s son and his allies. This advantage has been capitalised by him in the well-funded Food-for-Work programmes. Some community benefits like mud roads were built and only a few households benefited from rice and cash payments. In this GP, even the \textit{Janmabhoomi gram sabhas} were not well attended. The programme was largely associated with community level benefits that were ‘contracted’ out to local TDP leaders. Since there was a high level of party-based contestation in the GP, most individual benefits from the \textit{Janmabhoomi} programme in the 2001 term went to TDP supporters. The situation was slightly better than in the 1995 term when there was less awareness about the opportunities afforded by the \textit{Janmabhoomi} programme.

However, the performance of the \textit{Janmabhoomi} programme in the 1995 term was much better than the abysmal condition of the GP. There were no elections for the GP president in that term. The MLA’s “duplicate \textit{naxalite}”\(^{215}\) group brokered the installation

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\(^{212}\) He fielded his mother, in order to circumvent the Andhra Pradesh \textit{panchayat} rule of being unable to contest if one had more than two children.

\(^{213}\) Rivals from different parties were often from within the same castes. Andhra Pradesh has direct elections for the post of GP president and ward members. In general, there is limited interest in ward member elections as ward members have little power to pressurise the president, and the GP president has explicit control over finances.

\(^{214}\) Interview with elected male No. 48, 30 November 2005, Anantapur.

\(^{215}\) Villagers would openly comment that the ‘\textit{naxalites}’ affiliated to feuding families were ‘duplicate \textit{naxalites}’, meaning that they were not working for the socio-economic upliftment of poor people but were essentially private armies that orchestrated planned killings of rival supporters. During this period, apart from these \textit{naxalite}-styled private army groups, ‘original \textit{naxalites}’ or non-faction oriented groups also operated within some parts of the constituency. However, their influence paled in comparison to that of the private armies, especially in the \textit{mandals} under study (interviews with key informants in Anantpur district, 2006). The ‘original \textit{naxalites}’ within this constituency have been fighting against the brutalities of the landlords who are largely from the Reddy caste.
of a Nese TDP president in return for money, and even influenced the “nomination” of ward members:

When the MLA’s group was there they nominated people for GP positions ten years ago, but five years ago no such group, so there was competition. In 1995, the Sarpanch was R_______, Nese of TDP…the ward members were all nominations. There was an environment of fear. People had to listen to what the group said.216

During this term, most ward members, political leaders and citizens were in the dark about the functioning of the GP and the dispersal of material benefits. Key informants commented that a general atmosphere of “fear” prevented collective mobilisation during this period217. In addition, there was no panchayat secretary in the 1995 term. However, there is little change even after the appointment of a secretary in the 2001 term. Like the ward members, he too is manipulated by local-level leaders and the GP president’s son. In addition, unlike panchayat secretaries in Karnataka, those in Andhra Pradesh are less qualified and have to shoulder multiple responsibilities (revenue, panchayat, Janmabhoomi), which limits their quality of work.

In this GP, a few local NGOs (largely run by powerful political leaders) have worked on micro-credit and service delivery issues in the past, but their impact was minimal. However, out of the four habitations, two have a large number of state-run women SHGs in operation. Although an attempt has been made by some government facilitators to generate awareness about women’s issues in the early stages, on average, most of these forums have ended up being used purely for ‘monetary’ discussions and transactions. These groups were also unable to collectively lobby for PRI or Janmabhoomi gram sabha benefits. This was also the case in relation to other user-groups like forest and watershed committees. The leadership in these forums continues to be dominated by the upper castes.

Across the four habitations, the level of material benefits provided to poor people (from both panchayats and Janmabhoomi) varies. Since the two GP presidents come from the main headquarter village, “more developments” have taken place in this habitation compared to others218. The TDP MLA sanctioned houses and water tanks for the habitations but since it was a ‘Congress’ GP, the level of funding support was relatively small. This partisan neglect is also visible in the conduct of the mandal-level officials.

216 Interview with knowledgeable informant No. 77, 29 November 2005, Anantapur.
217 Interview with knowledgeable informants No.46 and 77, 30 and 29 November 2005, Anantapur.
218 Interview with knowledgeable informant No. 99, 6 December 2005, Anantapur. Other research also suggests that differences between habitations in a GP are important (Krishna, 2005: 127), but more research needs to be done in this area.
One year before her term expired, the GP president passed away. In spite of repeated requests by GP members, no interim arrangements were made. As a result, there were no financial dispersals from the *panchayat* in the last one year of term.

**GP 14 - Kokanpalli**

Kokanpalli is a non-remote, NGO-operational GP in Anantapur district. It has access to basic public amenities, but lacks a government high school and public health centre. It covers five habitations (four of them formed part of the study) and 542 households. NGO Jamuna has been operating in this GP since early 2002\(^{19}\). Initially, the NGO focused its efforts on building awareness in relation to natural resource management and water conservation issues, but after the PRI elections in 2001, it has also started work on *panchayats*. It does not operate through the medium of *sanghas* but works with the public at large. Most habitations of the GP also have a few state-sponsored micro-credit SHGs (women only), but they mainly focus on monetary transactions and are not involved in any PRI-related collective agitations.

The *panchayat* has traditionally been associated with one powerful Reddy family that is affiliated to the Congress. This family is located in the main village. Landed Reddy and Balija\(^{20}\) households in other habitations are also influential, albeit to a lesser extent. However, the past decade has witnessed a substantial change in the local power dynamics. Increasingly, leaders from the Kuruba and Valmiki communities (both BCs), and the Muslim community are posing a threat to the established order. They are aided in their endeavours by the friction between the Reddy and Balija households within the *gram panchayat*.

While the Reddy's and the Valmikis mainly support the Congress, the Balijas, Kurubas and Madigas (SCs) largely support the TDP. In both the 1995 and 2001 terms, these differences have been shrewdly exploited by an enterprising TDP leader from the Kuruba community. In the 1995 GP presidential elections, he scored a victory over an important Reddy leader, in a ‘general’ category (unreserved) seat. Since then, he has attempted to strengthen his support base by channelling benefits (largely community-related) to poor households across all habitations. His strategy has involved a centralisation of power, the marginalisation of ward members and a total control over ‘contracts’. Although most ward members were ‘elected’ in closely fought contests,

\(^{219}\) Aside from NGO Jamuna, one other NGO also operates in the GP. It works mainly with SCs, in two habitations on service delivery issues. This NGO concentrates its efforts on providing housing, education and health-related support to SC households.

\(^{220}\) The caste names Baljiga and Balija are used interchangeably. Unlike Karnataka, in Andhra Pradesh they are not classified as BCs but come under forward castes.
some of the winners were initially ‘selected’ by the president and many were supported with election expenses. This has reinforced the powerlessness of ward members and reduced the scope for ‘unified’ questioning of the president.

In the 2001 elections, the Kuruba leader again secured a victory by fielding his wife as the candidate. Although she has an opportunity to play a more active role, he explicitly discourages her from gaining experience in PRI-related matters. Thus, when NGO Jamuna invited her to participate in a series of training sessions, he used a range of excuses to justify her exclusion. At the same time, the wife of the influential Reddy (Congress) in the main village was elected as the intermediate panchayat member, and she eventually secured the post of intermediate panchayat president. In some ways, her situation is the reverse opposite to that of the lady GP president (TDP). Since her husband is an acknowledged drunkard, she has begun to manage PRI-related issues. In this she is greatly supported by the training sessions and exposure visits organised by NGO Jamuna\(^\text{221}\). She too has centralised power but unlike the GP president’s husband, she has not channelled benefits to poor households. In fact, she is often accused of corruption in implementing ‘works’ within the GP.

NGO Jamuna has tried to raise the awareness of the general public on the roles and responsibilities of the elected functionaries and citizens. Across most habitations, it has organised a series of public meetings to generate awareness (using videos, skits, and songs), and has also painted PRI-related writings on walls. However, many people commented that these strategies of information dissemination are largely ineffectual. The impact of NGO initiatives has also been weakened by the inadequate and irregular efforts of frontline staff. Nevertheless, in some instances, NGO Jamuna has been able to make a positive impact.

For example, the NGO has carried out part of the Food-for-Work programme under the aegis of the GP and ensured that unlike most other ‘contractors’, the designated amount of cash and rice payments reached the poorer households. They have tried to introduce the concept of micro-planning in gram sabhas, but there is limited response from both elected members and citizens. Although NGO Jamuna has encouraged ward members to be more vocal and assertive in their dealings with the GP president’s husband, most ward members explain that they lack the ‘collective’ strength to pressurise him. As one dejected ward member complained, “We are like paddy planted

\(^{221}\) Interview with elected female No. 29, 7 March 2006, Anantapur.
in a piece of land that belongs to the sarpanch (president). He harvests us and we remain where we are.\textsuperscript{222}

The GP president’s husband also dominated the Janmabhoomi proceedings and managed to secure additional funds from the ruling TDP zilla panchayat member, TDP MLA and the TDP Member of Parliament.\textsuperscript{223} This monetary backing has increased his influence and dominance. In addition, the presence of a TDP MLA and MP for most of the study time-period has meant that he faces little opposition from the Mandal Parishad Development Officer, who shares joint cheque-signing authority with the GP president. The panchayat secretary is also heavily influenced by the GP president’s husband. Across both terms there were no GP meetings. A GP office was constructed in the 2001 term but it is never open.

4.5.2.2 Possible Factors Associated with Variations between GPs

The above discussion and the qualitative analysis in the other twelve GPs help to highlight the six possible factors that appear to be associated with different levels of political capabilities and material well-being. Aside from political opportunity spaces and NGO interventions, other factors - like the nature of grassroots political competition and the nature of democratic political institutions within the legislative constituency, also appear to play a prominent role. In turn, these factors are influenced by the actions and policies of a variety of actors (for example, GP president, intermediate panchayat officials and MLA) located at different tiers of government.

One of the main factors that appear to be associated with variations between gram panchayats is the nature of PRI-related political opportunity space. The content of the PRI legislation and associated policies, and the extent of their implementation seem to have an important influence on - the everyday functioning of GPs, the nature of political competition within GPs, and the quality and extent of citizen engagement with PRIs. In some GPs, this space has also enabled collectives of poor people (like in GP 5), and enterprising young leaders from the Backward Castes (like in GP 14) and SC/STs to challenge traditional power-holders.

The eight study-GPs in Kolar district have fairly functional GP offices and a modicum of staff support; make some attempts to conduct GP meetings, involve women elected representatives and ward members, and collect taxes (as seen in GP 3 and GP 5 in the

\textsuperscript{222} Interview with elected member, 10 January 2006, Anantapur.

\textsuperscript{223} In this legislative constituency, throughout the study time-period, MLA’s across both parties (TDP and Congress) have not overtly interfered in the functioning of PRIs or deliberately obstructed the conduct of PRI elections.
previous sub-section). Further, financial disbursements to these GPs have increased over the years and provisions have been put in place to ensure that the cheque-signing authority is shared between the GP president and the panchayat secretary. In addition, men and women elected representatives are supported with regular opportunities for intensive training.

However, in the study-GPs of Anantapur district, power is centralised with the GP president, there are no attempts to collect taxes\(^\text{224}\), women elected representatives and ward members are largely sidelined, GP offices are dysfunctional, and the panchayat secretary’s responsibilities covers both revenue and panchayat functions (as seen in GP 11 and GP 13 in the previous sub-section). Financial devolution to GPs is highly inadequate, and allocations to GPs are controlled by higher-tier government officials [a senior official (Mandal Parishad Development Officer) at the intermediate panchayat level shares joint cheque-signing powers with the GP president]. Even the training offered to elected representatives in Anantapur is piecemeal and irregular.

Another factor that appears to be associated with different levels of political capabilities and material well-being between GPs is the nature of NGO-interventions. In some GPs, NGOs have worked largely on augmenting the awareness of citizens (like in GP 14 in the previous sub-section); while in others, NGOs have supplemented these efforts by building the organisation (through the medium of sanghas) and political participation skills of poor people (like in GP 5); and in yet others, NGOs have mobilised their constituencies to capture political power within GPs. In some GPs, NGOs have chosen to work with the general population as a whole (like in GP 14) while in others they have focused their efforts on vulnerable and marginalised communities within GPs (like in GP 5). The discussion in the previous sub-section also sheds light on the problems faced by NGOs and sanghas that work on PRI-related issues, and draws attention to the role of political opportunity space in providing an enabling or constraining environment for change.

In GPs where NGOs operate through the medium of sanghas, the differences in NGO interventions have also affected the strategies, actions and collective strength of sangha members (for example, in GP 5). In turn, the actions of sangha members appear to have influenced the nature of grassroots politics.

The variations between GPs indicate that both PRI-related political opportunity spaces and NGO interventions seem to be shaped by state government’s policies, and the

\(^{224}\) In fact, taxes that are shown to be collected are actually ‘adjusted’ from GP finances.
political dynamics within the legislative constituency and individual GPs. In particular, the eight GPs in Anantapur reveal how the Janmabhoomi programme has sidelined the role of the constitutionally mandated panchayats, and reinforced the supremacy of bureaucrats and male political leaders (like in GP 11 and GP 14). Unlike the constitutional panchayats, there was no statutory role for women in this forum.

Similar to the Anantapur GPs, the patterns of change in the eight GPs in Kolar also seem to reflect the policies of the state government. Although the 1993 Congress state government (that drew-up the state PRI legislation) had clawed-back some of the erstwhile powers of PRIs, subsequent state governments (across political parties) have gradually strengthened the legislation by enforcing implementation and devolving a greater degree of powers and resources to PRIs. Over time, the increasing devolution to PRIs has sparked greater interest in contesting seats, challenging the hold of traditional elites, combating corruption, and participating in the functioning of PRIs.

Further, variations between the GPs appear to be influenced by the nature of democratic institutions in legislative constituencies. All four sample GPs in the previous sub-section reveal how variations in MLA leadership have an important influence on the nature of democratic institutions, especially at and below the level of intermediate panchayats. MLAs can play a constructive role by being non-obstructive and/or extending cooperation to PRIs, and NGOs that work on issues relating to conscientisation and mobilisation (GP 5 in Kolar and GP 14 in Anantapur); or they can deliberately hinder the functioning of PRIs (GP 3 in Kolar and GP 11 in Anantapur) and NGOs.

Lastly, variations also appear to be associated with the nature of political competition within GPs. Over the study time-period, in some GPs, there has been a heightened degree of political competition and contestation of traditional authority, while in others - political competition has increased but only amongst the conventional elites. All four GPs in the previous sub-section reveal changes in the nature of leadership at the grassroots. At times, the intense competition (for instance, in GP 5 and GP 14) and the presence of powerful leaders (like in GP 3) can help to ensure that poor people secure a measure of PRI and non-PRI-related material benefits. GP 5 and GP 14 also demonstrate how members from vulnerable and marginalised communities are collectively (GP 5) or individually (GP 14) challenging the dominance of traditional elites. These four accounts also highlight that the traditional understanding of elites - as belonging to the upper castes - needs to be revised. Increasingly, some of the new elites come from the lower castes.
The variations between GPs are also examples of the ways in which PRI-related ‘reservations’ are simultaneously harnessed as well as abused. While male elected representatives from SC/ST and BC communities are increasingly utilising the political opportunity space to enhance their political awareness and skills (like in GP 3 and GP 14), there is limited change in the political capabilities of women elected representatives across all caste and religious groupings (like in GP 11 and GP 14). However, over the study time-period, the political capabilities of poor women have expanded (especially those associated with *sanghas*, like in GP 5), but the extent has varied.

Further, the discussion in the previous sub-section and the qualitative overviews in the other twelve GPs help to demonstrate that the criterion of remoteness is not a major factor that influences inter-GP variations in the levels of political capabilities and material well-being. For instance, GP 5 and GP 14 are part of the top-eight GPs but one is remote (GP 5) and one is non-remote (GP 14).

### 4.5.3 Possible factors associated with Trends and Patterns in the top-eight GPs

By combining the findings of the previous sub-section (4.5.2) with the discussion in sub-section 4.5.1, it is possible to tentatively identify the factors associated with higher levels of political capabilities and material well-being in the top-eight GPs (the eight GPs where poor people attained higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits compared to the remaining eight GPs). Although there are variations between these eight GPs, there are also some immediately identifiable trends:

1. Five of the top GPs are located in Kolar district (GP 1, GP 4, GP 5, GP 6 and GP 8) and three are based in Anantapur district (GP 12, GP 13 and GP 14)
2. Five of the top GPs are located in legislative constituencies where the MLAs have been fairly non-intrusive and non-obstructive (GP 5, GP 6, GP 8, GP 13 and GP 14)
3. Six of the top GPs are NGO-intervention GPs (GP 1, GP 4, GP 5, GP 8, GP 13 and GP 14)
4. Of these six, in four GPs NGOs operate through *sanghas* (GP 1, GP 4, GP 5, GP 8)
5. All eight have witnessed heightened levels of political competition and the rise of leaders from traditionally marginalised communities (especially in GP 1 and GP 4)

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225 The survey percentages also indicate that in relation to political capabilities and material benefits there is not much variation between remote and non-remote GPs (Mann-Whitney test is not significant, p>0.05). Also, four of the top-eight GPs are remote and four are non-remote, which reinforces my finding that GP remoteness is not a key factor. On the other hand, the ‘demographic size’ of a GP appears to be an important factor, but this feature is a function of state-level PRI provisions (Karnataka provides for bigger GPs while Andhra Pradesh provides for smaller GPs). Bigger GPs, like those in Kolar, often provide ready access to a larger variety of public facilities, are relatively better resourced in terms of the quality and extent of staff support, and they also have a higher potential to generate own sources of revenue. In addition, since much of the PRI funding is provided on a per-capita basis, GPs with a higher population have greater access to external funding. Nevertheless, the data reveals that GPs in Kolar have not harnessed this potential effectively.
These eight GPs provide a robust indication of the possible factors that influence higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits attained by poor people at the NGO-PRI interface. These factors can be grouped into three broad sets - relating to ‘high politics’ at the level of state governments and legislative constituencies, to the nature of NGO interventions, and to ‘deep politics’ at the level of gram panchayats. In the next three chapters, I examine these different sets of factors in detail and assess the extent to which they make a difference. In chapter 5, I provide a detailed examination of state-specific political opportunity space and the dynamics in legislative constituencies. In chapter 6, I unpack the nature and impact of NGO interventions; and in chapter 7, I examine the dynamics at the grassroots – the role of the sangha and the nature of political competition.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the nature of poor people’s experiences at the interface of NGOs and PRIs in sixteen gram panchayats, drawn attention to variations in these experiences, and highlighted patterns and trends in these variations.

At the interface, poor people have experienced an expansion in political capabilities in relation to awareness and voice but the gains have been fairly limited in relation to influence. However, the data also reveals that there are variations in different aspects of awareness and voice. Poor people have a relatively high degree of awareness in relation to electoral aspects of GP functioning, but they have limited knowledge about the conduct and procedures relating to GP meetings and gram sabhas. With respect to voice, poor people have relatively high levels of political capabilities in relation to more non-confrontational forms of political participation activities like voting, contacting elected representatives and government officials, and attending gram sabhas. Political capabilities in relation to more active or confrontational activities like protesting, petitioning, campaigning for elections and deliberating in gram sabhas are relatively weak. In terms of influence, poor people have been relatively unsuccessful at shaping PRI-related actions and decision-making, or the general functioning of the GP.

These experiences have also shaped their chances of securing material benefits from panchayats. On the whole, the existing political capabilities of poor people have not enabled them to secure increased levels of material benefits. Nevertheless, compared to the first GP term, overall, there is some improvement. Nowadays, most poor people have a general idea about the main benefits and schemes offered by PRIs. In order to secure material benefits, they are contacting elected and government functionaries to a larger extent than in the first term. All the same, like the past, there is little awareness
about details relating to eligibility, mode of selection and implementation, and stipulated financial disbursements - especially in relation to wage rates. Although the range of benefits has increased during the study time-period, poor people continue to have little access to 'individual' material benefits, like housing and daily-wage employment. For them, material benefits from panchayats largely take the form of collective benefits - those that assist the public at large, like potable water and street lighting.

The chapter has also revealed that these aggregate trends hide variations between the sixteen GPs. By combining findings from the quantitative and qualitative data, the chapter has identified the top-eight GPs where poor people experience higher levels of political capabilities and material well-being compared to the other eight GPs. However, it is found that the higher performing GPs are not restricted to one district alone, and they also include GPs where NGOs do not operate. So, aside from political opportunity spaces and NGO interventions, other factors appear to shape variations in the experiences of poor people.

The patterns and trends in the top-eight GPs point to four other factors that appear to be associated with these higher levels – the nature of democratic institutions at the intermediate panchayat level and below; the strategies, actions and collective strength of sangha (group associated with NGO) members at the gram panchayat level; the nature of political competition at the gram panchayat level; and the Janmabhoomi programme – the content and extent of its implementation (only in Andhra Pradesh) at the state level and below. These different factors appear to be influenced by the actions and policies of a variety of actors (for example, GP president, intermediate panchayat officials and MLA) located at different tiers of government.

The six factors can be grouped into three broad sets - relating to 'high politics' at the level of state governments and legislative constituencies, to the nature of NGO interventions, and to ‘deep politics’ at the level of gram panchayats. Each of these three different sets of factors is explored in greater detail in the following three chapters.
Chapter 5

HIGH POLITICS: SHAPING THE POLITICAL?

“The difference is that the Karnataka government is giving more opportunities to PRIs and so there is more all-round development in Karnataka compared to Andhra Pradesh.” (Key informant, Kolar, 2006)226

“Under TDP rule, during Janmabhoomi programme, the MLA influence was in awarding contracts to TDP leaders not Congress, and now under Congress government its Congress people who get contracts. Under both governments the quality of roads etc. has been bad.” (Key informant, Anantapur, 2006)227

5.1 Introduction

This chapter demonstrates that ‘high politics’ – party-based politics at the level of state governments and legislative constituencies – shapes the experiences of poor people in the sixteen case-study panchayats. It describes how state government politics moulds the nature of PRI-related political opportunity space, and it highlights how politics at the level of legislative constituencies influences the nature of democratic institutions at the intermediate panchayat level and below228. More importantly, it indicates that variations in political opportunity spaces and the nature of democratic institutions are associated with variations in the experiences of poor people in the sixteen GPs.

The chapter reveals that in general poor people in the eight GPs of Kolar district have acquired higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits than their counterparts in the eight GPs of Anantapur district. However, even though state governments in Karnataka have devolved greater powers and resources to panchayats than their counterparts in Andhra Pradesh, disaggregating the data highlights that not all eight GPs in Kolar district have performed better than the eight in Anantapur. Poor people have attained different levels of political capabilities and material well-being in GPs situated within the same district and the same legislative constituency. This suggests that factors at lower levels of government also play a role in moulding the nature of political opportunity space. In particular, the discussion brings out the role of MLAs and describes how they influence the political dynamics within the legislative constituency, especially in relation to the nature of democratic institutions, and the functioning of intermediate panchayats and study-NGOs. Thus, the chapter helps to elucidate the ways in which panchayat-related policies formulated in the higher reaches of government are modified as they filter through the upper tiers of government.

226 Interview with elected male member No. 74, 23 March 2006, Kolar.
227 Interview with knowledgeable informant Number 127, 12 February 2006, Anantapur.
228 They include amongst others, the institutions of free elections, free speech, free press, free organisation and assembly, and political and civil rights protected by the rule of law.
The chapter is divided into five sections. Section 5.2 provides a short overview of the political context in the two states, with a focus on the regimes in power within the selected time period. This discussion demonstrates that the evolution of NGOs and panchayats in both states is bound-up with changes in the policies of state government regimes, and highlights that both Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have displayed broad policy continuity in relation to NGOs and panchayats. It also draws attention to the inter-state differences in political opportunity space. Section 5.3 briefly discusses the political context in the two districts and compares findings in the eight GPs of Kolar district with those in Anantapur district. Section 5.4 outlines the political context in the four legislative constituencies and compares findings between these constituencies. The final section (5.5) pulls together the main findings of the chapter.

5.2 NGOs, Panchayats and State Politics in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh

Although the focus of this section is on the period between 1994 and 2006, the dynamics in this period are better understood by unpacking the evolution of state politics prior to the 1990s. Since the formation of both states in 1956, the “political trajectories” of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh show a remarkable degree of similarity up until 1999 (Table 5.1 highlights the similarities), but the reasons behind these apparent resemblances are often divergent and complex (Manor, 2004a).

Table 5.1: Similarities in Political Trajectory of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Similarities in Political Trajectory of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Both states are created on linguistic basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Both states implement three-tiered system of PRIs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 1970s</td>
<td>In contrast to most other states in India, Congress returns to power in both states in the national (parliamentary) and state (assembly) elections 229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Congress is defeated in assembly elections of both states - by Janata Dal in Karnataka and TDP in Andhra Pradesh 230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Both states implement a new system of PRIs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Congress returns to power in assembly elections in both states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Congress loses assembly elections to Janata Dal in Karnataka and TDP in Andhra Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-1995</td>
<td>Both states implement the constitutionally-mandated system of PRIs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Congress returns to power in assembly elections in Karnataka but TDP wins again in Andhra Pradesh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both states have followed a policy of political accommodation of elites (especially, from the Backward Castes), both have witnessed an increase in political party competition, both have displayed broad policy continuity, and both have experimented with democratic decentralisation prior to the 73rd constitutional amendment. However, there

229 In both states, all prior elections (national and state) were won by the Congress.
230 The TDP was formed by N.T. Rama Rao (Kamma) in 1982.
are some differences in the nature of state politics and policies. On the whole, state
governments in Karnataka have focused on incremental inclusive change (involving
broad-spectrum social coalitions), and their periods-of-rule are associated with
collective leadership\(^{231}\) (institutions tend to be more important than individuals), and a
fairly autonomous and capable bureaucracy. State governments in Andhra Pradesh
have largely focused on populist change (targeting specific social coalitions like OBCs,
women and youth), and their periods-in-power are associated with individual leadership
(individuals tend to be more important than institutions), and a largely ‘state-controlled’
but capable bureaucracy. These differences have also influenced their approach to
NGOs and PRIs.

In both Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, democratic decentralisation has not been a
grassroots demand but has been pushed from the top by state or national
governments. In addition, within each state, over time, differences in PRI-related
policies are intertwined with changes in state government regimes. These differences
in *panchayat* policies have also influenced the nature of NGO interventions in relation
to PRIs.

Karnataka is one of the main NGO hubs within India, but in sheer numbers Andhra
Pradesh has a larger concentration of NGOs\(^{232}\). In both states, broad-based agitations
and campaigns in the 1990s have had strong links with NGOs\(^{233}\).

This section is divided into three sub-sections. The first sub-section compares the
situation in relation to state politics, *panchayats* and NGOs in both states over the
period 1994 to 2006. The second sub-section highlights the links between these
differences, and variations in the nature of *panchayat*-related NGO interventions in
Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The third sub-section documents the key inter-state
differences in the nature of political opportunity space.

\(^{231}\) The dynastic politics of JD(S) reared its head only in early 2006.
\(^{232}\) It is extremely difficult to ascertain the exact number of NGOs that are operational in the two
states. As of December 2008, the figures for number of organisations funded by the central
government in the non-profit sector are AP = 1677 and K = 729, out of an all-India total of 16430
\[(http://pcserver.nic.in/ngo/) Accessed 12 December 2008\]. These are approximate figures as
there is some overlap between the various categories in the database. The corresponding
figures for Anantapur are 152, and 134 in Kolar. The number of organisations funded by foreign
sources in the non-profit sector in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka are roughly 4800 and 2700
respectively, while the totals for Anantapur and Kolar districts are 900 and 200 respectively

\(^{233}\) In Andhra Pradesh, a prime example is the case of the two NGOs Samata and SAKHI that
facilitated an *adivasi*-centred (indigenous people) campaign against the powerful mining lobby
in the eastern districts of the state, leading to the passage of the landmark Samata judgement
by the Supreme Court in 1997. For more details, see [http://www.samataindia.org/index.html
5.2.1 1994 to 2006

Compared to the situation in 1956, by the early 1990s, both states had observed a change in the nature of state politics. State-level politics had evolved from the one-party system of the 1950’s and 1960’s to a multi-party arrangement, and it was also slightly less dominated by traditional elites. However, at the grassroots, this had not translated into much change for citizens from marginalised and vulnerable communities. In both states, although political party competition had increased and the importance of caste hierarchies had declined, power was still largely concentrated in the hands of upper castes.

In the time period under study (1994-2006), in both Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, this dominance of the upper castes is being increasingly challenged and the change is reflected in the more volatile nature of state politics. The period covers four parliamentary elections, three assembly elections and three PRI elections in Karnataka, and it covers similar numbers for Andhra Pradesh, with the exception of the last PRI election of Andhra Pradesh conducted in mid-2006, as it was held after my GP-level fieldwork had been completed in that state. Appendix 5.1 provides an overview of the break-up of electoral results amongst the principal political parties in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh (and Kolar and Anantapur districts) for parliamentary and assembly elections during the study time-period. The dynamics in these different terms are elaborated upon in the following two sub-sections.

5.2.1.1 From 1994 to 1998

In Karnataka, the Janata Dal won the assembly elections of 1994 and the parliamentary elections in 1996. With respect to PRIs, the Janata Dal under chief minister J. H. Patel (Lingayat) was more progressive than the previous Congress government. In consultation with academics and civic activists, it brought in crucial amendments in 1997 that restored a sizeable number of powers to panchayats, thereby widening the existing political opportunity space\(^{234}\). These reforms also encouraged NGOs to work on PRI issues (F. Stephen and N. Rajasekaran, 2001).

Studies conducted during that term have assessed the performance of PRIs on various counts. One study indicated that although awareness and participation of citizens in PRI-related activities was low, it was relatively high for both officials and elected functionaries at the GP level across castes (Sivanna, 2002: 176-181). Vyasulu and Vyasulu explained how women elected functionaries were beginning to be more

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\(^{234}\) However, the government reduced the tenure of presidents and vice-presidents. In addition, state government fiscal outlays to the district sector continued to fall (World Bank, 2000b: 90).
assertive and confident in dealing with PRI-related matters (1999). Service delivery and accountability also improved but the gains were localised and patchy (Satish Chandran, 2000: 143).

Meanwhile, in Andhra Pradesh, the 1994 assembly elections witnessed a landslide victory for the TDP with N.T. Rama Rao (NTR) at the helm. However, in 1995, Chandrababu Naidu (Kamma) dethroned his father-in-law, leading to a split within the party. Naidu lacked the charisma of NTR. So, in order to build a mass base, he made a decisive move away from “style and symbols associated with NTR” (Srinivasulu, 2003: 145), in favour of one based on “managerial lines through an elaborate network based on distribution of spoils” (Srinivasulu, 2004: 3851). Naidu projected himself as a new-generation, computer-savvy reformist, but he adopted the role of supreme leader (like NTR), ostensibly developing a cadre but allowing no room for second-rung leadership. He had a tremendous capacity for hard work, which helped him gain a “firm grip on the governmental machinery and functioning as well as the party organisation” (Suri, 2006: 291).

Naidu initially pursued a policy that appeared to endorse liberalisation and reform initiatives, but by the end of his first tenure it was clear that this strategy was being increasingly accompanied by fiscally profligate populist programmes. Part of the reason for this change in tactic could be attributed to the tenor of the results in the 1996 and 1998 parliamentary elections. It had underlined the fact that his ‘reform’ initiatives had the potential to seriously erode the party’s traditional electoral base235 (emphasis mine, Srinivasulu, 2003: 145). So, in an attempt to bolster political support at the grassroots, he adopted a populist policy that was laced with reformist jargon - placing greater emphasis on ‘participation, self-help and stakeholder groups’236. The policy involved the mobilisation of rural masses through the Janmabhoomi programme, extending programmatic support for “need-based self-help among different target groups”237 and a slew of populist schemes targeting the main support base of the TDP (Srinivasulu, 2003: 155-156).

As explained in chapter 4, the TDP government implemented the Janmabhoomi programme by appropriating the space of the legally constituted panchayats (Reddy,

\[\text{235 The base was made-up of OBCs, women and youth.}\]

\[\text{236 These initiatives also found favour with international donors who had been pushing for sectoral reforms (Mooij, 2007: 39).}\]

\[\text{237 These 'nominated' village-level user or stakeholder groups included water-user associations, }\]
\[\text{vana samrakshana samithis (forest protection committees), vidya (education) committees, youth committees, and a substantial emphasis on women oriented micro-credit based Self-Help Groups.}\]
2002). Whereas the former programme was generously funded, funds routed to PRIs were negligible (Manor, 2002). In the Government of Andhra Pradesh accounts, funds for the *Janmabhoomi* programme were “shown as released to PR (panchayat) bodies, in reality, it (was) released directly to the Collector, who then release(d) it to the Nodal officer” (World Bank, 2000b: 3). Even the centrally-sponsored funds were channelled and implemented through a parallel body - the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), with authorisation provided by the District Collector (ibid). Moreover, the agenda of the *Janmabhoomi* programme, and most of the functional responsibilities delegated to various village-level ‘user’ committees covered those very areas that fell under the purview of *panchayats* in the Andhra Pradesh *panchayat* Act. Furthermore, whereas the former programme was ably administered, the administration and staffing of PRIs was abysmal. This abject neglect of *panchayats* reduced the opportunities for NGOs to work on PRI-related issues.

5.2.1.2 From 1999 to 2006

In Karnataka, the Congress buried its internal differences and put up a strong collective front that enabled it to secure a significant victory in both the parliamentary and the assembly elections. S. M. Krishna (Vokkaliga) became chief minister and served out the full five-year term. Although Krishna’s regime developed a pro-urban image, the government did not divert funds from rural development programmes (Raghavan and Manor, Forthcoming).

Under Krishna, the Congress implemented a range of *panchayat* reforms. In the 1990s, despite a relatively prudent fiscal record (Raghavan and Manor, Forthcoming), the state government’s fiscal position in relation to PRIs, and GPs in particular, had been steadily deteriorating. State government funds to the district were increasingly being channelled through mechanisms outside the purview of PRIs (World Bank, 2000b: 71). Taking note of these discrepancies, the incumbent Rural Development and *Panchayati"
Raj minister, M.Y. Ghorpade, kick-started another phase of reforms by carrying out wide-ranging consultations with academics, bureaucrats, elected functionaries and civic activists. However, unlike the past, the PRI reform initiatives that were passed in 2003 were done so sans the fanfare of the 1980’s. This strategy of “stealth” led to a fairly smooth passage of progressive amendments and a peaceful transfer of substantial powers to PRIs. The passing of the bill highlighted the role of high-level leadership, evidenced in the acts of enlightened bureaucrats and legislators.

Across the border in Andhra Pradesh, the TDP was voted back into power in the assembly elections of 1999. In large measure this was the outcome of a strategic alliance with the BJP, which also helped it to capture a majority of the seats in the parliamentary elections. The TDP also gained from the positive response to populist schemes and grassroots networking programmes that were initiated in 1997-98. However, the rise of the BJP and groups like the Maha Jana Front (MJF) was also indicative of the increasing caste-class polarisation, and attendant volatility in the social bases of both the TDP and the Congress.

After the elections, the TDP government continued to promote the Janmabhoomi gram sabha and other user-group forums, but there was a clear loss in momentum, and the credibility of ‘indicators’ and ‘results’ was brought into question. The profligate spending on populist programmes also placed the state in a highly precarious fiscal situation. In addition, programmes like Food-for-Work that were aimed at marginalised and vulnerable groups came to be associated with corruption scams involving contractors, officials, local political leaders and elected representatives (Deshingkar and Johnson, 2003). As far as PRIs were concerned, even the protracted struggle by the association of GP presidents did not bring about any significant reform.

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241 Reforms included streamlining district-sector transfers, implementing tax-revisions for GPs, and sorting electricity overdue payments of GPs (Interviews with senior bureaucrats, Bangalore and New Delhi, 2005). Funds are directly routed to GP bank accounts, reducing transfer times. Gram sabhas are authorised to identify, select and prioritise the beneficiary lists for various anti-poverty programmes, with the provisos that no alterations can be made by higher levels of government.

242 The word ‘stealth’ was used repeatedly in interviews that I conducted with senior bureaucrats and legislators associated with the drafting and passage of the bill (Bangalore, 2005-06).

243 The Maha Jana Front (MJF) is a social coalition of Backward Caste and dalit organisations.

244 The relentless top-down pressure on lower-level officials often led to them “manufacturing” evidence in relation to results and the dispersion of benefits (interviews with officials of this tier, Anantapur, 2006).

245 The government had to borrow money to cover basic salary payments (Manor, 2004a: 265).

246 Interviews with members of the association, Hyderabad, 2006.
marginalisation of PRIs but they too felt powerless in the face of such resistance. For example, the head of one of these NGOs said:

After Naidu came to power, the government did not devolve further powers to GPs. Parallel institutions and programmes like the Janmabhoomi programme took away their space. There was excessive control of collectors, bureaucrats to set agenda – almost like a machine. Officials came to dominate local government. Women’s groups and other user-groups proliferated. Our organisation picked up on this and made it an electoral issue by running a big signature campaign – ‘give power or give up power’. But there was no real change in state government policies. PRI elections were postponed for a year and a half.

The 2004 parliamentary and assembly elections in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh provided further evidence of their increasingly divergent political trajectories. In Karnataka, a general sense of dissatisfaction among the electorate coupled with a perceived sense of urban bias (Shastri and Ramaswamy, 2004: 5485) helped to complete the Congress party’s undoing. For the first time in Karnataka’s history, a coalition government was formed. The JD(S) and the Congress struck a bargain, which would allow each party an equal share in the total tenure. The uneasy coalition proceeded in a sluggish manner and not much work was accomplished in the short tenure of twenty months.

On the other hand, in Andhra Pradesh, the 2004 elections delivered decisive victories to the Congress. The preceding term under Naidu had witnessed a manifold rise in weaver and farmer suicides, the escalation of hostility between naxalites and the police, and the vociferous demands for a separate Telangana state. Furthermore, Naidu’s “leadership style and functioning…alienated traditional party leaders and workers at the local level,” and generated a pro-rich image for the regime (Suri, 2006: 293). The Congress under Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy projected a more pro-poor and inclusive stance by undertaking a 1500 km padayatra (travel by foot), promising populist schemes like free power to farmers, and forging new alliances.

Once in power, Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy has continued his predecessor’s twin-track approach of coupling reform initiatives, with the implementation of populist measures

247 Interviews with senior PRI programme staff, Hyderabad, 2006.
248 Interview with head of L organisation, 21 June 2005, Hyderabad.
249 In early 2006, a faction of the JD (S) led by H. D. Kumaraswamy revolted and formed an alternate power-sharing coalition with the BJP. Under the leadership of Kumaraswamy, the coalition passed an anti-PRI amendment in 2007. It aimed to transfer some of the powers of PRIs back to MLAs but because of widespread opposition among PRI functionaries, concerned citizens and civic groups it did not come into force. The frustration of the MLAs and the concerted grassroots agitation indicates that PRIs are increasingly perceived to be democratic institutions with a significant degree of substance and influence.
like free power to farmers and participatory programmes\textsuperscript{250}. In addition, the government has shown no real inclination to devolve powers and resources to PRIs. It has made some positive noises, conducted the *panchayat* elections and brought about a few positive changes, but, in the main, the status quo has been maintained with programmes continuing to be administered by officials\textsuperscript{251}.

### 5.2.2 Variations in *panchayat*-related NGO interventions

The political opportunity space provided by successive governments in Karnataka have encouraged many state-level NGOs (SEARCH, Hunger Project, Singamma Sreenivasan Foundation and CWC), grassroots-NGOs (Hansen, 1999), and a quasi-government organisation - Mahila Samakhya (Batliwala, 1996; Narayanan, 2002) to engage with PRIs on a wide range of issues (capacity-building, mobilisation, dissemination of information, legal reforms and gender-budgeting)\textsuperscript{252}. In addition, some NGOs have established networks of elected women representatives\textsuperscript{253}. However, in practice, these networks are heavily dependent on the parent NGO for financial sustainability, and their advocacy potential has remained relatively underutilised (Behar and Aiyar, 2003: 4939).

In Andhra Pradesh, under the TDP regime, NGOs have had little encouragement to work on PRI issues. Despite this, state-level NGOs in Andhra Pradesh, like the Centre for World Solidarity and Lok Satta, in coalition with a network of grassroots-NGOs have actively campaigned for the devolution of constitutionally-mandated powers and resources to PRIs (Lok Satta, 2003; Centre for World Solidarity, 2004). However, at the local level, the climate of open hostility towards PRIs (Centre for World Solidarity, 2004: 61) has meant that many grassroots-NGOs have struggled to mobilise the political participation of marginalised and vulnerable communities in PRIs, and build forums for elected representatives. In the next sub-section, I briefly highlight the key differences in the political opportunity spaces of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

\textsuperscript{250} These initiatives and schemes do not form part of my study because they had only started operation during and slightly prior to my fieldwork.

\textsuperscript{251} Fieldwork observations and interviews with key informants in Anantapur and Hyderabad, 2006.

\textsuperscript{252} Mahila Samakhya also operates in Andhra Pradesh (under the name AP Mahila Samatha Society) but unlike the former, the latter’s operations have been hindered by the lack of adequate devolution to PRIs in Andhra Pradesh (Interview with AP Mahila Samatha ex-director in 2006, Hyderabad).

\textsuperscript{253} Fieldwork highlighted the rise of ‘turf-wars’ between competing organisations (Interviews with key informants in Bangalore, 2005-2006).
5.2.3 Comparing Political Opportunity Spaces in the Two States

Table 5.2 provides a comparative break-up of key panchayat features in both states as of 2006\(^{254}\). On the whole, governments in Karnataka have provided more political opportunity space in relation to PRIs than their counterparts in Andhra Pradesh. However, though Karnataka clearly scores over Andhra Pradesh in terms of political and administrative devolution; in terms of finances (until the 2003 amendments), and government officials’ accountability to PRIs, its efforts have been inadequate.

With respect to general features, two differences stand out. The first one relates to the average population of a GP and IP. The population that comes under these units of government is higher in Karnataka compared to Andhra Pradesh. This makes them more viable functionally and financially, as much of the funding is distributed on a per-capita basis. So, GPs and IPs in Karnataka receive larger amounts of funding and they are also able to recruit a larger number of panchayat staff\(^{255}\). The potential for generating own sources of income also rises in these units. The second main difference relates to the legislative transfer of funds, functions and functionaries. Karnataka has transferred all 29 panchayat subjects compared to the limited transfer in Andhra Pradesh. However, in reality, Karnataka government officials are still largely under the administrative control of line departments and a significant amount of funding continues to be in the form of tied funds.

With respect to political features, there are quite a few core differences. The first one relates to the system of elections at the GP level. Karnataka has direct elections for ward members and indirect elections for the president; while Andhra Pradesh has direct elections for both ward members and the president. The fieldwork data reveals that the system in Karnataka enhances the status and bargaining power of ward members compared to their counterparts in Andhra Pradesh (discussed in more detail in sub-section 5.3.2.1). Another important difference relates to provisions for the rotation of presidential posts within the five-year term (for all tiers). While Karnataka has rotation within terms (for example, every 30 months within the five-year term at the GP level), Andhra has a fixed five-year term. This has meant that newly elected representatives in Karnataka do not have enough time to gain the relevant experience and skills. Consequently, more experienced local leaders and the panchayat secretary have a greater say in the functioning of the GP.

\(^{254}\) Within the table, sections that are highlighted in yellow draw attention to the central differences in political opportunity space.

\(^{255}\) Interviews with key informants within the district, Kolar and Anantapur, 2005-06.
Table 5.2: Comparing Political Opportunity Space for PRIs provided by state governments of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh as of 2006*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRI features</th>
<th>Karnataka</th>
<th>Andhra Pradesh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>GENERAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average population of gram panchayat (GP), intermediate panchayat (IP), zilla panchayat(ZP)</td>
<td>GP - 6173; IP - 2,00,000; ZP - 12,89,411</td>
<td>GP – 2538; IP - 50,000; ZP - 25,10,179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of GPs, IPs and ZPs</td>
<td>GP – 5653; IP – 176; ZP – 27</td>
<td>GP – 21825; IP – 1098; ZP – 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative transfer of funds, functions and functionaries associated with 29 panchayat subjects</td>
<td>All have been transferred, but government officials are largely under the administrative control of line departments, and a significant amount of funding is tied funds</td>
<td>5 funds, 17 functions, 2 functionaries (all functionaries are under the administrative control of the state department of Panchayati Raj), almost all funding is tied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of State Finance Commission (SFC)</td>
<td>Established, two reports have been submitted</td>
<td>Established, two reports have been submitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of State Election Commission (SEC)</td>
<td>Established</td>
<td>Established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POLITICAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System of elections for all three tiers</td>
<td>Direct elections for members, and indirect elections for president and vice-president for all tiers</td>
<td>Direct elections for members and indirect elections for president and vice-president in GP and IP, in GP, direct elections for members and president, and indirect election for vice-president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term of office for panchayat presidents and vice-presidents</td>
<td>Rotation of posts within the five year term: every 20 months - ZP and IP, 30 months - GP</td>
<td>Five year fixed term for all tiers, no rotation of posts within the five year term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent of reservations for women, SC/ST and OBCs in panchayat elections</td>
<td>Women, SC/ST, OBCs - one-third seats and equivalent proportion of chairperson’s posts in all tiers</td>
<td>Women and SC/ST - one-third seats and equivalent proportion of chairperson’s posts in all tiers, OBCs - 34 percent seats and equivalent proportion of chairperson’s posts in all tiers. Also, members from minority community are co-opted and have voting rights (two for ZP and one for IP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria for contesting in elections</td>
<td>All GP contestants must have a toilet/latrine in their house, criteria since 2000</td>
<td>In all tiers, persons having more than 2 children (after 1994) shall be disqualified for election or from continuing as member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of representation at all tiers</td>
<td>GP - one member for every 400 persons, IP -one member for every 10,000 persons, ZP -one member for every 40,000 persons</td>
<td>GP - one ward member for every 200-300 persons, IP - one member covering 3000-4000 population, ZP - one member for every IP - covering about 50,000 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision for training of elected representatives</td>
<td>Regular training at all tiers for all members, mainly from 2003-04. Advanced Satellite training available at all IP headquarters and specialised</td>
<td>Piecemeal training for GP/IP and ZP presidents with little focus on training members (all tiers). State SIRD* in Hyderabad provides some specialised training but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRI features</td>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheque-power for presidents at GP level</td>
<td>Vested partly with president and partly with panchayat secretary at GP level</td>
<td>Vested partly with president and partly with Mandal Parishad Development Officer at the Intermediate tier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisions for no-confidence motion against chairpersons at all tiers, and disqualification of members at GP tier</td>
<td>No-confidence motion cannot be moved within a year of office for GP chairs, and six months for IP and ZP chairs. For GP, such a notice has to be signed by not less than one-third of the total members and has to be passed by a two-thirds majority at a special meeting. For IP and ZP, the motion has to be passed by a simple majority. GP members risk disqualification if they miss three consecutive meetings.</td>
<td>The president of a GP can be removed from office by the Collector on grounds of non-performance and misconduct. Presidents and vice-presidents of the IP and ZP can be removed by a motion passed by not less than two-thirds of the total members after 2 years in office, and not against the same person more than once during one term of office. Elected members risk disqualification if they do not attend three consecutive meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisions for social audit and general audit of accounts at GP level</td>
<td>Provisions for social audit and PRIs have been brought under the purview of the lokayukta (ombudsman at the state level) as of 2004-05.</td>
<td>No provisions for social audit, but there are provisions for local auditing of GP accounts (to be presented in the gram sabhas).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right to Information</td>
<td>Was already in operation since 2000</td>
<td>Only came into operation in 2005, after national Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissemination of up-to-date PRI-related information, circulars and government orders</td>
<td>Yes, the relevant department sends a monthly newsletter to all panchayats in the state</td>
<td>Newsletters are sent but not on a regular basis and they have no comprehensive information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of GP meetings to be conducted per year, quorum and mandatory public display of proceedings</td>
<td>Changed from every two months to every month in 2003-04, quorum has also been changed to 50 percent of the total membership. At the GP-level, it is now mandatory to display all financial transactions in relation to 34 areas of functioning</td>
<td>Once every month. No provisions for mandatory public display.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of gram sabhas to be conducted annually and specifications for quorum</td>
<td>Minimum two. As of 2003-04, the quorum shall not be less than one tenth of the total adult voters in the GP or 100 voters, whichever is less. Stipulations for attendance of SC/ST and women.</td>
<td>Two, quorum was not mentioned in the Act initially but a recent government order stipulates at least one-third of the village population or a minimum of 50 persons. No stipulations for attendance of SC/ST and women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gram sabha empowered to identify and select beneficiaries</td>
<td>Yes, as of 2003-04</td>
<td>No (only identification)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitution of ward sabhas and quorum specifications</td>
<td>Enabled, as of 2003-04. To meet at least twice a year. Quorum is not less than ten percent of the total number of members or 20 whichever is less.</td>
<td>No provisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Planning Committee (DPC) Status</td>
<td>Constituted and chairperson is ZP President</td>
<td>Constituted and chairperson is ZP President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power vested with state government to control PRI</td>
<td>Power to cancel/suspend resolution – No. Power to remove elected representatives - No</td>
<td>Power to cancel/suspend resolution – Yes. Power to remove elected representatives -Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRI features</td>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ADMINISTRATIVE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department at the state level</td>
<td>Merged</td>
<td>Panchayati Raj and Rural Development departments remain separate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of District Rural Development Agency</td>
<td>Merged with ZP since 1987</td>
<td>Separate to ZP, executive chairperson-District Collector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of GP staff</td>
<td>One panchayat secretary appointed by state government but sometimes they might be deputed to cover more than one GP. Additional staff like watermen, bill collector, sweeper and helper are recruited by GPs based on their own resources</td>
<td>One panchayat secretary appointed by government, role covers both panchayat and revenue duties. In addition, due to the large number of GPs, secretaries are often deputed to cover more than one GP. GPs rarely recruit additional staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FISCAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal sources of finance for PRIs per year</td>
<td>GP: 1. Own sources, and assigned revenues (shares of taxes and levies from state government) 2. Tied and untied grants from central and state governments [includes statutory annual grant from state government of 5 lakhs*** as of 2005-06 (it increased from around 1 lakh in 1993-94 to 2 lakhs in 1998-99, 3.5 lakhs in 2000-01 and 5 lakhs in 2003)]. 3. Transfers from Finance Commissions – both central and state 4. Public contributions to various development programmes GPs now receive about 50 percent of the total transfers compared to the two upper tiers. Prior to 2005, they received the lowest proportion amongst the three tiers</td>
<td>GP: 1. Own sources, and assigned revenues (shares of taxes and levies from state government) 2. Tied and un-tied grants from central and state governments 3. Transfers from Finance Commissions – both central and state 4. Public contributions to various development programmes GPs receive the lowest proportion compared to upper two tiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average revenue of GP per year (including own sources)</td>
<td>1993 term it averaged 4-5 lakhs. In the 2000 term it increased from 8-10 lakhs to about 30 lakhs</td>
<td>The multiple channels of decentralisation make it hard to ascertain exact amounts. For non-notified GPs varies from roughly one lakh in the 1994 term to about 3 lakhs in the 2000 term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from (World Bank, 2000a; Aziz et al., 2002; Ghorpade, 2002; Government of India, 2002b, 2002c; Natraj and Ananthpur, 2004; Narayana, 2005; Government of India, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c; Government of Karnataka, 2006; Natraj et al., 2006; Bhargava and Subha, 2007; Government of India, 2008e, 2008d, 2001 Census of India, www.indiastat.com (Accessed 17 September 2007), interviews with various key informants at state government and district tiers in both states in 2005-06. *Main differences are highlighted in yellow, **SIRD – State Institute of Rural Development, ***1 lakh is 100,000 Rupees.
Both states also have different provisions for the passage of a no-confidence motion against the GP president. While Karnataka places the responsibility on other ward members within the GP (the resolution needs to be passed by a two-thirds majority), Andhra Pradesh bypasses the GP ward members and allocates responsibility to a higher-level official - the District Collector. This dependence on officials rather than elected representatives in Andhra has strengthened the hand of bureaucrats over elected representatives.

Inter-state differences are also evident in the provisions for training elected representatives. Karnataka provides regular training for all members while the system in Andhra Pradesh is irregular and inadequate. This limited support in the latter state has made it harder for elected functionaries who are first-timers to obtain the necessary information and understanding to function better.

Another important difference relates to the decision-making powers of *gram sabhas*. In Karnataka, *gram sabhas* have been empowered to identify and select beneficiaries for anti-poverty programmes, with provisions that these decisions cannot be overturned by higher-level functionaries. Yet, in practice, final decisions are largely made outside these forums. On the positive side, these decisions are mostly made locally within the GP by elected functionaries and political leaders. In Andhra Pradesh, *gram sabhas* are authorised to identify potential beneficiaries and make recommendations, but these decisions can be modified by higher-level officials and elected representatives. The scope for interference was amplified during the *Janmabhoomi* programme, as these forums were primarily used to make applications, with final decisions being made by higher-level officials and political leaders:

> All of us gave applications but no discussions took place. Applications were all taken and nothing happened, main decisions were made at the *mandal* level. Benefits mainly went to the followers of the political leaders, not to the poor.\(^{256}\)

In terms of administrative features, the disproportionate power of officials in Andhra Pradesh is reinforced in the working of the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA). Whereas the DRDA and the *zilla parishad* have been merged in Karnataka, they are independent entities in Andhra (with the District Collector acting as the executive chairperson). Thus, District Collectors in Andhra Pradesh wield a substantial amount of influence within the district (especially over PRIs) compared to their counterparts in Karnataka. On the other hand, in Karnataka, *zilla panchayats* and their Chief Executive Officers exercise a relatively higher degree of influence compared to their counterparts...

\(^{256}\) Interview with knowledgeable informant No. 76, 25 November 2005, Anantapur.
in Andhra Pradesh. Further, at the grassroots, Karnataka has made provisions for the appointment of separate staff for panchayat and revenue functions. It has also allowed recruitment of additional support staff from within the GP. However, in Andhra Pradesh, the panchayat secretary shoulders both revenue and panchayat responsibilities. In addition, the average GP rarely recruits additional support staff. This has made it difficult for secretaries to provide regular and adequate support to citizens, especially as they are often assigned responsibility for two or more GPs.

With respect to fiscal aspects, although Karnataka provides larger amounts of finances (especially to the GP level) than Andhra Pradesh, fiscal devolution has only increased since the amendments in 2003. However, this change has meant that Karnataka's GPs now receive about 50 percent of the total transfers compared to the two upper tiers.

Thus, the discussion in this sub-section indicates that despite its limitations, Karnataka’s panchayat legislation has provided a greater degree of political opportunity space than its counterpart in Andhra Pradesh.

### 5.3 Examining the role of Political Opportunity Spaces in the Two Districts

I begin by briefly discussing the situation in relation to party politics and panchayats in the two study districts\(^{257}\). This is followed by a sub-section that compares the experiences of poor people in the eight GPs of Kolar in Karnataka with those in the eight GPs of Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh.

#### 5.3.1 Politics and Panchayats in Kolar and Anantapur 1994-2006

In Kolar, after the entry of Janata Dal in state politics, the political contest has been largely between the Congress and the two splinter groups of the Janata Dal. In the time period under study, the two parliamentary seats (MPs) have been mostly won by the Congress\(^{258}\). The party has also secured a higher proportion of MLA seats (except in the 1994 term), but the zilla panchayat chairperson posts have been largely secured by the Janata Dal (except the 2005 term). In the 2004 assembly elections, the BJP has begun to split the vote base of the Congress and the Janata Dal, and this has become more visible in the 2005 zilla panchayat elections.

After the entry of TDP in state politics, the political contest in Anantapur has been mainly between the Congress and the TDP. Throughout most of the study time-period

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\(^{257}\) The situation in relation to NGOs has already been discussed in section 4.2 of chapter 4.

\(^{258}\) Appendix 5.1 has details on the party-wise proportion of MPs / MLAs in the different terms.
the TDP has been in power in Anantapur district \( (zilla panchayat \) chairpersons and proportion of MLAs). The two Members of Parliament (MPs) have mostly belonged to the TDP (except in the early 1990s and the 2004 term). The Congress was able to wrest power only after the assembly elections of 2004.

In both districts, the influence of left parties is restricted to a handful of legislative constituencies. Overall, the electoral politics in Kolar district is not as volatile and factional as in Anantapur district, “Anantapur has a faction mindset...in some parts of the district, factions supersede everything else...things are much quieter in Kolar”\(^{259}\).

Political parties have an important role to play in the functioning of the \( zilla panchayat \) (ZP) in Kolar and Anantapur, as elections for the ZP chairpersons are conducted indirectly and on political party lines. The party-in-power can influence the nature of allocations amongst ZP members and also to lower tiers.

In the time period under study, the ZP members in Kolar have had a higher degree of functional and financial control relative to their counterparts in Anantapur\(^{260}\). Nevertheless, in Kolar, the rotation of reservations for \( zilla panchayat \) chairpersons (every twenty months) has meant that there is little stability in policy implementation. Further, in both districts, increasingly, there are differences of opinion within the party cadre, leading to break-away factions and “rebel” candidates\(^{261}\). In order to capture the ZP chairperson posts, both districts have also witnessed an increase in horse-trading, and the last-minute defection of candidates involving ‘attractive’ money transfers\(^{262}\).

### 5.3.2 Comparing Experiences of Poor People between Districts

As discussed in the previous chapter, of the top-eight GPs (the eight GPs where poor people attained higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits compared to the remaining eight GPs), five are located in Kolar district (63 percent) and three are based in Anantapur district (37 percent, see Table 5.3). This sub-section examines this trend in more detail and highlights that the more substantive political opportunity space offered in Karnataka compared to Andhra Pradesh is associated with the acquisition of higher levels [relating to the 2000 GP term in Kolar (plus the first year of the 2005 term), and 2001 term in Anantapur] of political capabilities and material benefits by poor people in the GPs of Kolar compared to the GPs of Anantapur (sub-section

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\(^{259}\) Interview with senior government official, APARD, 18 October 2006, Hyderabad.

\(^{260}\) Interviews with key informants in Anantapur and Kolar, 2005-06.

\(^{261}\) Field observations and interviews with key informants in Anantapur, Kolar, Hyderabad and Bangalore, 2005-06. Also see (Staff Reporter, 2006b, Hindu).

\(^{262}\) In the last part of the 2001 ZP tenure in Anantapur, the Congress was able to engineer seat defections, in order to take over the post of chairperson.
5.3.2.1). This difference is found to be statistically significant (Mann-Whitney test)\textsuperscript{263}. The sub-section also draws attention to the role of the Janmabhoomi programme. Sub-section 5.3.2.2 sheds light on the variations between GPs within both districts.

### Table 5.3: Distribution of Top and Bottom-Eight GPs across Two Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kolar</th>
<th>Anantapur</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top-eight GPs</td>
<td>5 (63 percent)</td>
<td>3 (37 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom-eight GPs</td>
<td>3 (37 percent)</td>
<td>5 (63 percent)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5.3.2.1 Comparing Overall Trends and Patterns in Kolar and Anantapur**

**POLITICAL CAPABILITIES**

In relation to awareness, the survey data\textsuperscript{264} indicates that although poor people in the eight GPs of Kolar district have only a slight edge in relation to questions like naming the candidate they had voted for in the previous elections [83 percent in Kolar and 78 percent in Anantapur – \(p>0.05=\) not significant], they have substantially higher percentages in response to the query about naming their current ward member (88 percent and 37 percent respectively - \(p<0.05=\) significant). This variation reflects the difference in the nature of political opportunity space in the two states with respect to the election of gram panchayat representatives.

In Kolar, the system of ‘indirect’ elections affords ward members the opportunity to be elected as president, and simultaneously provides ward members with means to control the GP president through no-confidence motions. This makes the contest for ward members very competitive. However, in the Anantapur GPs, this competitiveness is only restricted to the ‘direct’ elections for the president’s post. There is very little interest in the ward member elections as they have no opportunities to vie for the president’s post themselves, and no means to influence or control the incumbent\textsuperscript{265}. So, in these GPs, the lack of awareness about local ward members reflects the marginal standing of ward members and their limited powers, “People feel that ward members have no powers anyway so they do not bother about them.”\textsuperscript{266}

\textsuperscript{263} The Mann-Whitney test indicates that the differences between the two states in relation to the index (incorporating the sixteen survey questions covering political capabilities and material benefits) is statistically significant (\(p<0.05\)).

\textsuperscript{264} Appendix 5.2 provides details on the aggregate frequency percentages across the two districts for political capabilities. Percentages are for favourable responses (yes answers), and frequencies are out of 160 respondents in each district (unless specified otherwise). The Mann-Whitney test is used for all statistical analysis in this sub-section.

\textsuperscript{265} As mentioned in Table 5.2, in Andhra Pradesh, the GP president can only be removed by the District Collector.

\textsuperscript{266} Interview with knowledgeable informant No. 146, 25 February 2006, Anantapur.
The focus on the ‘president’ in the Anantapur GPs also explains the difference between the two districts in the survey percentages for contacting presidents and ward members – relating to voice. Whereas a larger number of people have contacted their ward member in Kolar (77 percent in Kolar and 6 percent in Anantapur - \( p<0.05=\text{significant} \)), more people have contacted their GP president in Anantapur (31 percent and 68 percent respectively - \( p<0.05=\text{significant} \)). However, the uneven size (demographically and spatially) of panchayats in Anantapur means that in larger, more spread-out GPs, contacting the president can be a cumbersome task, especially if the incumbent is not aligned to a like-minded party or faction. Further, the higher percentages for contacting government officials in Anantapur (for example, contacting panchayat secretary - 29 percent for Kolar and 51 for Anantapur - \( p<0.05=\text{significant} \), and contacting the intermediate panchayat official – 9 and 19 percent respectively - \( p<0.05=\text{significant} \)) reflect the larger weight given to officials as compared to elected functionaries within Anantapur.

Survey percentages for voting in the most recent GP elections are relatively similar in Kolar and Anantapur (98 and 83 percent respectively - \( p<0.05=\text{significant} \)), but a substantially higher number of poor people in Kolar have voted in the previous GP elections (93 and 38 percent respectively - \( p<0.05=\text{significant} \)). Poor people in Kolar also have the advantage in relation to campaigning (28 percent in Kolar and 13 percent in Anantapur - \( p<0.05=\text{significant} \), and carrying out protests and strikes (13 and 2 percent respectively - \( p<0.05=\text{significant} \)). This suggests that the nature of political opportunity space in the GPs of Kolar is more conducive to the participation of poor people than the space in the GPs of Anantapur.

In terms of attending gram sabhas in the last five years, the relatively high survey percentages in Anantapur (64 percent) need to be interpreted cautiously as they relate primarily to the Janmabhoomi gram sabhas (panchayat gram sabhas were absent during the TDP rule). Since the Andhra Pradesh government tried to ensure that these forums were conducted on a regular basis and were attended by a team of relatively senior government officials, so, poor people readily availed of these opportunities, especially in the initial rounds of the programme. It was refreshing for villagers to see a reversal in norms with bureaucrats visiting their village, seeking their advice and listening to their questions and requests. In addition, the state-led emphasis on Self-Help Groups in Andhra Pradesh, and the focus on women helped to open up spaces for women to raise demands and participate in public forums. However, as mentioned
in sub-section 4.3.1 in chapter 4, the enthusiasm to participate in gram sabhas gradually diminished for a variety of reasons. As one of the local leaders explained:

With the Janmabhoomi programme, officials started coming to the village. There was something positive about their coming. However, applications were taken but nothing much happened. Only few applications actually saw the light of day. Some work was done by the people as shramadhanam. Contracts were all done by TDP leaders.267

In the Kolar GPs, the relatively low survey percentages for attendance of panchayat gram sabhas (37 percent - p<0.05=significant) indicates that these gram sabhas are not viewed as influential and important forums for deliberation and decision-making. The low percentage also reflects the lax attitude of officials in terms of facilitation and attendance, and the weak enforcement of accountability to the public.

Survey percentages for petitioning or making applications are similar across both districts (54 percent in Kolar and 55 percent in Anantapur - p>0.05=not significant). The Anantapur percentage can be explained by taking account of the Janmabhoomi gram sabha, which became the main forum for collecting applications from potential beneficiaries, and disbursing benefits. In Kolar, poor people directed their petitions to elected representatives and lower-level officials like the panchayat secretary, both in panchayat gram sabhas and outside these forums.

In relation to influence, poor people have moulded the functioning of panchayats to a larger extent in the Kolar GPs than those in Anantapur. In the former GPs, a larger number of poor people are able to participate in various panchayat activities; contest and win ward member seats; and influence the functioning of the GP president and the panchayat. Over the study time-period, they have also been able to challenge the dominance of traditional elites to a higher degree than their counterparts in Anantapur. In the latter GPs, the limited opportunities to participate in panchayat activities, centralisation of power with the GP president, and dominance of government officials has reduced the scope for poor people to effectively influence the functioning of GPs.

MATERIAL BENEFITS
Unlike the clear-cut differences in relation to political capabilities between both districts, in relation to material benefits, variations are not so straightforward. Overall, poor people in Kolar have acquired higher levels of PRI-related material benefits than those in the eight GPs of Anantapur district, but the advantage is marginal. Appendix 5.3 provides details on the survey percentages with respect to material benefits.

267 Interview with knowledgeable informant No. 126, 11 February 2006, Anantapur.
Although the percentages are fairly similar in relation to some aspects of material benefits, like the satisfactory provision of certain collective benefits like potable water (71 and 74 percent respectively - p>0.05=not significant), the gaps are wider in relation to other benefits like street lighting (26 and 7 percent respectively - p<0.05=significant). Also, the percentages for Anantapur largely relate to the state-directed Janmabhoomi programme as the panchayats had relatively little powers and resources.

On the other hand, in Kolar, material benefits are channelled through democratically-elected panchayats. Though the GPs in Kolar were inadequately funded during most of the study time-period, poor people have had greater opportunities to bargain and access material benefits within the panchayat framework in Kolar compared to Anantapur, as Karnataka provides wider political opportunity space in relation to PRIs than Andhra Pradesh. In Kolar, the system of indirect elections for GP president has meant that the onus of providing material benefits is more equally shared among the GP members. This is useful because GPs cover a relatively large population and are geographically spread out.

By contrast, in Anantapur, the centralisation of power with the president has meant that in GPs with bigger populations and greater geographical spread, access to material benefits is constrained. However, during the TDP rule, since much of the panchayat funds, state government funds and the existing programmes within the revenue department were channelled through the Janmabhoomi gram sabha, GPs in Anantapur had a central corpus that they could dip into for various developmental activities. Nevertheless, unless the ‘sarpanch’ (GP president) was a powerful local leader affiliated to the ruling TDP party, he or she had relatively less power to influence the allocation of material benefits:

During Janmabhoomi time, the sarpanch did not have much power. He was like a doll. Only applications were taken, final decisions made by the political leader at the mandal office.268

Another example of the influence of different political opportunity spaces relates to pensions (survey percentages for securing pensions in Kolar and Anantapur are exactly the same – 24 percent - p>0.05=not significant). However, pensions are provided under the aegis of PRIs in Karnataka but in Andhra Pradesh they come under the purview of the revenue department (routed through the Janmabhoomi gram sabha). In both Kolar and Anantapur, PRIs have limited funds for housing. Instead, housing is primarily provided through state-sponsored programmes chaired by the MLAs, “We do

268 Interview with knowledgeable informant No 126, 11 February 2006, Anantapur
not get many houses from PRIs, more from MLAs\textsuperscript{269}. Survey percentages for securing housing through \textit{panchayats} (mostly \textit{Janmabhoomi} in Anantapur) in the two districts during the last five years are 21 and 12 percent respectively (p<0.05=significant).

In \textit{both} districts, most GP-related wage-employment ‘works’ are allocated to GP members and political leaders who act as petty contractors. However, corruption is more ‘centralised’ in Anantapur. This is evident in the major scams associated with the Food-for-Work programme and to a lesser degree in the \textit{Janmabhoomi} programme. In contrast, there is more ‘decentralised’ corruption amongst GP members and political leaders in Kolar. Survey percentages for securing daily-wage employment through the \textit{panchayats} (mainly \textit{Janmabhoomi} in Anantapur) in the two districts over the last five years are 26 and 27 percent respectively (p>0.05=not significant).

On balance, the data indicates that although the GPs in Kolar provide a wider range of \textit{panchayat} facilities, existing programmes were insufficiently funded (until the fiscal changes after the 2003 amendments) and ineffectively implemented. However, compared to survey respondents in Anantapur (13 percent), more people in Kolar (26 percent - p<0.05=significant) feel that material benefits from the GP have increased in the last five years compared to the situation in the first GP term of the 1990s. In the next sub-section, I demonstrate that these broad trends hide variations between GPs in both districts.

5.3.2.2 Comparison between GPs within Kolar and Anantapur

In terms of \textit{awareness}, \textit{voice} and \textit{influence}, there are variations between GPs within each of the two districts. All eight GPs in Kolar have not outperformed their counterparts in Anantapur. For example, in relation to naming the candidate they voted for in the previous elections [seven of the eight GPs (88 percent) in Kolar and one of eight (13 percent) in Anantapur are high performers], and in terms of campaigning in elections [only two of the eight GPs in Kolar (25 percent) are medium-to-high performers, and none in Anantapur].

Similarly, in relation to material benefits, poor people in different GPs within the same district have acquired varying levels of material benefits. Poor people expressed high levels of satisfaction in relation to the provision of minor roads in two out of eight GPs in Kolar (25 percent) and three out of eight GPs in Anantapur (37 percent). Only one of the eight GPs in Kolar (13 percent) and none in Anantapur have medium-to-high percentages in relation to the query about services and benefits from the GP having

\textsuperscript{269} Interview with elected male member No. 76, 25 March 2006, Kolar.
increased over the last five years compared to the time the panchayat elections started about ten years ago. This suggests that aside from variations in relation to the nature of political opportunity space provided by the two state governments, other factors are also influencing variations in the experiences of poor people. In the next section, I examine whether these variations are associated with differences in the nature of democratic institutions in the four legislative constituencies.

5.4 Examining the role of Democratic Institutions in the Four Legislative Constituencies

The first sub-section provides a comparative overview of the four legislative constituencies that form part of the study\(^{270}\). The second sub-section examines variations in the experiences of poor people between the four constituencies, and between GPs within these four constituencies.

5.4.1 Comparative Overview of Legislative Constituencies in Kolar and Anantapur

5.4.1.1 Maddilpalli and Reddapalli in Kolar

The two study constituencies Maddilpalli (LC 1) and Reddapalli (LC 2) in Kolar district are both predominantly rural constituencies bordering Andhra Pradesh, and they cover roughly the same geographical area. However, Maddilpalli covers roughly two intermediate panchayats (only one of these is part of my study) while Reddapalli covers one intermediate panchayat (the boundaries of this legislative constituency and the intermediate panchayat are contiguous). Both have a national highway running through them, but Maddilpalli is further away from the district headquarters and is known to be more remote, drought-prone and backward\(^{271}\). Both display a high degree of political competition across all tiers of elections with increasingly narrow margins of victory. Further, in both constituencies, MLAs command significant influence over the local bureaucracy as they have powers to orchestrate transfers of government officials within their constituency, especially the Executive Officer (EO) of the intermediate panchayat (senior-most official within the taluk) and GP-level panchayat secretaries.

In the study period, the political contest in Maddilpalli was between the CPM and the Congress. Other parties had a minor influence. No incumbent MLA has been able to retain their seat in the following elections. The same CPM leader (male, Vokkaliga) was an MLA in both the 1994 and 2004 term whereas the independent (rebel Congress)

\(^{270}\) Appendix 5.4 provides a comparative profile of the four legislative constituencies.

\(^{271}\) Interviews with sub-district and district-level informants, Kolar, 2006
candidate (male, Baljiga) was an MLA in 1999. Aside from differing political party affiliations, the difference in caste between the two main contestants has contributed to a degree of caste polarisation in assembly elections. In addition, whereas the CPM leader’s term is normally associated with a heightened degree of tension in the villages, brow-beating of the bureaucracy and clear party favouritism in awarding ‘contracts’ and benefits; the rebel Congress candidate’s term is considered to be more relaxed, non-intrusive and accommodative:

S was fair. Once he was elected, he did not favour his party people, but the present CPM MLA does not think like that, all the contracts are only for his followers.

However, the CPM leader is considered more approachable as he is largely based within the constituency whereas his rebel-Congress counterpart was accused of spending too much time in Bangalore. The CPM MLA professes to be an advocate of democratic decentralisation but it is not evident in his actions. On the other hand, the rebel Congress candidate allowed the status quo to continue and did not obstruct the political opportunity space provided by PRIs. In part, this is because his support base is partially made up of sangha members associated with the study-NGO Akravati. So, when he has been in power, the senior leaders of the sangha together with the senior management of the NGO are able to exert some amount of pressure on him to ensure that their members benefit from panchayats and that there is no wilful obstruction on his part. However, this open support to the rebel-Congress candidate had driven a wedge between the CPM MLA and the sangha supporters.

During the study time-period, the political party-in-power in the intermediate panchayat in Maddilpalli has often been at odds with the ruling MLA. This ‘opposition’ has ensured that no party is able to completely dominate the political scene, and spoils and benefits are distributed to supporters across the divide. However, this has not always translated into positive gains for marginalised and vulnerable citizens, but it has allowed for some continuity in policy. Although both the MLA and the intermediate panchayat members have tried to channel benefits to their vote bases, they have often been thwarted by intra-party politics and local village dynamics. In addition, the rotation of reservations for the post of chairpersons in intermediate panchayats (every twenty months within a

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272 Maddilpalli has a caste break-up that reflects the Kolar district break-up except that it has a sizeable number of Baljigas (BC). Both Baljigas and Vokkaligas are influential caste groupings within this legislative constituency.

273 Interview with sangha functionary No. 3, 19 September 2005, Kolar.

274 Interviews with key informants at the sub-district and GP level, Kolar, 2005-06.

275 Interviews with rebel Congress MLA, Akravati staff and functionaries of sangha, Kolar, 2006.
five year term) has increased opportunities for defections, generating further instability in planning and implementing *panchayat* policies.

In *Reddapalli* legislative constituency, the contest is largely between the Congress and the JD(S), and the principal contenders are both male Vokkaligas. Like in Maddilipalli, no incumbent MLA in Reddpalli has been able to retain their seat in the following elections. The JD(S) leader was MLA in 1994 and 2004 while his Congress counterpart was MLA in 1999. Both leaders follow similar centrist policies and are not wilfully obstructive in relation to PRIs, “Both the MLAs are not people who put too much pressure on GPs or interfere excessively in its functioning.” They purport to be supporters of democratic decentralisation initiatives, but only as long as it maintains status quo and does not interfere with their existing powers of patronage. Both MLAs have provided spaces for NGO Godavari to work on PRI-related issues but they are not enthusiastic advocates of its interventions.

The JD(S) leader is considered more approachable as he is largely based within the constituency. On the other hand, his Congress counterpart was accused of being fairly inaccessible as he spent most of his time in Bangalore. Although the latter had delineated ‘command’ to constituency-level leaders, the allegations of corruption directed at the second-line leadership led to a lot of negative publicity for him. On the whole, politics within the constituency is not aggressive or violent. There is some amount of tension during elections, but by and large, the situation is relatively peaceful.

In relation to the intermediate *panchayat*, the situation in Reddapalli is somewhat different to its counterpart in Maddilpalli. In both the 1994 and the 2000 term, the party-in-power in the intermediate *panchayat* was the same as the party to which the MLA belonged. Although, this made the political dynamics less conflicting, it did not translate into positive gains for poor people. For example, in the 2000 term, the match between the Congress MLA and the Congress-dominated intermediate *panchayat* ensured that it was largely supporters of the Congress who benefited from both PRIs and MLA development programmes. In addition, local leaders from the Congress were (at times) able to get away with a high degree of corruption because there was no threat to them from the MLA or the officials. This match in party affiliations also meant that the chair of the intermediate *panchayat* was in the shadow of the MLA.

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276 The caste-religion break-up roughly mirrors the district profile.
277 Interview with elected male member No. 76, 25 March 2006, Kolar.
278 Interviews with NGO staff and key informants at the sub-district level, Kolar, 2006.
279 Interviews with key informants at sub-district and GP level, Kolar, 2006.
5.4.1.2 Yellapalli and Bhushanapalli in Anantapur

Both Yellapalli (LC 3) and Bhushanapalli (LC 4) are rural legislative constituencies bordering Karnataka. They each have a national highway running through them and they both reflect the caste/religion break-up of the district. However, Bhushanapalli is geographically and demographically smaller than Yellapalli. It is also considered to be more remote and backward, but less faction-ridden than Yellapalli. Both constituencies have underlying problems with naxalites, but successive splits among the prevailing naxalite groups have damaged their credibility and influence among the masses. All four intermediate panchayats under study (two each in Yellapalli and Bhushanapalli) are located in areas where the naxalite influence is relatively limited compared to other parts of the constituency.

Yellapalli is considered to be one of the most faction-ridden constituencies in the district. This faction is essentially a family feud that has grown to take on caste, political party and ‘naxalite’ overtones. Two Congress supporting Reddy families are pitted against another TDP supporting Kamma family. The same individual was TDP MLA throughout the study period and was finally assassinated in 2005 by his rivals. Later that year his wife won the bye-election.

During the study period, the TDP has dominated the parliamentary, assembly and panchayat elections in Yellapalli. In part, this is because ‘victories’ in elections were engineered through coercive force and rigging. In many of the gram panchayats, there were no elections, only “ekagriyam” or unanimous nominations decided by the MLA on the advice of senior intermediate-tier leaders. Benefits from PRIs and the Janmabhoomi programme were channelled to local TDP supporters who in turn distributed them among their followers. The MLA also dominated district-level politics, and manipulated all government contracts associated with development programmes.

A retired bureaucrat who lived in the district described the MLA in these words:

This MLA had more clout than a regular MLA, but like most other MLAs he was not really pro-poor. He tried to project a pro-poor image but he did not do things to benefit the poor. There was an element of fear in his constituency and beyond…anybody that did not agree was terminated.

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280 Interviews with sub-district and district-level informants, Anantapur, 2006
281 The issue about ‘duplicate naxalites’ has been discussed in more detail in sub-section 4.5.2.1, in relation to GP 11.
282 Interviews with sub-district and district-level informants, Anantapur, 2006.
283 Interviews with sub-district and district-level informants, Anantapur, 2006.
284 Interview with district-level informant No. 9, 2 October 2006, Anantapur.
Both the intermediary *panchayats* under study in Yellapalli were under the control of functionaries from the TDP party. The MLA also ensured that the bureaucracy was made to toe the line. In part, this was made possible by the sizeably smaller geographical size of the intermediate tier compared to the legislative constituency. This provided the MLA with additional leverage over the functioning of officials and the intermediate *panchayat*. In addition, unlike the three other legislative constituencies that form part of this study, the TDP MLA in Yellapalli was never voted out of power. NGOs operating within the constituency were also negatively affected by the political dynamics. In particular, NGO Teesta found it hard to work on development and PRI-related issues, and it had a very uneasy relationship with the MLA.

In marked contrast, Bhushanapalli is relatively ‘quieter’ and is not afflicted by major factional rivalries. However, it does have ‘law and order’ problems in relation to ‘original naxalite’ groups. In the time period under study, the constituency has always seen the ruling MLA being voted out in the ensuing elections. All three MLAs were male (Reddys). Two were from the TDP, while the incumbent MLA belongs to the Congress. By and large, all three have been relatively non-intrusive and non-obstructive in relation to local-level politics, *panchayats* and NGOs. They have provided some space for opposition parties, government officials and NGOs to function independently. NGO Jamuna has been able to work relatively freely on PRI issues, and has even secured the support and involvement of some of these MLAs in PRI-related open forum discussions and debates. For example, one of the NGO functionaries explained:

> We had a pre-election discussion which involved getting all the contenders for local elections to come to a common forum and speak about what they would do in relation to PRIs if they were elected. We had good involvement and support from the MLA for this.285

Even when the MLA and the intermediate *panchayat* president belong to different parties, the incumbent MLAs have been fairly accommodative and have not interfered unduly in the functioning of the intermediate *panchayats*. Although the intermediate tier lacks adequate powers and resources, in both the intermediary *panchayats* under study in Bhushanapalli there has been intense party-based competition for the post of intermediate *panchayat* president. The system of indirect elections for the post of chairperson further fuels the political stand-off.

As can be seen from the discussion in the preceding two sub-sections, although the legislative constituencies in each district share some underlying similarities, there are

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285 Interview with NGO staff No. 12, 6 March 2006, Anantapur.
distinct differences between them. These differences are associated with variations in
the nature of democratic institutions between the four legislative constituencies, which
in turn have moulded the existing political opportunity spaces and the operations of the
study-NGO to varying degrees. In the next sub-section, I examine whether these
variations are associated with differences in the experiences of poor people across and
within these four legislative constituencies.

5.4.2 Comparing Experiences of Poor People in the Four LCs

The discussion in chapter 4 (sub-section 4.5.3) indicates that of the top-eight GPs
(higher performing GPs), three are located in Reddapalli (37 percent), two each in
Maddilpalli (25 percent) and Bhushanapalli (25 percent), and only one in Yellapalli (13
percent). Further, within each legislative constituency (covering four study-GPs)
Reddapalli has the highest percentage of GPs in the top-eight – 75 percent (Table 5.4).
The table also highlights the top-eight GPs across the four legislative constituencies.

Table 5.4: Distribution of Top and Bottom-Eight GPs between Legislative Constituencies
(column percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total of 16 GPs</th>
<th>Maddilpalli</th>
<th>Reddapalli</th>
<th>Yellapalli</th>
<th>Bhushanapalli</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top-eight GPs</strong></td>
<td>2 (50 percent)</td>
<td>3 (75 percent)</td>
<td>1 (25 percent)</td>
<td>2 (50 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GP 1, GP 4</td>
<td>GP5, GP6, GP8</td>
<td>GP 12</td>
<td>GP 13, GP 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bottom-Eight GPs</strong></td>
<td>2 (50 percent)</td>
<td>1 (25 percent)</td>
<td>3 (75 percent)</td>
<td>2 (50 percent)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Kruskal-Wallis test indicates that the differences between the four legislative
constituencies in relation to the index (incorporating the sixteen survey questions
covering political capabilities and material benefits) is statistically significant (p<0.05). It
also highlights that Reddapalli constituency has performed the best, followed by
Maddilpalli, Bhushanapalli and Yellapalli. These broad trends affirm that variations in
the experiences of poor people between the four constituencies are partly associated
with the differences in the nature of democratic institutions. Compared to the MLA in
Yellapalli, in the 2000 GP term in Kolar (plus the first year of the 2005 term) and 2001
term in Anantapur, the MLAs in Reddapalli, Maddilpalli and Bhushanapalli have been
relatively non-intrusive and non-obstructive in their approach towards politics,
panchayats and NGOs.

5.4.2.1 Comparing Experiences of Poor People between Legislative Constituencies

**POLITICAL CAPABILITIES**

Overall, between the four legislative constituencies, poor people in Reddapalli (followed
by those in Maddilpalli, Bhushanapalli and Yellapalli) have attained the highest levels of
political capabilities in terms of awareness, voice and influence\(^{286}\).

\(^{286}\) All statistical analysis in this sub-section uses the Kruskal-Wallis test.
In relation to awareness, the differences in survey percentages are marginal at times (name the person you voted for in the last GP elections – 82 percent in Maddilpalli, 84 in Reddapalli, 76 in Yellapalli and 80 in Bhushanapalli - p>0.05=not significant) or more clear-cut in other instances (name your present ward member 83, 94, 34, 40 percent respectively – p<0.05=significant).

Variations are also reflected in relation to aspects of voice. For example, the survey percentages with respect to voting in previous GPs elections (2000 and 1993 in Karnataka, and 1995 in Andhra Pradesh) are 96 percent in Maddilpalli, 90 percent in Reddapalli, 19 percent in Yellapalli and 58 percent in Bhushanapalli (p<0.05=significant). The relatively low percentages in Yellapalli reflect the overt influence of the MLA. Elections were run relatively freely in Maddilpalli, Reddapalli and Bhushanapalli, but the MLA in Yellapalli often pushed for ‘nominations’ rather than elections. Percentages for participating in panchayat-related protests and strikes in the last five years are 4 percent in Maddilpalli, 23 percent in Reddapalli, 0 percent in Yellapalli, and 4 percent in Bhushanapalli (p<0.05=significant); and those for signing a collective petition outlining demands or submitting an individual petition/application are 38, 70, 51 and 59 respectively (p<0.05=significant).

In relation to influence, in the 2000 GP term (2001 term in Anantapur) poor people in Reddapalli were able to have greater leverage over the functioning of panchayats than their counterparts in the remaining three legislative constituencies.

MATERIAL BENEFITS

With respect to material benefits there are some broad trends in the variations between the four legislative constituencies but the differences are not very clear-cut. In Kolar, Reddapalli has an edge over Maddilpalli; and in Anantapur, Bhushanapalli has the edge over Yellapalli. Overall, Reddapalli performs the best (Appendix 5.3 provides constituency-wise survey percentages with respect to material benefits). For example, percentages for satisfactory provision of minor roads are 49 in Maddilpalli, 49 in Reddapalli, 45 in Yellapalli and 71 in Bhushanapalli (p<0.05=significant); and percentages for survey respondents who felt that material benefits from the GP had increased in the last five years compared to the situation in the first GP term of the

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287 Appendix 5.2 provides details on the survey percentages across the four legislative constituencies. Percentages are for favourable responses (yes answers), and frequencies are out of 80 respondents in each legislative constituency (unless specified otherwise).

288 By the start of the 2005 term, poor people in Maddilpalli were also beginning to influence the dynamics in the GP, but it is too early to see visible gains.
1990s are 19, 33, 6 and 19 percent respectively (p<0.05=significant); and those for satisfactory provision of street lighting are 21, 30, 13 and 1 percent respectively (p<0.05=significant).

The absence of a clear-cut trend suggests that aside from legislative constituency dynamics, other factors are also influencing the level to which poor people are able to secure panchayat-related material benefits. The data suggests that GP-level politics and leadership also moulds the experiences of poor people. This factor will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 7.

5.4.2.2 Comparing Experiences of Poor People within Legislative Constituencies

In relation to political capabilities and material benefits, there are variations between GPs located within the same constituency. For instance, although Reddapalli legislative constituency has performed the best along both dimensions, not all GPs (total of four) in the constituency have performed well [for example, survey percentages for satisfactory provision of minor roads are as follows: out of four GPs - one (25 percent) is in the high category, two (50 percent) in the medium-to-low category, and one in the low category (25 percent)]. The data also reveals that part of the explanation for the higher performance of certain GPs like GP 5 in Reddapalli lies with the local NGO Godavari and the associated sangha. These associations with NGO interventions will be examined in more detail in the next chapter.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that high politics – party-based politics at the level of state governments and legislative constituencies – moulds the nature of political opportunity spaces and the nature of democratic institutions in the two districts and four legislative constituencies under study. It has also described how these spaces and institutions shape the experiences of poor people in the sixteen case-study panchayats. More importantly, it has revealed that variations in political opportunity spaces and the nature of democratic institutions are associated with variations in the experiences of poor people in the sixteen GPs.

In relation to state politics, the chapter has explained how the evolution of NGOs and panchayats in both states is bound-up with changes in the policies of state government regimes. Although both states share similarities in the nature of state politics and policies, they also have some distinct differences. State governments in Karnataka have focused on incremental inclusive change and their periods-of-rule are associated with collective leadership, and a fairly autonomous and capable bureaucracy. State
governments in Andhra Pradesh have largely focused on populist change and their periods-in-power are associated with individual leadership, and a largely state-controlled but capable bureaucracy. These differences have also influenced their approach to PRIs and NGOs.

The chapter documents that during the study time-period both Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have displayed broad policy continuity in relation to panchayats and NGOs. While the former state has gradually increased devolution to panchayats, the latter has either bypassed these forums or neglected them. On the whole, state governments in Karnataka have provided greater political opportunity space than those in Andhra. These differences have also influenced their approach to NGOs that work on issues relating to PRIs. While the Karnataka government has promoted NGO involvement in panchayats; in Andhra Pradesh, under the TDP regime, NGOs have had little encouragement to work on these issues. The chapter has argued that these contrasting approaches draw attention to the role of chief ministers and MLAs.

The policies adopted by chief ministers can play a crucial role in shaping the content of the panchayat legislation (and associated policies) and the extent of its implementation, which in turn can influence the opportunities for NGOs to engage with panchayats. This is especially evident in Andhra Pradesh where the TDP chief minister’s flagship Janmabhoomi programme sidelined panchayats and disregarded the PRI-related campaigns of NGOs. Thus, the nature of political opportunity space has influenced the experiences of poor people. Poor people in Kolar district in Karnataka have acquired higher levels of awareness, voice and influence, and material benefits than their counterparts in Anantapur district in Andhra Pradesh. However, disaggregating the data highlights that not all eight GPs in Kolar district have performed better than the eight in Anantapur (five out of the eight GPs in Kolar are in the top-eight rankings). Poor people have attained different levels of political capabilities and material well-being in GPs situated within the same district. This suggests that although political opportunity space is an important factor, other forces also appear to be at play.

Another factor that is significant relates to the nature of democratic institutions within the legislative constituency. The chapter has revealed that one of the main influences on the nature of democratic institutions are the MLAs. They influence the extent to which panchayat elections are conducted freely and fairly, the decision about likely candidates for presidential posts in panchayat elections are often determined by them, and they also shape the interventions of NGOs that work on the subject of panchayats. This helps to explain variations between the four legislative constituencies under study.
The chapter has also established that differences between these constituencies are associated with variations in the experiences of poor people. However, although Reddapalli constituency performs the best in terms of political capabilities and material benefits (three out of the four GPs in this constituency are in the top-eight rankings), experiences of poor people vary across different GPs within this constituency. This suggests that other factors might also influence these variations.

Thus, the findings in this chapter highlight the relevance of political opportunity spaces and democratic institutions, but they also indicate that variations between GPs are influenced by other factors. In the next chapter, I examine whether differences in the nature of NGO interventions are associated with variations in the experiences of poor people.
Chapter 6

GRASSROOTS-NGOS: UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF THE POLITICAL?

The reason why we decided to have politics as an integral part of sangha was to get benefits from the government without having to bend over backwards, begging some one to get benefits for us. We need the sangha for collective strength. It also has programmes like health support, and the group strength is crucial, especially when it comes to time of elections. We elect members who will listen to us. We control them… Panchayats and sanghas are both needed. Some things sanghas cannot give us like hostel seats, houses, street lights. (Sangha functionary, 2006)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comparative assessment of the role played by the four grassroots-NGOs, and describes the various ways in which these NGOs shape the experiences of poor people. It demonstrates that variations in the structure, policies and activities of the four NGOs in relation to PRIs are associated with different levels of political capabilities and material benefits in the sixteen GPs under study. It also reveals that poor people who are affiliated with two of the study-NGOs acquire higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits than those associated with the other two NGOs. In doing so, the chapter highlights the importance of political strategies, membership-based sanghas and collective action.

The chapter is divided into six sections. All sections pertain to the 2000 GP term in Karnataka (plus one year of the 2005 GP term) and 2001 GP term in Andhra Pradesh. Section 6.2 provides an in-depth comparison of the structure, policies and activities of the four grassroots-NGOs; and sheds light on the factors associated with variations in their interventions. Section 6.3 briefly compares the broad trends in the eight GPs associated with the study-NGOs with those in the eight GPs where these NGOs do not operate. Section 6.4 provides a comparative assessment of the four NGOs by focusing only on the eight GPs associated with the four study-NGOs. Section 6.5 identifies the key factors that have strengthened NGO interventions in relation to panchayats. The concluding section (6.6) sums up the main findings of the chapter.

6.2 Comparing Structure, Policies and Activities of the four NGOs

6.2.1 NGO Akravati in Kolar district (operational in GP 1 and GP 4)

This large, long-established NGO is headed by a charismatic leader who is strongly committed to working with panchayats and bringing about systemic change for poor
people. Although the head promotes a decentralised and collective approach to PRI-related decision-making, in practice, the NGO management is highly centralised. However, decision-making is relatively more decentralised within the membership-based sangha that it facilitates. The sangha is a federation and is a separate legal entity. It is largely made up of daily-wage labour families, many of whom are from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. There is a close link between the NGO and the sangha as more than half of the NGO staff are drawn from amongst the sangha.

Akravati works in about 900 habitations covering four different legislative constituencies. Its core emphasis is on the conscientisation, organisation and mobilisation of sangha households. With respect to PRIs, Akravati has disseminated information, mobilised sangha members to contest seats and make demands on the panchayats, and provided training on PRI-related issues. As one of the female sangha functionaries put it, “Before people did not know what was happening in relation to panchayats, now we get to know what is coming to the panchayats”.

Alongside its work on panchayat advocacy, Akravati also provides socio-economic support to the sangha members through agricultural loans, dry-land development programmes, women’s programmes, children’s education initiatives, community and referral health programmes; and legal support in socio-economic and political disputes. Some of these programmes are funded by monetary contributions from sangha members but the majority are funded by international donors. Akravati reaches out to the sanghas through a regular programme of meetings and training sessions. In order to streamline monitoring and evaluation, it has developed a computer-based application for accessing and updating information in relation to member families. This database is accessible both to sangha members and staff.

Compared to the other four NGOs, Akravati has a relatively well-defined political strategy. In all panchayat elections, the NGO has mobilised the sangha members to collectively vote for candidates nominated by the sangha or aligned with it. In Maddilpalli, the legislative constituency under study, the sangha has aligned itself with electoral candidates (both in panchayat and assembly elections) who pledge to support sangha members and sangha initiatives. As discussed in chapter 5, this electoral stance has had both positive and negative benefits for sangha members. The MLA in 1999 supported the sangha, but this was not the case in the 1994 and 2004 terms.

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291 The organisation as a whole started work on panchayats from the late 1980s, but in some GPs (including GP 1) it only started work on panchayats in 2000.

Securing the MLA’s support (1999 term) for its panchayat initiatives is a significant achievement as MLAs are often indifferent or antagonistic to PRIs. Akravati has been able to help the MLA recognise the political benefits of supporting panchayat initiatives at the local level and prioritising the sangha’s concerns:

Akravati is giving people information about the panchayat Act. They are doing good work. It is important for people to have this information. Panchayats can empower marginalised communities…I value Akravati and the sangha’s efforts and count on their support.293

Akravati has also followed a strategy of building the organisational base of the sangha by extending sangha coverage within GPs, and within the legislative constituency. At the GP level, the enhanced knowledge, organisational skills and collective action of sangha members have allowed members to capture a sizeable share of ward member seats in the 2005 elections (in GP 1 and GP 4).

However, this success is only a recent development. In the past, the sanghas have been less successful at translating their collective strength into electoral victories or material benefits for their members. In part, this is because they have been unable to capture a significant proportion of ward member seats as they have lacked adequate coverage within the GP. At other times, frontline workers have been poor at disseminating PRI-related information and supervising the conduct of village-level sangha meetings. The nature of local politics and sangha-level leadership has also influenced the organisational and collective strength of the village-level sanghas (more on this in the next chapter). In some cases, the threat of violent reprisal from the local elites has curbed membership expansion.

In terms of networking and lobbying on panchayat matters at higher levels of government, Akravati has followed a different strategy compared to the three other study-NGOs. It has preferred to concentrate its efforts on increasing the political leverage of the sangha within the legislative constituency and the district. Contact and exchange with other district/state-level NGOs working on PRI-related issues or state-level bureaucrats associated with panchayats is kept to the minimum.

6.2.2 NGO Godavari in Kolar district (operational in GP 5 and GP 8)

Godavari is a women’s collective headed by an experienced and committed advocate of gender justice. Decision-making within the NGO and the associated sangha is largely decentralised and arrived at by consensus. Godavari works with poor women who are largely landless labourers or marginal farmers hailing from Scheduled Castes.

293 Interview with ex-MLA of Maddilpalli constituency, 9 October 2006, Bangalore.
and Scheduled Tribes. The membership-based sanghas are federated and operate in 160 habitations spread across four different legislative constituencies. In its early years, Godavari focused mainly on micro-credit and gender issues. From around 2000, it has expanded its work to cover advocacy issues relating to panchayats and sustainable livelihoods.

Godavari was previously funded by a few international and national donors. However, in the last few years of the study time-period, it has faced severe funding shortfalls. This has curtailed the expansion and development of advocacy initiatives as it is unable to train, retain or recruit staff. It has also hampered Godavari’s efforts to sustain micro-credit and welfare programmes, and develop a readily accessible and up-to-date database in relation to the member families. Problems with staffing and finances are particularly damaging as Godavari has a unique approach to working in the villages.

All members of staff are women (many of whom come from other districts of Karnataka) and a sizeable proportion is based in the villages. This policy has greatly increased opportunities for regular interaction and extension of support to local women, especially in relation to panchayat-related issues. In turn, this has helped to build the political capabilities of the sangha members and expanded opportunities for collective mobilisation and action. NGO Staff and sangha functionaries have helped to disperse information on PRI-related roles, responsibilities and programmes through role-plays, songs and meetings. They have encouraged sangha members to contest elections and participate in panchayat activities.

Additionally, NGO staff have provided sangha functionaries and elected members (especially women) with opportunities to attend panchayat-related training and gain experience on exposure visits. One of the elected members from the 1994 GP term commented, “With the presence of the sangha, women have more knowledge about panchayats...they question more...they have also got more benefits from the panchayat”.

However, since they lack adequate geopolitical coverage within most GPs, sangha members have been largely unable to capture key positions within the gram panchayat and the intermediate panchayat. In panchayat elections, Godavari and the sangha have not officially aligned themselves with any political party. Informally, some sanghas have chosen to collectively support a local candidate or have negotiated with local political leaders to extend support to a consensus candidate from within the sangha.

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294 Interview with elected male member No. 102, 10 September 2006, Kolar.
Although they have been unable to influence the functioning of panchayats by capturing ward member seats, many sangha members have been actively involved in ‘voicing’ their demands by staging collective dharnas (sit-ins) and protests. In gram panchayats like GP 5 and GP 8 (located in Reddapalli legislative constituency), sangha women have acted as pressure-groups. They have contacted elected representatives, and submitted petitions to local bureaucrats and politicians within the legislative constituency on a range of panchayat issues. This has helped to ensure that the gram panchayat office “remains open” everyday of the working week and that panchayat secretaries visit the GP on a “regular” basis. However, since they largely work with women, the sangha has found it difficult to alter the mindsets of village men, and win their support for collective action and reform.

Apart from mobilising protests and petitions at the intermediate tier and below, senior sangha functionaries and Godavari staff have lobbied for panchayat reforms at the level of state government. They have also networked with a number of state-level advocacy NGOs that work on the theme of panchayats. This has helped to generate support from state-level bureaucrats for PRI-related grassroots initiatives, like the conduct of ward sabhas. State-level recognition and support has been instrumental in putting pressure on errant officials within the legislative constituency:

In the RDPR (Rural Development and Panchayati Raj) department in Bangalore, the secretary R____ was like our right hand. If we approached him with a serious problem he used to immediately issue a GO (government order) circular. After him, B____ was also a big support. We let him know that panchayat offices were not being kept open during the week and that panchayat secretaries were not attending regularly. So he organized some spot inspections and caught a few officials off-guard. After those suspensions, the officials are much more vigilant now.

6.2.3 NGO Teesta in Anantapur district (operational in GP 9 and GP 10)

Teesta is headed by a dynamic couple who are passionate advocates of ecological restoration programmes like the regeneration of traditional forests and grasslands, and the rejuvenation of traditional water-harvesting structures. These ecological initiatives are combined with micro-credit activities targeted at women, youth and disabled people; specialised support for youth and disabled people; and alternative education programmes for children. Since 2000, it has started advocacy work on panchayats.

Teesta works in 112 habitations located in three sub-district divisions of Yellapalli legislative constituency. It is primarily financed by a mix of international and state-level

295 Interview with panchayat secretary No. 10, 22 March 2006, Kolar.
296 Interview with NGO staff No. 24, 13 October 2006, Kolar.
297 The micro-credit sanghas are federated within each sub-district division. Teesta’s target households consist of the landless, marginal farmers and dalits.
funding organisations. In order to supplement finances, Teesta also sub-contracts development projects (watershed and natural resource management) from the state government. Although it maintains a record of micro-credit loans and repayments, the NGO lacks a readily accessible database of member families. Decision-making within the NGO and the associated sanghas (women, youth, disabled, and watershed) is relatively decentralised, but the programmatic team working on panchayat issues is small and it has lacked stable leadership.

In GPs where they operate, Teesta has focused on building the awareness of both sangha members and the wider public on panchayat-related issues. Information is disseminated through the medium of street theatre, public meetings (includes discussions and debates) and video screenings. Teesta has carried out pre-election campaigns to build the awareness of voters by distributing pamphlets; and making mobile public announcements on the dangers of rigging, the importance of voting, the value of making informed choices, and the rights of voters. As a result, despite the political machinations of the ex-MLA, elections for the GP president’s post in 2001 were held impartially and peacefully in at least a few gram panchayats (like GP 9).

Teesta has also conducted training programmes for elected representatives from all tiers of panchayats, and has taken some of them on exposure visits to the neighbouring states of Kerala and Karnataka. Although it has tried to facilitate a forum of elected representatives within the legislative constituency, enthusiasm has been weak as GP ward members feel powerless within the existing panchayat system. In addition, Teesta’s efforts have been thwarted by the antagonistic stance of the ex-MLA, and his overt interference in the functioning of panchayats:

When R___ was in power, there were a lot of unanimous (uncontested) elections for PRIs. Now not many unanimous elections… at least the element of fear is not there like during R___’s time. R____ had problems with Teesta’s work, especially in 1995 and 2004.298

Despite these odds, sangha members are actively encouraged to contest elections. Teesta and the sangha are not aligned to any particular political party but in a few instances, some sanghas have informally supported certain candidates. However, in the absence of a coherent electoral strategy, this policy has at times led to political divisions within the sanghas. Further, the limited geo-political coverage of sanghas within the GPs has restricted the sangha’s chances of capturing key positions within the gram panchayat. In addition, Teesta’s frontline staff have their own political

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298 Interview with NGO staff No. 9, 16 January 2006, Anantapur.
leanings (this is also an issue in the other three study-NGOs), and this can sometimes come in the way of effective work on panchayat issues.

Teesta has been largely unsuccessful in mobilising its members to undertake collective agitations and assert their rights in relation to panchayats, or lobby for material benefits. So, sangha members have had little influence on the functioning of GPs. Nevertheless, in certain GPs, Teesta and the sanghas have tried to ensure that at least some of the funds devolved to GPs are utilised in a transparent and productive manner. As one of the key informants in GP 9 commented:

The Food-for-Work programme was organized by Teesta... we did work in the forest. That was good. Other programmes were given to contractors or TDP leaders, they made some money. If it is done via Teesta, then it is done well. It is reaching people.299

In addition, Teesta has tried to raise the income generating potential of GPs (like GP 10) by partially financing the construction of rooms that can be rented out as shops. Aside from attempts to improve the functioning of GPs, Teesta has also tried to lobby for panchayat reforms at the district and state level. It has networked with other NGOs working on panchayat issues and made collective representations at the state level, but it has been unable to stem the deliberate sidelining of panchayats by the TDP state government or reverse the Congress state government’s apathy towards panchayats.

6.2.4 NGO Jamuna in Anantapur district (operational in GP 13 and GP 14)

Jamuna is a small NGO (in terms of staff size and habitation coverage) compared to the other three study-NGOs. It works with agricultural labourers and resource-poor families in around 40 habitations spread across six sub-district divisions in two legislative constituencies. Decision-making within Jamuna is fairly centralised with most of the key policies being devised by the head of the organisation.

The NGO is funded by international, national and state-level donors. However, it has been relatively unsuccessful in securing regular and adequate funding. As a result, it has been unable to invest efforts in initiatives that require long term interventions and sustained financial and organisational support. The dearth of funding also means that it is the funds flow that dictates its field of work. So, it does not operate in a fixed set of habitations, as they vary depending on the project that is being implemented. Problems with funding have also affected its ability to train and retain staff, and maintain a readily accessible database of households that it works with.

299 Interview with knowledgeable informant No. 64, 20 November 2005, Anantapur.
In order to supplement funds, Jamuna has taken on the role of project implementing agency for some watershed and natural resource management programmes funded by the state government. Since 2001, it has also secured funding from a state-level NGO to work on advocacy issues relating to panchayats. However, limited and irregular funding, inadequate staffing, insufficient supervision, and the absence of a clear strategy for panchayats have hampered the quality and effectiveness of its initiatives. In particular, problems with staffing have made it difficult to build and maintain relationships with villagers:

After 2004, there is no one really to look after this mandal. G____ is supposed to look after two mandals by himself. Our funders, C____ are not willing to support many staff. Now we have only four staff, which includes one coordinator and we are supposed to look after five mandals. So we have not been able to concentrate on GPs. This has affected our work amongst people in the villages...results have become less.\(^{300}\)

Unlike the other three grassroots-NGOs, Jamuna does not work alongside a membership-based sangha of poor people when working on the subject of panchayats. Although it provides support and training to elected ward members and GP presidents from marginalised backgrounds, in general, it does not focus its efforts on poor people alone but prefers to work with all citizens within the GP.\(^{301}\) It disseminates information and raises citizen awareness by screening videos, conducting public discussions, organising cultural programmes, distributing pamphlets and performing street plays.\(^{303}\) Jamuna also displays details pertaining to panchayat finances and implementation of works in prominent places within the main panchayat headquarter village. In some GPs, it also provides monetary contributions for selected development projects, like improving drinking water facilities (in GP 13).

However, it has rarely been able to mobilise poor people to make collective demands in relation to panchayats or agitate against the weak functioning of the GP. The absence of collective struggles and the lack of influence over the functioning of GPs have meant that people from marginalised and vulnerable backgrounds have been largely unable to alter the prevailing power hierarchies. In part, Jamuna’s efforts have been thwarted by the limited devolution to panchayats and the spotlight on the comparatively well-funded Janmabhoomi programme. The low levels of engagement with panchayats also reflect the inadequate efforts and poor supervision of some of Jamuna’s frontline workers.

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\(^{300}\) Interview with NGO staff No. 12, 6 March 2006, Anantapur.
\(^{301}\) It focuses its efforts on poor families in some of the other projects that it works on.
\(^{302}\) However, it chooses to work in GPs where there is a sizeable proportion of agricultural labourers and resource-poor families.
\(^{303}\) Jamuna has not aligned itself with any political party.
Further, since it does not appoint village-level functionaries, Jamuna is unable to nurture the leadership potential amongst poor people. Although it has made some efforts to draw GP ward members and GP presidents from marginalised backgrounds (especially women) into the public arena, through training and exposure visits to other states, it has been unable to motivate them to play a greater role in the functioning of gram panchayats. One of the village informants described their impact in this way:

Jamuna had a few meetings in the school about raising awareness on panchayats. They even invited the MPDO (Mandal Parishad Development Officer). About thirty people came, a few women. Some cultural programmes were also held. They haven’t had a major impact because no use with just words. They need to have done some action.304

Aside from GPs, Jamuna has also tried to build awareness about panchayats within the legislative constituency as a whole. It has organised cycle rallies, invited MLAs to public debates on panchayats, and started a forum for elected representatives. Nevertheless, its efforts to raise awareness have had limited success due to the nature of its interventions (for instance, it has inadequate geopolitical coverage within the legislative constituency) and the nature of political opportunity space (insufficient powers and resources). Jamuna has also tried to lobby for panchayat reforms at the level of state government. Together with other NGOs in the district and the state, it has petitioned the chief minister and the panchayat minister for greater devolution, but it has received little response under both the TDP and Congress state governments.

As can be seen from the discussion in the previous four sub-sections, some of the NGOs (Akravati and Godavari) have engaged with the political to a larger extent than the others (Teesta and Jamuna). They have mobilised poor people to contest elections, build electoral alliances and undertake protests and strikes; thereby enabling vulnerable and marginalised people to have greater influence over the functioning of PRIs. In the next two sections, I examine whether these differences are also associated with variations in the experiences of poor people in the study-GPs.

6.3 Assessing the role of NGO Interventions across the Sixteen GPs

This section is divided into two sub-sections. The first sub-section compares the levels of political capabilities and material benefits attained by poor people in NGO-operational GPs with those GPs where these NGOs are absent. The second sub-section compares the experiences of poor people between the four areas where the different NGOs operate, and highlights some of the NGO-related factors that are associated with higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits.

304 Key informant GP 13, 1 February 2006, Anantapur.
6.3.1 Comparing Experiences of Poor People in GPs where NGOs operate with those where they do not

As was discussed in chapter 4 (sub-section 4.5.3), six out of the top-eight GPs (highest performing) are NGO-operational GPs. Table 6.1 provides a matrix of the distribution of the top-eight and bottom-eight GPs, between NGO-operational and non-NGO operational GPs. In addition, it lists the different GPs that form part of the top-eight GPs across the two categories. 75 percent of the NGO-operational GPs fall in the top-eight category as compared to 25 percent of the Non-NGO operational GPs. The Mann-Whitney test indicates that the differences between these two sets of GPs in relation to the index (incorporating the sixteen survey questions covering political capabilities and material benefits) is statistically significant (p<0.05).

Table 6.1: Distribution of Top and Bottom-eight GPs across NGO-operational and non-NGO operational GPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total of 16 GPs</th>
<th>NGO-operational</th>
<th>Non-NGO operational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top-eight GPs</strong></td>
<td>6 (75 percent) - GP1, GP4, GP5, GP8, GP13, GP14</td>
<td>2 (25 percent) – GP 6, GP 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bottom-eight GPs</strong></td>
<td>2 (25 percent)</td>
<td>6 (75 percent)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### POLITICAL CAPABILITIES

In terms of political capabilities, poor people have acquired higher levels of awareness, voice and influence in the eight GPs where the grassroots-NGOs operate than in the eight GPs where no such NGO operates. However, the differences are more clear-cut in relation to influence and less so with respect to awareness and aspects of voice (Appendix 6.1 provides details on the survey percentages for the two sets of GPs)305. For instance, in relation to awareness and certain forms of voice there are only slight differences in the survey percentages - 63 percent of interviewees in the eight NGO-operational GPs are able to name their present ward members as compared to 62 percent in the other eight GPs, percentages for contacting the GP president are 55 and 44 percent respectively, and for attending the panchayat gram sabha in the last five years are 56 and 45 percent respectively (p>0.05=not significant for all three examples). However, the differences are more distinct in relation to more active forms of political participation like campaigning in elections (27 and 14 percent respectively - p<0.05=significant) and participating in protests/strikes in the last five years (13 and 2 percent respectively - p<0.05=significant).

The impact of NGO interventions is also more discernible in relation to influence. Poor people in the eight NGO-operational GPs (mainly in those associated with NGO

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305 Percentages are for favourable responses (yes answers), and frequencies are out of 160 respondents in each area (unless specified otherwise).
Akravati and NGO Godavari) have been better able to collectively pressurise the GP-level elected functionaries, local leaders and intermediate *panchayat* officials to function more transparently and inclusively. In these GPs, NGOs have mobilised collective action through non-electoral means - protests and petitions; and electoral means - *sangha* members collectively support the candidature of a fellow member or align themselves with individuals who support their demands, or negotiate mutually beneficial electoral alliances with these individuals. However, this level of mobilisation is only visible in a few NGO-operational GPs, and is relatively limited in the other NGO-operational GPs.

Levels of political capabilities also vary between the eight GPs where *NGOs do not operate*. For instance, 25 percent of Non-NGO operational GPs (two out of eight) have participated in PRI-related protests and/or strikes in the last five years, whereas 75 percent have not.

**MATERIAL BENEFITS**

In relation to material benefits, although NGO-operational GPs have the overall edge over non-NGO operational GPs, the difference is often marginal (Appendix 6.2 provides details on the survey percentages). For example, according to the survey results, 73 percent of respondents in the NGO-operational GPs express satisfaction about the provision of potable water, whereas 71 percent do so in the non-NGO operational GPs (*p* > 0.05 = not significant); and corresponding percentages for securing housing are 18 and 14 percent respectively (*p* > 0.05 = not significant). Further, the NGOs and associated *sanghas* have been unable to sizeably improve or influence the selection of individual beneficiaries, and the implementation of wage-employment programmes and other PRI-related material benefits. However, the data suggests that there are important differences in the experiences of poor people between different NGO-operational GPs. In the next sub-section, I examine whether these differences are more clear-cut when these experiences are compared across the four NGO-operational areas.

6.3.2 Comparing Experiences of Poor People between the four NGO-operational Areas

Each of the four legislative constituencies under study encompasses two GPs where a grassroots-NGO operates (NGO-operational area) and two where they do not (non-NGO operational area). So, altogether there are four NGO-operational areas covering two GPs each (associated with NGO Akravati, NGO Godavari, NGO Teesta and NGO Jamuna). Likewise there are four non-NGO operational areas (or *control* areas – one
within each legislative constituency) covering two GPs each. The Kruskal-Wallis test indicates that the differences between these eight areas in relation to the index (incorporating the sixteen survey questions covering political capabilities and material benefits) is statistically significant (p<0.05). The test also generates a ranking for the different areas. When these ranks are combined with the findings of the qualitative data, it highlights that poor people in the NGO-operational areas associated with NGO Godavari, NGO Akravati and NGO Jamuna (in descending order) have acquired higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits than their respective ‘control’ areas. However, in the case of NGO Teesta, this difference is marginal.

In this sub-section, I focus only on the four NGO-operational areas. This helps to identify some of the NGO-related factors associated with higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits.

POLITICAL CAPABILITIES
The variations between the four NGO-operational areas are more distinct in relation to influence, and the more active forms of voice like participating in electoral campaigns and protests. The data reveals that this is partly because poor people in certain NGO-operational areas (Akravati and Godavari) are encouraged by the NGOs to participate in more active forms of political participation. For instance, the survey results indicate that 55 percent of interviewees in the NGO Akravati’s operational area have campaigned in panchayat-related elections, 18 percent have done so in NGO Godavari’s operational area, 5 percent in NGO Teesta’s area and 30 percent in NGO Jamuna’s area (p<0.05=significant). Similarly, 8 percent of interviewees have participated in protests and/or strikes in NGO Akravati’s operational area, while 45 have done so in NGO Godavari’s operational area, and none in NGO Teesta’s and NGO Jamuna’s areas (p<0.05=significant).

Further, poor people in NGO Godavari’s and Akravati’s operational areas (in Karnataka) have higher levels of influence over the functioning of the GP than their counterparts in the NGO-operational areas of Jamuna and Teesta (in Andhra Pradesh). The data indicates that the Godavari and Akravati are involved in building membership-based sanghas and encouraging collective struggles in relation to panchayats. Although there are some parallels in the political strategies adopted by these two NGOs, they also have a few variations. I have already touched on these in the earlier discussion under section 6.2 but in the next few paragraphs, I highlight the key similarities and differences between the strategies employed by Akravati and Godavari.
In Godavari’s area, sangha members have been mainly mobilised to participate in various non-electoral forms of collective action (like protests and petitions) to improve the everyday functioning of the GP and the disbursal of material benefits (see section 4.5.2.1 in chapter 4 for a detailed qualitative account of the strategies adopted in GP 5 and their impact). To bolster the collective strength of its members, the NGO has federated sanghas within and across legislative constituencies. It has also encouraged its members to contest panchayat elections, but it has not placed too much emphasis on this strategy as it has been wary of fuelling political divisions within the sangha (discussed in more detail in section 7.3 of chapter 7).

These actions have been backed-up by the dissemination of information to sangha members and elected functionaries about PRI-related roles, responsibilities, opportunities, benefits and schemes. In addition, Godavari has broadened its sphere of influence by networking with like-minded NGOs, activists, politicians and bureaucrats up to the level of state government. This has enabled it to access the latest information in relation to PRIs, draw on the support and expertise of activists, and use the assistance of senior bureaucrats and politicians to pressurise officials and elected functionaries within the legislative constituency. These different political strategies of Godavari have helped sangha functionaries and sangha members gain a measure of influence over GP functioning:

In this GP, we had a massive water problem. We went to the taluk office and we gave petitions. Next we again went to the taluk office and conducted a protest – a dharna (sit-in). Soon after, an overhead tank was built in the village. Aside from this, we have also brought about changes in the functioning of the GP. We went and put a lock on the GP office because so many times we went there and the door was always locked. Then the panchayat secretary, bill collector, etc. said we will put a complaint against you. But we said go ahead. We gave a petition to the MLA and made a complaint at the taluk office. Finally, the vice-president of the panchayat council G____ said, “We will ensure that the panchayat secretary comes on particular days and that the GP office remains open everyday”.306

On the other hand, in Akravati’s area, sangha members have been largely mobilised to contest elections and influence decision-making within the gram panchayat. Although sangha members are also encouraged to participate in protests and strikes (for an example, see discussion in sub-section 7.2.2.1 of chapter 7), Akravati’s primary emphasis is on mobilising members to capture political power at the GP and IP levels by securing a majority of seats. As discussed earlier in sub-section 6.2.1, this is achieved by expanding membership within the GP and encouraging sangha members

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306 Interview with sangha functionary No. 13, 26 March 2006, Kolar.
to build electoral alliances with sections of the neutral population. These efforts are supplemented by the regular dissemination of PRI-related information.

In addition, Akravati has tried to increase the sangha’s geopolitical coverage (number of GPs where sangha operates) by federating sanghas within and across legislative constituencies, so that members can have greater bargaining power when dealing with the local MLA or MP. The NGO has also networked with senior politicians, panchayat representatives and bureaucrats within the district to secure support for its campaigns and PRI-related initiatives. In the most recent GP elections in Kolar (2005), the sangha has managed to capture a majority of ward member seats in a few GPs and appoint its members as GP presidents. These actions have provided the members with greater leverage within the GP.

Two of our sangha members stood in the GP elections in the early 1990’s. One won and one lost. We did not get many benefits from the member who won. In the 2000 GP elections, two sangha members contested but none of them won. Things only changed in the 2005 GP elections. Because we had the big strike in 2004 and the neighbouring villages saw the power and support of the sangha, so it was easy to get the support of neutral people and increase our membership and coverage within the GP. A majority of the current ward members either belong to the sangha or are aligned with it, and this has helped us to secure the post of GP president. Now we have much a better idea of the finances and schemes coming to GPs, and we can influence allocations and implementation.

Thus, even though Godavari and Akravati have placed emphasis on different forms of collective action (non-electoral and electoral), they have enabled their target group to influence decision-making and functioning within the GP. Nevertheless, despite their successes, both NGOs have faced obstacles from different quarters. In some cases the issues they face are fairly similar but in other cases, these NGOs have faced different problems.

At times both have been unable to secure adequate support from the MLA for their PRI initiatives (see discussion in sub-section 5.4.1.1 of chapter 5). At other times they have both found it difficult to implement their strategies because of the deep political divisions amongst citizens within habitations, insufficient membership base within the GP, or the ineffective supervision and leadership extended by sangha functionaries and frontline NGO staff (discussed in more detail in section 7.3 of chapter 7). Akravati in particular has found it difficult to retain and expand membership in some GPs or

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307 It is too early to see if these changes have had a visible impact for poor people, but they have helped to reduce election expenses and alter prevailing power-relationships.

308 In the two ‘control’ GPs where NGO Akravati does not operate, there has been no collective pressure, and so, decision-making powers continue to remain in the hands of traditional elites.

309 Interview with sangha functionary No. 6, 27 August 2006, Kolar.
certain parts of the legislative constituency because of existing party-based divisions and the threat of violent reprisal from local elites:

For so many years we were unable to expand membership in the main village of G____ because people feared a violent backlash from the Reddys, who mostly supported the C___ party. Things have only changed in the last few years, the dependence on the Reddys has decreased, new leaders have emerged from the lower castes, political competition has increased, and people have realised that they can count on the sangha - it is here to stay. So we are gradually able to expand coverage.\footnote{Interview with NGO staff No. 4, 11 November 2005, Kolar.}

Although Godavari has also faced problems in relation to membership retention and expansion, the problem is partly to do with the lack of adequate funding to conduct and monitor their advocacy and service delivery programmes, and partly to do with a decision not to duplicate efforts in GPs where other NGOs operate. In addition, staff have also struggled to mobilise support from male members within the GP, as the sanghas only target women:

We have realised that in order to change things within the GP, we need support from male members of the public. We have tried to involve them in our activities but the response until now has been poor.\footnote{Interview with NGO staff No. 24, 13 October 2006, Kolar.}

The contrasts between the different NGO-operational areas also indicates that NGOs are able to make a greater contribution at the grassroots in states that support NGO engagement with PRIs (like Karnataka), as opposed to those that are indifferent or antagonistic (like Andhra Pradesh).

MATERIAL BENEFITS

Overall, the two NGO-operational areas associated with NGO Jamuna and NGO Godavari have performed better than the other NGO areas but the differences are not always clear-cut. For example, the survey percentages indicate that 15 percent of interviewees in NGO Akravati’s area have secured housing from panchayats, 25 percent in NGO Godavari’s area, 15 percent in NGO Teesta’s area and 18 percent in NGO Jamuna’s area (p>0.05=not significant); while the corresponding percentages for expressing satisfaction about the provision of minor roads are 53, 53, 48 and 88 percent respectively (p<0.05=significant). However, the qualitative data indicates that the higher performance of the two GPs associated with NGO Jamuna (GP 13 and GP 14) is not associated so much with the structure, policies and activities of the NGO, as much as with the nature of democratic institutions within the legislative constituency and the nature of political competition at the GP-level.

\footnote{Interview with NGO staff No. 4, 11 November 2005, Kolar.}
\footnote{Interview with NGO staff No. 24, 13 October 2006, Kolar.}
The data also reveals that even within NGO-operational areas that have performed well, there are inter-GP differences in the levels of material benefits acquired by poor people. In the next section, I examine the eight NGO-operational GPs in more detail and demonstrate that inter-GP variations are associated with differences in the interventions of the NGOs.

6.4 Assessing the Role of NGO Interventions across the eight NGO-operational GPs

As mentioned in the chapter 2, in each of the two GPs associated with an NGO-operational area, I examined the experiences of poor people who are associated with the NGOs (NGO-affiliated), either as members of the sangha or as part of the target group; and other poor who live in the same gram panchayat but do not associate themselves with the NGO’s activities (non-affiliated). The following two sub-sections provide an insight into the experiences of these two sets of respondents. The first sub-section briefly compares the experiences of NGO-affiliated and non-affiliated poor people in the eight NGO-operational gram panchayats. The second sub-section focuses only on the experiences of NGO-affiliated poor people, and draws attentions to the key NGO-related factors that are associated with higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits.

6.4.1 Comparing Experiences of NGO-affiliated and non-affiliated Poor People

In relation to political capabilities, NGO-affiliated poor people have a slight edge over non-affiliated poor people, but with respect to the acquisition of material benefits, the advantage is marginal. This is also reflected in the Mann-Whitney test in relation to the index (incorporating the sixteen survey questions covering political capabilities and material benefits), which shows that the differences between these two sets of survey respondents is not statistically significant (p>0.05).

However, the qualitative data indicates that in some of the eight NGO-operational GPs (GP1, GP 4 and GP 5), NGO-affiliated poor people have greater awareness, voice and influence than non-affiliated poor people in their own GPs; and they also have secured

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312 Except NGO Jamuna - unlike the three other study-NGOs, it does not operate through a collective or a sangha. So, all survey respondents in the two GPs associated with NGO Jamuna are included in the category of NGO-affiliated respondents.

313 In each NGO-operational GP, I interviewed more poor people associated with the NGO than those who were not. So, for each question, the relative percentages are out of 106 (NGO-affiliated respondents) and 54 (non-affiliated respondents).
a higher level of material benefits. In these three GPs (associated with NGO Akravati and NGO Godavari), NGO-affiliated interviewees have a clear-cut advantage in relation to political capabilities, but in relation to material benefits, they only have a slight advantage over non-affiliated interviewees. The higher performance of NGO-affiliated poor people in certain GPs is reinforced by the survey results (Appendix 6.3 provides details on the inter-GP percentages).

Although it is not possible to conduct statistical tests on such small samples, the broad trend is that NGO-affiliated respondents in GP 1, GP 4, GP 5 and GP 8 have done better than non-affiliated respondents in the same GPs, while GP 13 has done better than GP 14. Further, NGO-affiliated poor in these four GPs and GP 13 have done better than both NGO-affiliated and non-affiliated poor in the remaining GPs [GP 9 and GP 10 (NGO Teesta) and GP 14 (NGO Jamuna)].

Combining both sets of findings reveals that NGO-affiliated respondents in GP 1, GP 4, GP 5 and GP 8 have not only done better than non-affiliated respondents in their own GPs, they have also attained higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits than NGO-affiliated respondents and non-affiliated respondents in the other four GPs.

These four GPs form part of the top-eight GPs, and they are all located in Kolar district. While GP 1 and GP 4 are located in Maddilpalli legislative constituency, GP 5 and GP 8 are located in Reddapalli legislative constituency. Thus, in combination with the findings in the previous chapter, the discussion in this sub-section begins to highlight the inter-connections between political opportunity spaces, the nature of democratic institutions in the legislative constituency, and the intervention of NGOs.

In the next sub-section, I take a closer look at the trends in relation to NGO-affiliated respondents and demonstrate that the higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits acquired by poor people in GPs 1, 4, 5 and 8 are associated with the more successful interventions of NGO Akravati and NGO Godavari.

6.4.2 Comparing Experiences of NGO-affiliated respondents across the Four NGOs

Table 6.2, provides examples of the various ways in which the study-NGOs have enabled NGO-affiliated poor people to expand their political capabilities and acquire material benefits. It also compares trends across the four NGO sites.

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314 In GP 13 and GP 14, there is no distinction between NGO-affiliated and non-affiliated respondents as NGO Jamuna does not operate through the medium of a sangha but works with the village as a whole.

315 The percentages in Appendix 6.3 are not computed out of a uniform total of respondents but vary according to the number of respondents interviewed within a GP under each category.
Table 6.2: Comparing experiences of NGO-affiliated respondents with respect to the 2000 GP term in K (plus one year of the 2005 GP term) and 2001 GP term in AP *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions across four NGOs</th>
<th>NGO Akravati</th>
<th>NGO Godavari</th>
<th>NGO Teesta</th>
<th>NGO Jamuna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency percentage for NGO-affiliated respondents</td>
<td>Out of 22</td>
<td>Out of 22</td>
<td>Out of 22</td>
<td>Out of 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why did you vote for that particular candidate? (Percentages for - sangha related)***</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>NA**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the sangha / NGO encouraged you to stand for elections?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes (i.e. participated in electoral practices - campaigning), who helped you get involved? (Percentages for - sangha / NGO related)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you are in the sangha, did you influence other non-sangha voters because you were in the sangha?</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>NA**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the NGO/ sangha done any one thing to take care of things important to you in relation to PRIs?</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has panchayats - its functions / schemes /funds /rights etc. been discussed in any of the NGO/sangha meetings?</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the NGO/ sangha helped you form external connections/alliances with groups in neighbouring villages/taluk/mandal etc.?</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you did make contact with any one person in relation to PRIs, who has helped/supported you in this and how? (Percentages for - NGO/sangha related)****</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you did attend the panchayat gram sabha, who motivated and mobilised you? (Percentages for - NGO/sangha related)*****</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The green colour highlights the highest percentage in a row. The total of 106 NGO-affiliated respondents is made up of 22 respondents in the two GPs associated with NGO Akravati, 22 in NGO Godavari and 22 in NGO Teesta; and since NGO Jamuna does not operate through a sangha, all 40 respondents covering the two GPs are included as NGO-affiliated respondents. No statistical tests have been conducted as the samples are too small.

** NA – Not Applicable as NGO Jamuna does not operate through the medium of sanghas

*** Out of those who voted (NGO Akravati - 21 and NGO Godavari – 22)

**** Out of people who contacted (NGO Akravati – 19, NGO Godavari – 18, NGO Teesta – 19, NGO Jamuna – 37)

***** Out of people who attended the gram sabha (NGO Akravati - 11 and NGO Godavari – 16)

The percentages in the above table clearly indicate that the two NGOs in Kolar district - Akravati and Godavari have been able to support and strengthen NGO-affiliated poor people to a larger extent than the two NGOs located in Anantapur district – Teesta and Jamuna. They have done this by encouraging poor people to participate in electoral practices (comparative percentages are 41, 18, 0 and 0 respectively), providing them with detailed information about panchayats (50, 100, 46, 15), supporting them to form external connections and alliances with other groups (73, 100, 59, 0), mobilising their participation in gram sabhas (36, 88, 0, 0), helping them contact panchayat-related
elected functionaries and government officials (53, 94, 21, 3), and by assisting them with needs and issues in relation to panchayats (32, 14, 0, 8).

Both the Kolar NGOs operate through membership-based sanghas of the poor. These sanghas have harnessed their collective strength to improve the functioning of gram panchayats and the disbursement of material benefits. However, while NGO Akravati has attempted to build the influence of its members primarily through electoral means (capturing a majority of GP ward member seats), NGO Godavari has attempted to build their influence mainly through non-electoral means (protests and petitions). Although NGO Teesta in Anantapur also works through membership-based sanghas, it has been unable to galvanise its members to play a greater role in the everyday functioning of GPs. The differences in the strategies and collective strength of sangha members associated with these three NGOs are explored in more detail in the next chapter.

As mentioned in section 6.2, unlike the other three NGOs, NGO Jamuna does not operate through sanghas but works with the village as a whole. It is also different from the others because it only imparts information and training, and does not build the organisational skills of the poor or provide any material support. This has made it harder for it to mobilise poorer sections of the population to launch protests and make collective demands on panchayats.

In the next section, I identify the key NGO-related factors that are associated with the more successful interventions, and highlight the main actors that shape these interventions.

6.5 Key Factors that have strengthened NGO interventions in relation to Panchayats

In the light of the trends and patterns discussed in this chapter so far, it is possible to identify five NGO-related factors that have enabled poor people (affiliated to NGOs in GPs 1, 4, 5 and 8) to acquire higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits than their counterparts in other NGO-operational GPs:

1. Intra-NGO factors (for example – leadership of NGO head on panchayat matters and capacity of frontline staff)
2. Political strategy (for example - electoral game-plan and networking with bureaucrats)
3. Policy on sanghas (for example - facilitation of membership-based sangha and provision of material support)
4. GP-level strategy (for example - geopolitical coverage within GP and working with both men and women)
5. Donor support (for example - long term funding support for panchayat activities)\textsuperscript{316}

Table 6.3 provides a comparison (drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data) of the relative strength of these key factors (and the sub-factors) across the four NGOs. The table highlights that these factors are stronger in the interventions of Akravati and Godavari compared to Teesta and Jamuna.

In relation to intra-NGO factors, the higher performance of GP1, GP 4, GP 5 and GP 8 indicates that the NGO head’s leadership in planning and devising appropriate policies and activities (especially, in relation to panchayats) is extremely important. Successful implementation of these policies and activities is associated with the presence of sufficient and capable staff (backed up by supportive supervision), transparent and decentralised decision-making within the organisation, and an up-to-date database (of the target group) that can be readily accessed for monitoring and evaluation.

The NGO head’s leadership is particularly vital in relation to developing a political strategy. A well-defined electoral strategy for panchayats and sufficient geopolitical coverage within the legislative constituency are important in bringing about substantive change for poor people. The other elements of a successful strategy relate to building the organisational and collective strength of poor people; disseminating information on panchayats; and networking with other NGOs, bureaucrats, politicians and activists.

The findings in the preceding sections also highlight the value of working through the medium of ‘groups’. The NGO’s policy of building the organisational and collective strength of poor people is best achieved through a membership-based sangha of the poor. This provides poor people with opportunities to engage in collective action and it also helps to develop their leadership potential. In turn, engaging in ‘collective’ activities like contributing labour to improve a fellow sangha member’s agricultural land (NGO Akravati), maintaining seed-banks (NGO Godavari), and protecting local forests (NGO Teesta) helps to build and strengthen the unity of the sangha.

\textsuperscript{316} These five factors were arrived at by drawing on both the survey and the qualitative data. The material from semi-structured interviews with key informants at different tiers of government was also used to identify the principal ways in which each of the five main factors made a contribution. For example, with respect to ‘donor support,’ the qualitative material helped to draw attention to the two main ways in which donor support was useful – through long term financial support for PRI-related issues and the facilitation of PRI-related NGO networks. These two aspects were selected as they were the ones that were most frequently mentioned in the interviews as being important.
Table 6.3: Comparing the relative strength of key factors that strengthen the intervention of grassroots-NGOs working on PRI-related issues*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Factors that strengthen NGO Intervention on panchayat-related issues</th>
<th>NGO Akravati</th>
<th>NGO Godavari</th>
<th>NGO Teesta</th>
<th>NGO Jamuna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Intra-NGO factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership of head and senior staff on panchayat matters</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparent and decentralised decision-making amongst staff</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate and capable frontline staff backed up by supportive supervision</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparent and ready access to up-to-date baseline information for monitoring and evaluation</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Political strategy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-defined electoral strategy</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on building organisational and collective strength of poor people</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissemination of information on PRI-related roles, responsibilities, opportunities, benefits and schemes</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geopolitical coverage within the legislative constituency</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking with like-minded NGOs, activists, politicians and bureaucrats up to the level of state government</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Policy on Sanghas</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitation of membership-based sanghas enabling collective mobilisation and action</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>NA**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitation of accountable leadership among sangha members</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic and legal support for sangha members</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. GP-level strategy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group primarily involves poor people</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group involves both men and women</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geopolitical coverage within operational GPs</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Donor support</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term financial support for PRI-related issues</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitation of networks with other NGOs working on PRI-related issues</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* High indicates above average, medium indicates average and low indicates below average. The green colour highlights ‘high’ percentages; **NA - Not Applicable, as NGO Jamuna does not operate through sanghas.
The data also suggests that NGOs that provide a measure of socio-economic and legal support help to fortify the material base of poor people, and also assist in reducing dependence on landlords, moneylenders and large farmers. This support places sangha members in a stronger position to mobilise and agitate:

We joined the sangha to escape the oppression of landlords. We also joined it for the strength that comes with a group, for the material benefits provided and for the legal help…One of the first programmes that made an impact on improving our economic conditions and building our unity as a group was the higher daily wages (to the prevalent wage rate offered by landlords and big farmers) offered for working collectively on the agricultural land of other sangha members in the summer months. The aim was to develop the denuded land, provide daily-wage labourers with regular employment and wages in the dry months, and build the unity of a group that was made up of different marginalised caste groupings which did not always find it easy to eat and work alongside each other. Akravati provided us with subsidised agricultural loans to buy seeds, educational support for our children, help with legal disputes etc. Over the years, this support has helped to reduce bonded labour and our economic dependence on the Reddys. It has helped to build our unity and discipline within the group and it has put us in a better position to agitate and make collective demands.317

As can be seen in the above extract from the interview with a sangha functionary associated with NGO Akravati, and the opening quote on page 152, the hybrid nature of the NGO’s work (encompassing both advocacy and service delivery) strengthens their initiatives in relation to PRIs. The material support (agricultural, credit, educational and legal) improves the living conditions of sangha members and reduces their economic dependence on landed elites, while also building the unity and strength of the group across castes, religions and gender. This support enables poor people to come together as an entity and participate in various forms of collective action, especially actions that challenge the dominance of traditional elites.

The advocacy initiatives (awareness raising, organising, mobilising and networking) of the NGOs complement their service delivery efforts by building the awareness, voice and influence of vulnerable and marginalised communities. By enhancing the individual and collective political capabilities of these communities, the NGO helps poor people to have a better understanding of PRI-related powers and resources, and develop the skills that will allow them to have a greater say in the functioning of the GP, especially in relation to the acquisition, distribution and implementation of material benefits. As one of the sangha functionaries associated with NGO Godavari explained:

The micro-credit and agricultural initiatives organised by Godavari have helped to strengthen the material base, skills and collective strength of sangha members…In areas where we work, corruption has reduced…because of our presence they are a little scared to ask our sangha members for a bribe. For example we sorted out the

317 Interview with sangha functionary No. 5, 26 August 2006, Kolar.
issue related to the official at the taluk office who had asked for a bribe. We took this issue to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in the zilla panchayat and got the official suspended...We are giving awareness to people about PRIs. We are especially encouraging women. When the new ration cards were being distributed, we gave our sangha women some advance information about the actual amount that needed to be paid (only Rs. 5). So in villages where the officials and elected representatives tried to make money by charging a higher amount, our women protested and ensured that they and other non-sangha villagers only had to pay the correct amount. 318

The NGO’s GP-level strategy is the fourth key factor. The data suggests that it helps if the NGO works primarily with poor people (men and women), and has adequate geopolitical coverage within the GP. This makes it easier for poor people to act as effective pressure-groups and have influence over the functioning of the GP.

The last key factor relates to donor support. Challenging existing power-relationships, and building the organisational and collective strength of poor people requires time, and a long-term commitment on the part of the NGO. Dissent and protests on the part of the poor can sometimes be met with violent reprisals. So, grassroots-NGOs have to be able to assure their target group that they are in for the long-haul, so as to allay fears that they might withdraw support during the process. This means that NGO initiatives in relation to panchayats require long-term financial support from donors. Donors can also support these interventions by linking NGOs that are working on panchayat-related issues, so that these NGOs can collectively act as a pressure-group at higher levels of government.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that poor people in the eight NGO-operational GPs have acquired higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits than those in the eight GPs where these NGOs do not operate. It has also revealed that variations in the structure, policies and activities of NGOs are associated with different levels of political capabilities and material benefits in the eight NGO-operational GPs.

More importantly, it has highlighted that poor people affiliated with two of the study-NGOs (Akravati and Godavari) have attained higher levels of political capabilities and material well-being than those affiliated with the other two NGOs (Teesta and Jamuna). The chapter has argued that this variation is partly to do with the fact that Akravati and Godavari have engaged with the political to a larger extent than have Teesta and Jamuna. They have mobilised poor people to contest elections, build electoral alliances

318 Interview with sangha functionary who is also a staff member, NGO staff No. 21, 11 October 2006, Kolar.
and undertake protests and strikes; thereby enabling vulnerable and marginalised people to have greater influence over the functioning of PRIs.

In doing so, the chapter has identified five key factors that strengthen NGO intervention on *panchayat* issues; and has drawn attention to the inter-connections between NGOs interventions, political opportunity spaces and the political dynamics in the legislative constituency. Both Akravati and Godavari have made relatively strong interventions in relation to PRIs, but they have also benefited from the greater political opportunity space present in Karnataka, and the two GPs associated with Godavari have additionally profited from the positive dynamics in Reddapalli legislative constituency.

The five key factors which enable effective NGO interventions include intra-NGO factors (for example, leadership of the NGO head and senior staff, and the presence of adequate and capable frontline staff), the elements of the NGO’s political strategy (for example, building the organisational and collective strength of poor people, and the dissemination of PRI-related information), the NGO’s policy on membership-based groups or *sanghas* (for example, facilitation of groups to enable collective mobilisation and action, and provision of socio-economic and legal support), the NGO’s GP-level strategy (for example, the target group involves mainly poor people and includes both men and women), and lastly the nature of donor support (for example, a commitment to providing long-term financial support for PRI-related issues).

These five factors highlight the role played by donors and the NGO head, and they also underscore the importance of well-defined political strategies, membership-based *sanghas* and collective action. Both the Kolar NGOs - Akravati and Godavari - have been able to provide relatively strong NGO interventions as their structure, policies and activities encompass most of the key factors. Both operate through membership-based *sanghas* of the poor and both aim to enhance the collective capabilities of poor people. However, while Akravati has attempted to build the *influence* of its members primarily through electoral means (capturing a majority of GP ward member seats), Godavari has attempted to build their *influence* mainly through non-electoral means (protests and petitions). Both policies have enabled *sangha* members to harness their collective strength in order to improve the functioning of *gram panchayats* and the disbursal of material benefits.

Thus, the findings presented in this chapter indicate that grassroots-NGOs that choose to engage strongly with the political are able to make a more substantive contribution than those that engage weakly with the political. However, the variations between GPs
indicate that different levels of political capabilities and material well-being could also be influenced by certain grassroots-level factors, like the type of strategies and actions that are initiated by sanghas in different GPs. In the next chapter, I examine the dynamics at the GP level in more detail.
Chapter 7

DEEP POLITICS: RECONFIGURING THE POLITICAL?

“We need politics for development. There is a difference between asking some one else and getting things ourselves.” (Key informant, 2006)\(^{319}\)

7.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the role of ‘deep politics’ – party and non-party based politics at the level of gram panchayats. It describes how the political dynamics within the sixteen GPs shapes the experiences of poor people. In particular, it demonstrates that GP-level variations in the levels of political capabilities and material benefits acquired by poor people are associated with differences in the nature of political competition between leaders within the panchayat (party and non-party based), and the strategies, actions and collective strength of sangha members (members of groups associated with the study-NGOs).

More importantly, it reveals that poor people attain higher levels of political capabilities and material well-being in GPs where the nature of political competition is more democratic (pluralistic and inclusive); and where the strategies, actions and collective strength of sangha members are more effective. In doing so, the chapter brings to light the role of the gram panchayat president, sangha functionaries, and frontline workers associated with the grassroots-NGOs. It also brings out the importance of leadership, and the advantages of having a critical mass of sangha members within the GP.

The chapter is divided into four sections. Section 7.2 examines variations between GPs in relation to the nature of political competition, while section 7.3 assesses differences between GPs with respect to the strategies, actions and collective strength of sangha members. Section 7.4 highlights the main findings of the chapter and draws attention to the interconnections between the different factors that are associated with variations in the experiences of poor people.

7.2 Examining the Nature of Political Competition between Sixteen GPs

This section is divided into two further sub-sections. The first sub-section highlights the key features that illustrate the democratic nature of political competition within gram panchayats, while the second sub-section draws attention to the important role played by GP presidents in shaping the nature of political competition and the experiences of poor people.

\(^{319}\) Interview with knowledgeable informant Number 48, 28 August 2006, Kolar.
7.2.1 Key Features of Democratic Political Competition

The discussions in chapters 4 and 5 already suggest that in gram panchayats where political competition between leaders has grown to be more democratic (pluralistic – representing multiple interests and groups, and inclusive – encompassing autonomous representation from lower castes), there are greater opportunities for poor people to engage with panchayats and obtain material benefits.

In some GPs, like GP 13 and GP 14, competition is largely political party based, but in others, like GP 1 and GP 4 (where the sanghas operate), it is a mix of party and non-party based competition. Table 7.1 documents the extent to which political competition is democratic in the sixteen gram panchayats. It also compares the levels at the beginning and end of the study time-period (1994 and 2006). The table lists seven different features that help to assess the extent to which political competition between leaders within each GP is democratic (pluralistic and inclusive):

1. Level of cross-party competition between leaders
2. Level of within-party competition between leaders
3. Proportion of leaders from lower castes (SC/ST and Backward Castes) and religious minorities
4. Level of competition for post of GP member
5. Level of competition for post of GP president
6. Extent of autonomy of lower caste contestants for post of GP president
7. Extent of autonomy of lower caste contestants for post of GP member

I constructed these seven features from fieldwork data, and also drew on the work of (Dahl et al., 2003) and (Luckham et al., 2003). Table 7.1 grades the extent of these features across three broad categories – high (above average), medium (average) and low (below average). This gradation is carried out for the year 1994 and for 2006, which helps to highlight change within and across sixteen gram panchayats.

The first feature relates to the level of cross-party competition between GP-level leaders (includes leaders that are affiliated to political parties). It gives an indication of the strength of the opposition, and is gauged by the extent of cross-party competition for key positions (both in panchayat and non-panchayat forums) within the GP.

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320 Not directed by upper castes.
321 In all these features, competition relates to contestation through legitimate means.
322 Not directed by upper castes.
323 Above average number of members who are not directed by upper castes.
324 I drew on the data from GP-level semi-structured interviews and group discussions. These seven features were the most commonly cited aspects in discussions relating to the principal ways in which political competition could be identified as being democratic.
Table 7.1: Extent of Democratic Political Competition in the Sixteen GPs (1994-2006)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1994</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of cross-party competition between leaders</td>
<td>GP1, GP 2, GP 3, GP 5, GP 6, GP 14</td>
<td>GP 4, GP 7, GP 8, GP 9, GP 10, GP 11, GP 12, GP 13, GP 15, GP 16</td>
<td>GP 1, GP 4, GP 5, GP 14, GP 2, GP 3, GP 6, GP 7, GP 8, GP 9, GP 10, GP 11, GP 12, GP 13, GP 15, GP 16</td>
<td>GP 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of leaders from lower castes (SC/ST and Backward Castes) and minorities</td>
<td>GP1, GP2, GP3, GP4, GP5, GP6, GP7, GP8, GP9, GP10, GP11, GP12, GP13, GP14, GP15, GP16</td>
<td>GP 1, GP 4</td>
<td>GP 1, GP 4</td>
<td>GP 3, GP 7, GP 10, GP 11, GP 13, GP 14, GP 15, GP 16</td>
<td>GP 2, GP5, GP6, GP8, GP9, GP12, GP13, GP14, GP15, GP16</td>
<td>GP 10, GP 11, GP 16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These assessments are based on qualitative data. High indicates above average presence of feature, medium indicates average, and low indicates below average or absence.
** Not directed by upper castes.
*** Above average number of ward members who are not directed by upper castes.
Table 7.1 reveals that in 1994, there was a moderate amount of cross-party competition in six GPs. By 2006, there is high cross-party competition in four gram panchayats (GP 1, GP 4, GP 5 and GP 14), and cross-party competition is moderate in all the other gram panchayats (excepting GP 10, where all the main leaders are TDP supporters).

The second feature relates to the level of within-party competition between GP-level leaders (these parties include groups that are affiliated to political parties). It highlights the extent to which leadership is shared between a group of individuals, rather than being dominated by a single individual. This is assessed by gauging the number of influential leaders within a group. In 1994, none of the GPs had a high level of within-party competition, but by 2006, it is high in twelve out of sixteen GPs. The ex-president of a GP in Kolar explained:

In the 1995 elections, there was not much competition as there were only a few leaders in the whole GP. By the 2000 GP elections, there were a few main leaders within each party. Now there are many leaders from different castes and religions within each party. So within JD (S) there are groups which were not there before.325

The third feature relates to the proportion of GP-level leaders from lower castes (SC/ST and Backward Castes) and religious minorities. It provides an indication of the extent to which leaders from traditionally marginalised backgrounds have an influence on the functioning of both panchayat and non-panchayat forums. All sixteen gram panchayats had a low proportion in 1994, but by 2006, two GPs have a high proportion (GP 1 and GP 4) and nine have a medium proportion.

The fourth feature relates to the level of competition for the post of GP member. It reflects the degree of interest in competing for ward member seats, and signals the extent to which ward members have an opportunity to influence the functioning of gram panchayats. The level is gauged by the extent of competition for the position of ward member and the margin of victory in these elections. In 1994, competition for this post was low in a majority of GPs. Many of the posts were filled by nominations, especially in the GPs located in Anantapur district (particularly those in Yellapalli legislative constituency). By 2006, there is high competition in all eight GPs located in Kolar district, moderate competition in one GP of Anantapur district (GP 14), and low competition in all the remaining study-GPs of Anantapur. These differences also reflect the inter-state variations in political opportunity space for ward members.

325 Interview with elected female member No. 31, 23 March 2006, Kolar.
Unlike the situation in relation to ward members, competition for the post of GP president (fifth feature) was moderate in a majority of the GPs even in 1994, and by 2006, fifteen out of the sixteen GPs have witnessed high-level of competition for this post. GP 10 in Yellapalli legislative constituency is the only GP that is not in this bracket because no elections were held for the post of GP president as the ex-MLA nominated a candidate.

The sixth feature relates to the autonomy (not directed by upper castes) of lower caste contestants who vie for the post of GP president. In 1994, lower caste contestants in fifteen of the sixteen GPs had little opportunity to contest independently, and many were fronts for traditional leaders. Nevertheless, in one gram panchayat (GP 14), the Backward Caste contestant had a moderate degree of autonomy and was able to hold his own against traditional elites (for example, he competed against an upper caste candidate in a non-reserved seat). By 2006, there are a larger number of lower caste contestants who are competing on their own terms. In six out of the sixteen GPs these contestants have a modest degree of autonomy (GP 1, GP 4, GP 9, GP 12, GP 13, and GP 14). In GP 14, the same Backward Caste leader has become even more independent, but there is little representation from other individuals within the same caste-grouping or other marginalised castes/religions.

The seventh feature relates to the autonomy of lower caste contestants who are competing for the post of GP ward member. In 1994, contestants had low autonomy in all sixteen gram panchayats, but by 2006, contestants have a high degree of autonomy in two GPs (GP 1 and GP 4), and a modest degree of autonomy in four other GPs (GP 2, GP 5, GP 6, GP 8). The former two gram panchayats are NGO-operational GPs (NGO Akravati), and all six of these better performing GPs are located in Kolar district. In these GPs, a commonly held view amongst local leaders was, “There is a lot of interest and competition for ward member elections. For a single vote they will call voters back from Bangalore”\(^{326}\). The contrast with the GPs in Anantapur district reflects the limited political opportunity space for ward members’ vis-à-vis the GP president in the Andhra Pradesh panchayat system. In most of the eight GPs of Anantapur, GP ward members are ‘pre-selected’ by the presidential contestant. In some cases, where there is competition for the post, he or she also pays for their election expenses. This leaves ward member contestants with limited bargaining power, “The sarpanch G____ asked me to stand for the GP elections and he bore all the election expenses. Contracts are all done by him...no GP meetings are held, he just asks for my

\(^{326}\) Interview with knowledgeable informant No. 157, 25 March 2006, Kolar.
signature. In other cases, ward members from marginalised backgrounds are ‘nominated’ by powerful leaders within the habitation or the presidential contestant, as there is little interest to compete in the elections.

Overall, the data indicates that over the study time-period, the nature of political competition has become more democratic. In 1994, five out of sixteen GPs (31 percent) were in the medium category (GP 1, GP 2, GP 5, GP 6, and GP 14 – four in Kolar and one in Anantapur districts). By 2006, political competition is high in three GPs (GP 1, GP 4 and GP 5 – all in Kolar district – 19 percent), and the number of GPs in the medium category has increased to seven (GP 2, GP 6, GP 8, GP 9, GP 12, GP 13 and GP 14 – three in Kolar and four in Anantapur districts – 44 percent). Political competition has increased even in GPs that are in the low category in 2006, when compared to their position in 1994.

Table 7.2 highlights that as of 2006; overall, all the eight top-performing GPs (identified in chapter 4) – 100 percent - have average to above-average (high and medium category) levels of democratic political competition (GP 1, GP 4, GP 5, GP 5, GP 8, GP 12, GP 13, and GP 14). Only two of the bottom-eight GPs (25 percent) record average levels (GP 2 and GP 9 in the medium category). The remaining six (75 percent) fall in the low category. This indicates that between the sixteen GPs, higher levels of democratic political competition are associated with higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits for poor people.

Table 7.2: Distribution of Top and Bottom-eight GPs as of 2006 across Average to Above-average and Below-average levels of Democratic Political Competition (row percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total of 16 GPs</th>
<th>Average to Above-average Levels of Democratic Political Competition</th>
<th>Below-average Levels of Democratic Political Competition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top-eight GPs</td>
<td>8 (100 percent)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom-eight GPs</td>
<td>2 (25 percent)</td>
<td>6 (75 percent)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The growth and importance of political competition (especially party-based) in relation to panchayats has also been highlighted by other recent research (Mullen, 2008; Chandrashekhar, 2009). In addition, the literature documents the rise of leaders from traditionally marginalised communities and their influence on the nature of local political competition (Krishna, 2007). My data suggests that GP presidents are one of the key actors that shape the nature of political competition within the gram panchayat, and the levels of political capabilities and material benefits attained by poor people. In the next sub-section, I unpack their role of over the study time-period and examine whether their influence differs between the sixteen GPs.

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327 Interview with elected female member, 10 March 2006, Anantapur.
7.2.2 Examining the Role of GP Presidents

Table 7.3 highlights the changing nature of leadership demonstrated by GP presidents over the study time-period. In the first GP term (1994 in Karnataka and 1995 in Andhra Pradesh), GP presidents who were male and from the upper caste played a substantially more influential role than presidents who were from the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, religious minorities and Backward Castes (presidents from these four groupings were often fronts for upper caste leaders); or presidents who belonged to the upper caste but were female.

The data also indicates that in GPs where upper caste leaders exercised decisive influence over the de jure GP president, the manipulation was done by one powerful individual rather than a group of leaders or GP members\(^{328}\).

This begins to change in the 2000 GP term in Karnataka and 2001 GP term in Andhra Pradesh with the rise in political competition. Increasingly, decision-making power is being shared between a group of leaders (including GP members), some of whom come from traditionally marginalised communities:

In ten years there is change, political awareness has increased, panchayat elections have brought about change, especially because of the reservations…Earlier, mostly peddol (big people – traditional elites) won but not so in the recent GP elections. Now decisions are not made by the peddol alone but by a group of ward members and leaders belonging to different castes.\(^{329}\)

However, this change is more visible in the Kolar GPs than in the Anantapur GPs. The variation reflects the differences in the nature of political opportunity space between the two states. As mentioned in chapter 5, in Andhra Pradesh, a combination of factors (the system of direct elections for GP president, the president’s limited accountability to GP members, the weak powers of GP members, and a fixed five-year term) have meant that power is primarily vested in one individual or a smaller group of leaders. On the other hand, the system of indirect elections for the post of president in Karnataka has increased the leverage of GP members (and GP leaders) over the GP president. The increasingly close electoral contests for GP ward members in Kolar also ensures that additional pressure is made to bear on presidents by the opposition party.

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\(^{328}\) In this thesis, the term *de jure* GP president refers to the officially elected president, while the term *de facto* GP president refers to the one who manipulates the elected president and makes all key decisions.

\(^{329}\) Interview with elected male member No. 21, 12 October 2005, Kolar.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of GP</th>
<th>GP Num.</th>
<th>1994/1995 GP Term President</th>
<th>2000/2001 GP Term President</th>
<th>2005 GP Term President (only in Karnataka)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KOLAR</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gender and Caste/Religion</td>
<td>De facto power holder</td>
<td>Gender and Caste/Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shastripalli</td>
<td>GP 1</td>
<td>Female/BC** Husband</td>
<td>1st term: Male/BC**</td>
<td>1st term: Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2nd term: Female/ST</td>
<td>2nd term: Upper caste leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adavipalli</td>
<td>GP 2</td>
<td>Female/ST Husband</td>
<td>1st term: Male/BC**</td>
<td>1st term: Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2nd term: Females/SC - term was split into two smaller terms</td>
<td>2nd term: Other GP members and leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guttapalli</td>
<td>GP 3</td>
<td>Female/BC Upper caste leader</td>
<td>1st term: Male/Upper caste</td>
<td>1st term: Self</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2nd term: Male/Upper caste</td>
<td>2nd term: Self</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donnapalli</td>
<td>GP 4</td>
<td>Female/SC Upper caste leader</td>
<td>1st term: Male/SC</td>
<td>1st term: Upper caste leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2nd term: Male/Upper caste</td>
<td>2nd term: Self</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gumpalli</td>
<td>GP 5</td>
<td>Male/Upper caste Self</td>
<td>1st term: Male/SC</td>
<td>1st term: Upper caste leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2nd term: Female/BC and Muslim - as term was split into two smaller terms</td>
<td>2nd term: Husband, other GP members and leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thathpalli</td>
<td>GP 6</td>
<td>Male/Upper caste Self</td>
<td>1st term: Female/SC</td>
<td>1st term: Husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2nd term: Male/BC</td>
<td>2nd term: Self and other GP members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttapalli</td>
<td>GP 7</td>
<td>Male/Upper caste Self</td>
<td>1st term: Male/BC</td>
<td>1st term: Upper caste leader</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2nd term: Female/ST</td>
<td>1st term: Male/Upper caste</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chowdpatlli</td>
<td>GP 8</td>
<td>Female/ST Upper caste leader</td>
<td>1st term: Male/Upper caste</td>
<td>1st term: Upper caste leaders &amp; GP members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2nd term: Male/Upper caste</td>
<td>2nd term: Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of GP</td>
<td>GP Num.</td>
<td>1994/1995 GP Term President</td>
<td>2000/2001 GP Term President</td>
<td>2005 GP Term President (only in Karnataka)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gender and Caste/Religion</td>
<td>De facto power holder</td>
<td>Gender and Caste/Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANANTAPUR</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Beedpalli</td>
<td>GP 9</td>
<td>Female/Upper caste</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Male/BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turpalli</td>
<td>GP 10</td>
<td>Female/Upper caste</td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Male/Upper caste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandrapalli</td>
<td>GP 11</td>
<td>Male/BC</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Female/Upper caste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangapalli</td>
<td>GP 12</td>
<td>Female/SC</td>
<td>Upper Caste leaders</td>
<td>Female/ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gopipalli</td>
<td>GP 13</td>
<td>Male/BC</td>
<td>Upper Caste leader</td>
<td>Female/SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kokanpalli</td>
<td>GP 14</td>
<td>Male/BC</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Female/BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thimmipalli</td>
<td>GP 15</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>Female/BC</td>
<td>Husband and other GP leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rampalli</td>
<td>GP 16</td>
<td>Male/Upper caste</td>
<td>Self, husband and son</td>
<td>Female/Upper caste</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Green colour highlights terms when the GP president was the *de facto* and *de jure* leader of the council.
** Candidate was from the Baljiga caste, which is an influential caste-grouping that has ‘dominant caste’ stature within the legislative constituency.
Nevertheless, in terms of autonomy in decision-making, there has only been a slight improvement in the situation of presidents who are women, or from a Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, and minorities background; but some of the male GP presidents from the Backward Castes are playing a more independent and influential role (like in GP 6 and 9). The data indicates that these positive changes (however limited) are equally evident in gram panchayats located in both Anantapur and Kolar districts. The absence of clear differences across districts with respect to the growing influence of presidents from marginalised communities is primarily associated with the nature of political opportunity space in the two states.

Although Karnataka’s panchayat legislation has provided more powers and resources to panchayats than its counterpart in Andhra Pradesh, the split term for GP presidents has reduced the opportunity for presidents from marginalised communities to make a positive mark\(^\text{330}\), gain adequate experience and strike out on their own. It has also given traditional elites and local officials (especially the panchayat secretary) a chance to maintain control over decision-making within gram panchayats:

> A five year term for the GP president is needed because you need time to learn and make a contribution. Nowadays, there are further splits even within the reduced 30 month term, which has made it easier for the more experienced local leaders and the panchayat secretary to unofficially control the GP...For most members becoming president is a first-time experience...but they have insufficient time to gain the necessary knowledge and skills.\(^\text{331}\)

On the other hand, Andhra Pradesh’s five year term for GP presidents has allowed GP presidents more flexibility, and additional time to learn the ropes and challenge the authority of the old order. However, this opportunity has been muted by the limited devolution to PRIs and the focus on the Janmabhoomi programme.

Nevertheless, in both Kolar and Anantapur, amongst the GP presidents (de facto and de jure) hailing from traditionally marginalised backgrounds, a few have been able to harness existing opportunities to channel benefits to their supporters. In Anantapur, enterprising de facto GP presidents, especially those who supported the TDP (like in GP 13 and 14) were able to augment the meagre funding of panchayats, by influencing the allocation and distribution of material benefits from the relatively well-funded Janmabhoomi programme and state-administered development projects (like those relating to watersheds). The de facto president in GP 14 was also able to obtain

\(^{330}\) The reduced term has often meant that GP presidents have a short-term vision for the betterment of the GP. They are more interested in executing small-scale development projects and making quick personal gains, rather than focusing on the long-term development needs of the gram panchayat.

\(^{331}\) Interview with NGO staff No. 25, 14 October 2006, Kolar.
material benefits for the GP by utilising his contacts with the MLA, and other senior TDP leaders within the legislative constituency. In Kolar, despite the limitations relating to reduced terms for GP presidents, the existing political opportunity space has\textsuperscript{332} gradually enabled presidents from marginalised communities to have greater say in the functioning of village councils and the distribution of benefits (like in GP 6).

This is clearly evident in the performance of GP presidents in the first year of the term 2005 GP term in Karnataka (fieldwork ended in 2006)\textsuperscript{333}. In the eight GPs in Kolar district, five have presidents from marginalised backgrounds. Of these five, three are Scheduled Castes (GP 1, GP 3, and GP 8) and two are Backward Castes (GP 2 and GP 4). Almost all (excepting the president in GP 3) exercise greater leverage over the functioning of the council than predecessors from similar backgrounds. Further, these four are answerable to the ‘groups’ that support them and not to ‘individual’ leaders. In GP 1 and GP 4, the two presidents who belong to the sangha (one female Backward Caste and one male Scheduled Caste) are answerable to both the sangha and to other non-poor political leaders who form part of their electoral alliance, while the other two presidents in GP 2 and GP 3 (one female Scheduled Caste and one male Backward Caste) are answerable to GP members, and leaders (across castes / religions) affiliated to the political party-in-power within the council.

These changes are only visible in the ‘reserved’ posts. With respect to the post of GP president, none of these GPs have witnessed the competition of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe candidates against upper castes in non-reserved or ‘general’ seats. However, for the post of ward member, there have been some isolated instances of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes winning over upper castes.

Although the data reveals that the problem of elite-capture (in terms of the domination of traditional elites) is on the decline in both Kolar and Anantapur, it also indicates that issues relating to gender-bias continue to hamper the effective functioning of female GP presidents (across castes and religions). In most GPs in the 2000 (in Karnataka) and 2001 (in Andhra Pradesh) GP terms, female GP presidents are overshadowed by their husbands (GP 13 and GP 14), sons (GP 11 and GP 16) or upper caste leaders and GP members (like in GP 2, GP 5, GP 7 and GP 8). Only in one GP has the female GP president been able to function with a moderate degree of autonomy (GP 12).

\textsuperscript{332} For example, range of finances and material benefits; provisions that prevent male relatives from representing women GP members in GP forums; and regular opportunities for training.

\textsuperscript{333} GP elections for the corresponding term in Andhra Pradesh were only held after fieldwork was completed, so the focus in both districts is on the 2000 (in K) and 2001 (in AP) GP terms.
However, even in the other GPs, my research reveals that women GP presidents are not passive participants who can be labelled as ‘proxies’ for male relatives or male political leaders. Over their term in office, they have drawn on various resources (for example, training opportunities and male relative’s advice) and networks (for example, federations of elected women representatives and sangha support) to make small and often informal contributions to the everyday decision-making processes within the gram panchayat. In doing so, they have carved out new public identities, reconfigured existing political spaces and redefined traditional conceptions about the role of women in public spaces:

U____ (the local leader) asked me to stand for the elections and nominated me for the post of president...Before, I did not have the guts to speak to him but now I can hold my own. Reservations are good. There is a lot of change in me. In the beginning, everything was controlled by U____ but over time I have learnt to make some decisions and assert myself when needed. For example, at the GP meetings which were held every two months, I was gradually able to dissuade men from representing their women relatives.334

My research is also supported by other recent literature that argues for a more gendered understanding of the political arena. Strulik argues that in evaluating the participation and role of women elected representatives, it is important to adopt a perspective that acknowledges:

(T)he complexity of social relations and ongoing negotiation practices as constitutive to gender relations. As men…have to coordinate their actions with those of the people around them and the available cultural discourses, so of course also women will not act completely free and independent from the relations and the respective expectations they are grounded in. That a certain construction of gender, to a great extent shared by women and men, does not allow women to assume all their political rights is not sufficiently described by rendering them passive “proxies”, victims of male domination. (Also) due to the relatively limited norm-determining capacities of the distant state at the local level, an overnight replacement of previous practices is not viable, and the maturing of …gender equality, has to be a long process (2007: 67 and 58).

Recognising that both men and women have to change their attitudes and expectations, and that this process requires time, helps to make a more informed assessment of women GP presidents in the 2005 GP term in Karnataka. Of the three GPs of Kolar district that have female GP presidents, one president is beginning to assert herself within the council and is increasingly able to balance the demands made by local leaders and the sangha (GP 4), one is learning to function autonomously with the support of her husband and the grassroots-NGO (GP 8), and one is negotiating contracts with upper caste leaders and other GP members (GP 3). The changes in GP 4 and GP 8 are partly a reflection of the opportunities for training and support provided

334 Interview with elected female member No 39, 23 June 2006, Kolar.
by Karnataka’s *panchayat* legislation and state government, and they also point to the role played by *sanghas* and grassroots-NGOs. For example, the president in GP 4 explained:

> Before, S____ (a local upper caste leader) used to represent me at the taluk office but this has changed in the last six months. Since I have become more familiar with my job, the local leaders have realised that I cannot be taken for a ride. I have benefited from the five trainings provided by the state government. Things have been difficult as I am illiterate but *sangha* people have supported me, and Akravati’s field worker comes and gives me information about various schemes and benefits.335

In the following two sub-sections, I present an account of the experiences of two GP presidents in the 2000 GP term in Karnataka and 2001 GP term in Andhra Pradesh (one from Kolar and one from Anantapur). Both presidents come from two of the top-eight GPs. Both have gained electoral victories in closely fought elections where they were openly affiliated to one party. The accounts briefly describe how these presidents shape the political dynamics within the GP, and the levels of political capabilities and material benefits acquired by poor people. In particular, I focus on the various strategies employed by them and highlight the external factors that facilitate their endeavours. The president in GP 4 belongs to the upper caste and the one in GP 13 comes from a Scheduled Caste background.

### 7.2.2.1 Donnapalli – GP 4 in Kolar district

The young, male, dominant caste, well-educated GP president started as a front for a landed dominant caste leader336. Over time, the experience of being president emboldened him and fuelled his political aspirations. So he tried to build an independent political base by channelling benefits to poor people (many of whom belonged to the *sangha* facilitated by NGO Akravati), and awarding contracts to GP members and small-time leaders from the lower castes. In order to augment the funds of the GP, he also built links with the Congress-affiliated MLA. Although he did not come into power with the aid of the *sangha*, he drew on its support to challenge the domination of the influential dominant caste leader. This support was “extremely important” in preventing the passage of a no-confidence motion against him337:

> B___ Reddy was upset that I was growing in stature and refusing to report to him and so he moved to M___ party and they called for a no-confidence motion. Eight ward members have to support such a motion using hand vote. There were six M___ party supporting members, and they bought over two C___ party members…On the day of the no-confidence motion, about 2000 people from across the taluk came for a strike and prevented the opposition ward members...

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335 Interview with elected female member No 18, 28 August 2006, Kolar.
336 He was president in the second half of the five-year term.
337 Interview with elected male member No. 38, 31 August 2006, Kolar.
from entering the GP office. Most of these people who came for the strike belonged to the sangha.

Despite these efforts, eventually, the political ambitions of fellow GP members and the political machinations of the dominant caste leader prevented the president from completing a full term. Nonetheless, his actions have motivated sangha members and young leaders from traditionally marginalised backgrounds to forge electoral alliances and openly challenge the dominance of traditional elites. This has resulted in a victory for the alliance in the 2005 GP elections.

7.2.2.2 Gopipalli – GP 13 in Anantapur district

Gopipalli is headed by a middle-aged, illiterate, Scheduled Caste woman whose politically astute husband (TDP supporter) dominates GP level decision-making. This de facto president-ship is not questioned by local authorities or citizens. Moreover, the Andhra Pradesh panchayat legislation had no effective measures to check this infringement. In addition, the state-run panchayat training programme offers women functionaries limited opportunities to receive regular in-depth training. Despite these limitations, the president has managed to make her presence felt by chairing formal public meetings (accompanied by her husband), making "joint" GP-related decisions with her husband in some cases, influencing her husband’s decisions, and channelling personal requests made by other women. She has gained confidence to be more assertive and involved by attending training sessions and exposure visits organised by NGO Jamuna.

Her husband, the ‘de facto’ GP president, initially drew on a section of the influential Reddy families for electoral support, but as he gained experience, he has been emboldened to strike out independently. In order to reinforce and expand his political base, he has targeted material benefits to influential leaders and poor people within the Scheduled Caste and Backward Caste communities. He and his wife have also drawn on the advice and support offered by NGO Jamuna. Although he was able to control much of the decision-making in relation to GP and Janmabhoomi programmes, when it came to the well-funded watershed or MLA-sponsored programmes, he was unable to effectively challenge the power of the dominant caste families. However, challenging the writ of traditional elites in formal political arenas has encouraged other small-time leaders to shun subservience, and instead - negotiate demands.

338 Interview with elected female member No. 25, 2 February 2006, Anantapur.
As can be seen from the discussion in these two sub-sections, GP presidents have the potential to play an important role in shaping the nature of political competition and the experiences of poor people. However, the Gopipalli account highlights that although presidents (*de facto* and *de jure*) from marginalised communities are able to challenge the domination of traditional elites, women GP presidents need more time, experience and support to function autonomously. Further, these accounts reveal that decision-making is more centralised and individualistic in the GPs in Anantapur (GP 13), and more decentralised and collective in the GPs in Kolar (GP 4).

The discussion also draws attention to the part played by *sangha* members in shaping the nature of political competition. Their role is explored in detail in the next section.

### 7.3 Assessing the Role of the Sangha

This section reveals that variations in the levels of political capabilities and material benefits acquired by poor people are associated with variations in the effectiveness of the strategies, actions and collective strength of *sangha* members. It highlights the role of frontline workers and *sangha* functionaries in building the membership base of the *sanghas* within the GP, and shaping the strategies and actions of *sangha* members.

Out of the four grassroots-NGOs under study, only three facilitate the formation of *sanghas* – NGO Akravati, NGO Godavari and NGO Teesta. So I examine the role of the *sangha* in the six *gram panchayats* in which they operate. Except for GP 4 (late 1980s) and GP 10 (around 2000), in all other GPs, the *sanghas* have only become operational in the 1990s. In five out of the six GPs, the NGOs have started work in relation to *panchayats* only in the 2000 (in K) and 2001 (in AP) GP terms. GP 4 is the only GP where the NGO commenced work on *panchayat* issues from the late 1980s.

Table 7.4 provides details on the *sangha*’s position within these six *gram panchayats* in the 2000 GP term in Karnataka (plus one year of the 2005 GP term) and 2001 GP term in Andhra Pradesh. Comparisons are made with respect to:

339 In all six GPs, the grassroots-NGO has more than one *sangha* (group) in operation. In this section, I use the umbrella term ‘*sangha*’ to include all *sanghas* that are associated with the study-NGO within the GP.
340 However, in some GPs, *sanghas* had an unsteady evolution. They had disbanded mid-way and had regrouped around 2000 (GP 1 and GP 9).
341 These six ways in which the *sanghas* are compared were identified by examining the data from semi-structured interviews and group discussions. In addition, this data was used to highlight the various strategies and actions employed by the *sangha* in relation to PRIs. For example, the five principal strategies were selected on the basis that these were the ones that were most often alluded to in the qualitative material. This material was also used to identify the different ways in which *sangha* functionaries and NGO frontline staff exhibited leadership (for instance, by assisting *sangha* members and mediating on their behalf).
1. Strategies employed by sangha in relation to panchayats (Table 7.4 a)  
2. Actions of sangha members in relation to panchayats (Table 7.4 b)  
3. Critical mass of sangha members 342 (Table 7.4 c)  
4. Level of collective strength of sangha (Table 7.4 c)  
5. Leadership of sangha functionaries (Table 7.4 c)  
6. Leadership of NGO’s frontline staff that works with the sangha (Table 7.4 c)  

In terms of strategies, sangha members in GP 1 and GP 4 (associated with NGO Akravati) have a more well-developed electoral strategy than their counterparts in the other four GPs (Table 7.4.a). In order to influence decision-making within the GP, they aim to capture a significant proportion of ward member positions. The twin strategies they used in the 2005 GP elections were expanding membership, and building alliances with the neutral population and sections of the non-poor. These strategies have contributed to a reduction in election expenses for sangha members and their allies. More importantly, it has helped the sangha win a sizeable proportion of ward member seats in 2005, and it has also enabled it to secure the position of GP president for its sangha member. In turn, this has translated into opportunities to influence the allocation and distribution of material benefits. As one sangha functionary explained:

Five years ago in the GP elections we realised that the coverage of sangha members was less in the villages of the GP. So, in the last elections we made alliances with the neutral population and encouraged them to join the sangha, and that is how we managed to win the necessary votes and get so many members this time. Also, the rich people like S___ Reddy are seeking alliances with us because of the strength of the group. This has positive benefits for us343.

Their numerical strength has also placed the sangha leaders in a superior bargaining position in relation to non-panchayat matters. Aside from these electoral strategies, the sangha in GP 1 and GP 4 has also expanded its influence and attained material benefits by networking with senior political party leaders within the legislative constituency. In addition, since sanghas are federated within and across GPs, they are in a better position to harness their collective strength.

Sangha members in GP 5 and GP 8 (associated with NGO Godavari) did not have any well-structured electoral tactics for the 2000 GP term, but for the 2005 GP term, they formed informal alliances with leaders within certain habitations of the GPs. In some cases, this has helped to secure the victory of candidates who pledge to support the sangha, and in other cases, it has led to the victory of a few sangha members (like in GP 5).

342 The concept of ‘critical mass’ is not meant to signify a threshold such as 30 percent of the population but is used as an analytical tool to “distinguish those situations in which the increase(d) size of the minority makes it possible for this minority group to begin chang(ing) the power structure – and hence its own status as a minority” (Dahlerup, 1991: 277).

343 Interview with sangha functionary No. 5, 26 August 2006, Kolar.
Table 7.4: Comparison of Sangha’s Position in Six Gram Panchayats with respect to the 2000 GP term in Karnataka (plus one year of the 2005 GP term) and 2001 GP term in Andhra Pradesh

Table 7.4.a (X – indicates presence of feature)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies employed by sangha in relation to panchayats</th>
<th>GP 1</th>
<th>GP 4</th>
<th>GP 5</th>
<th>GP 8</th>
<th>GP 9</th>
<th>GP 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building alliances with non-poor and neutral population</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building alliances with individual leaders within habitations of the GP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanding membership</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federating sanghas within and across GPs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking with MLA and intermediate-tier party leaders</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.4.b (X – indicates presence of feature)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions of sangha members in relation to panchayats</th>
<th>GP 1</th>
<th>GP 4</th>
<th>GP 5</th>
<th>GP 8</th>
<th>GP 9</th>
<th>GP 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campaigning in panchayat elections</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contesting in panchayat elections</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting in panchayat elections</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protesting</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petitioning</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacting and pressurising elected members and local officials</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voicing demands in gram sabhas and other venues</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending gram sabhas</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberating in gram sabhas</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in wage-employment programmes</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying taxes and dues</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.4.c *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GP 1</th>
<th>GP 4</th>
<th>GP 5</th>
<th>GP 8</th>
<th>GP 9</th>
<th>GP 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical mass of sangha in GP</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of collective strength of sangha</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership of sangha functionaries</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership of NGO frontline staff **</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*High indicates above average, medium indicates average and low indicates below average; ** Although this column has more to do with NGO interventions, I have included it here as frontline staff operate primarily at the GP level.
However, since they lack membership coverage within the GP, they are unable to translate their collective power into political power. As one of the elected members commented, “They are a good influence but not a major influence”\textsuperscript{344}. Godavari’s staff members are aware about this problem but find it hard to devise a solution:

When our women have contested in GP elections we have made strategies within and across sanghas, or we have made alliances with certain leaders within the village. However, we realise that although we may have a few isolated victories, it is not enough for us to gain a majority in the council. So we cannot significantly influence decision-making in relation to allocations and distribution. Our dilemma is that the sangha women feel that politically they do not want to be part of any particular group or party but they want to build on unity to get things done. We also realise that it is quite expensive to contest elections, and victories are not guaranteed. In an atmosphere of deep politicisation, it is also difficult to get the support of sangha and non-sangha members, as they are both split along party lines.\textsuperscript{345}

Although Godavari’s sangha members have weak electoral strategies, they still have been able to influence functioning within the GP by carrying out various forms of confrontational collective action like protests and petitions (see section 4.5.2.1 in chapter 4 for a detailed qualitative account of the strategies adopted in GP 5 and their impact). Sangha members have also strengthened their position by networking with the MLA and bureaucrats at the intermediate-tier. This has also augmented their chances of acquiring material benefits from different tiers of panchayats. The strategy of federating sanghas has also expanded their influence within and across GPs. However, these all-women sanghas have often found it hard to mobilise support from men.

In GP 9 and GP 10 (associated with NGO Teesta), sangha members have no clear strategy aside from federating sanghas. In part, this is a reflection of the unsettled political dynamics in the legislative constituency. It also reflects the weak leadership of sangha functionaries and the weak intervention of Teesta in relation to panchayats:

Teesta has helped in terms of land development, seeds, health facilities, children’s school, SHGs…but they have not given detailed information about panchayats. Their sangha leaders have been given some basic information about panchayats but they are not coming and telling the general public, or even sharing it properly with their own sangha members.\textsuperscript{346}

In the 2000 GP term in Karnataka and the 2001 GP term in Andhra Pradesh, none of the GPs have a critical mass of sangha members, but by the start of the 2005 GP term in Karnataka, two GPs have attained a critical mass of sangha members (Table 7.4.c).

\textsuperscript{344} Interview with elected male member No. 98, 7 September 2006, Kolar.
\textsuperscript{345} Interview with NGO staff No. 24, 13 October 2006, Kolar.
\textsuperscript{346} Interview with knowledgeable informant No. 68, 23 November 2005, Anantapur.
In other words, in GP 1 and GP 4, the collective strength of *sangha* members has significantly influenced electoral outcomes and/or decision-making within the GP.

*Sangha* members in some of the other GPs (GP 5 and GP 8) are able to have a measure of influence over the functioning of the GP as they play a more active and confrontational role, and engage with *panchayats* in a larger variety of ways (Table 7.4.b) than their counterparts in other GPs (GP 9 and GP 10). For example, *sangha* members in GP 5 and GP 8 (associated with NGO Godavari) are more active in protesting, petitioning, and pressurising elected members and government officials to fulfil their demands, comply with the *panchayat* provisions, and function more transparently. Most non-confrontational actions are common to *sangha* members in all six GPs - voting, contacting elected members and local officials, attending *gram sabhas*, voicing demands, working in wage-employment programmes, and paying taxes and dues.

The collective strength of the *sangha* varies across the different GPs (Table 7.4.c). In other words, *sangha* members are able to harness their collective actions more effectively in some GPs compared to others. The collective strength of *sangha* members is low in both GP 9 and GP 10 (associated with NGO Teesta), as members are rarely involved in collective action. However, this strength can also vary between GPs that are associated with the same NGO. For instance, the collective strength of the *sangha* in GP 4 is higher than in GP 1 (high indicates above average, medium indicates average and low indicates below average). Even though both GPs are associated with NGO Akravati, *sangha* members in GP 4 are able to harness their collective efforts more effectively than their counterparts in GP 1. This difference is also evident in the two GPs associated with NGO Godavari. For example, in GP 5, the *sangha* members have had more success than their counterparts in GP 8 in ensuring that the *panchayat* secretary visits the GP regularly, and that habitations have access to potable water. Nevertheless, in both GP 4 and GP 5, this collective strength is not static. Internal divisions between *sangha* members have threatened to undo the hard-won unity of the *sanghas*. An NGO staff associated with NGO Akravati said:

> As soon as people’s awareness increases, they want to become leaders. They become more self-centred. Rival groups can develop around these leaders. This creates problems and divisions within *sanghas*, which can be exploited by outsiders who want to weaken the unity within the *sangha*.

Even in terms of the *leadership of sangha* functionaries, there are variations between the six GPs (Table 7.4.c). In certain GPs, *sangha* functionaries have disseminated

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347 Interview with NGO staff No. 6, 12 November 2005, Kolar.
panchayat-related information, administered the sangha, assisted and mobilised sangha members, devised appropriate tactics, and spearheaded collective action more effectively than in others. For example, in GP 4 and GP 5, sangha functionaries have provided ‘high’ leadership (high indicates above average, medium indicates average and low indicates below average) by motivating sangha members to participate in protests, building alliances with sections of the non-poor, and providing detailed information about the funds received by panchayats. Nevertheless, this situation can change over time. A member of Godavari’s staff explained, “Even within these GPs, over time, differences and power struggles amongst sangha functionaries can undo the hard won unity of the sangha”\(^{348}\). In GPs like GP 9 and GP 10, sangha functionaries have shown little initiative and foresight in panchayat-related matters.

Variations are also visible in the leadership demonstrated by NGO frontline staff – the staff who work alongside the sangha at the GP level (Table 7.4.c). Some have taken more interest than others in building the individual and collective political capabilities of sangha members; nurturing the leadership potential of sangha functionaries; assisting sangha members and mediating on their behalf; connecting sangha members with the relevant leaders, lawyers and government officials outside the GP; and supervising the general functioning of the sangha. For example, in GP 5 and GP 8, frontline staff have made some efforts to explain the role and function of panchayats to sangha members (also in GP 1), and mobilise sangha participation in ward sabhas. The panchayat secretary in GP 5 described the role of Godavari’s frontline staff:

Godavari staff are building awareness about government programmes. Now women come directly to the office….Before I came only once a week but now I have to come every day. The staff and sangha members have put pressure on us to keep the doors open everyday. The staff also attend GP meetings regularly.\(^{349}\)

However, in other GPs, the leadership demonstrated by the frontline worker is below average (GP 4, GP 9 and GP 10). A staff member of Akravati pointed out that in the long run this could damage the relationship between the NGO and the local sangha:

We have had complaints from sangha members that certain fieldworkers (frontline workers) do not visit their operational areas on a regular basis, nor do they provide the necessary information and support when needed. We realise that over time this can have a negative impact on the relationship between Akravati and the sangha. So we are trying out different methods to increase the accountability of fieldworkers to the sangha and Akravati.\(^{350}\)

\(^{348}\) Interview with NGO staff No. 22, 11 October 2006, Kolar.
\(^{349}\) Interview with panchayat secretary No. 10, 22 March 2006, Kolar.
\(^{350}\) Interview with NGO staff No. 6, 12 November 2005, Kolar.
Overall, the data indicates that the strategies, actions and collective strength of *sanghas* are more effective in GP 1, GP 4, GP 5 and GP 8, as compared to GP 9 and GP 10. The first four GPs are also part of the top-eight GPs, while the latter two form part of the bottom-eight GPs. This indicates that amongst *sangha*-operational GPs, poor people attain higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits in GPs where the strategies, actions and collective strength of *sanghas* are more effective.

### 7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that deep politics - party and non-party based politics at the level of *gram panchayats* - play an important role in moulding the nature of political competition, and the experiences of *sangha* members. It has revealed that poor people experience higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits in GPs where the nature of political competition between leaders within the *panchayat* is more democratic (pluralistic and inclusive); and where the strategies, actions and collective strength of *sangha* members are more effective.

The chapter builds on the discussions in chapters 4 and 5 to establish that in *gram panchayats* where political competition between leaders has grown to be more pluralistic (representing multiple interests and groups) and inclusive (encompassing autonomous representation from lower castes), there are greater opportunities for poor people to engage with *panchayats* and obtain material benefits. The data indicates that the nature of political competition has become more democratic over the study time-period. By 2006, all the eight top-performing GPs (identified in chapter 4) have average to above-average (high and medium category) levels of democratic political competition. Only two of the bottom-eight GPs record average levels while the remaining six fall in the low category. This indicates that among the sixteen GPs, higher levels of democratic political competition are associated with higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits for poor people.

In addition, the chapter has highlighted the changing nature of GP-level leadership over the study-period. With the rise in political competition, decision-making power is increasingly being shared between a group of leaders (including GP members), some of whom come from traditionally marginalised communities (more so in the Kolar GPs than those in Anantapur). Although the data reveals that the problem of elite-capture (in terms of the domination of traditional elites) is on the decline, it also indicates that issues relating to gender-bias continue to hamper the effective functioning of female GP presidents (across castes and religions). At the same time, the chapter argues that evaluating the contribution of women elected presidents requires a more gendered
understanding of the political arena. These presidents are not passive participants who can be labelled as ‘proxies’ for male relatives or male political leaders. Over their term in office, they have drawn on various resources (for example, training opportunities and male relative’s advice) and networks (for example, federations of elected women representatives and sangha support) to make small and often informal contributions to the everyday decision-making processes within the gram panchayat.

The chapter has also demonstrated that the nature of political competition and the changing nature of leadership are influenced by the strategies, actions and collective strength of sangha members. It has unpacked the role of the sangha at the grassroots and identified those strategies (for example, expanding membership and federating sanghas) that enable sangha members to reconfigure local power-relations and have a greater influence on decision-making and functioning within the GP. Members have a greater impact if they play a more active and confrontational role, and engage with panchayats in a large variety of ways. The chapter has also underscored the importance of enhancing the collective strength of the sangha and building a critical mass of sangha members within GPs. In doing so, it has highlighted the importance of leadership, particularly in relation to the role of frontline workers and sangha functionaries in building the membership base of the sanghas within the GP, and shaping the strategies and actions of sangha members.

At the same time, the discussion has revealed that inter-GP differences in the nature of political competition, and the sangha’s strategies and actions are influenced by the nature of - political opportunity space (for example, the type of elections held for ward members in Karnataka and Andhra pradesh: direct or indirect), NGO interventions (for example, whether they promote collective action and membership-based sanghas), and democratic institutions in the legislative constituency (for example, freedom to contest elections). The chapter has highlighted that these factors are interconnected and that it is their interaction that shapes the experiences of poor people. This suggests that the levels of political capabilities and material benefits attained by poor people are an outcome of the interplay of factors. In the concluding chapter, I explore this interplay in more detail and highlight the main findings and contributions of the thesis.
Chapter 8

CONCLUSION: THE VALUE OF ENGAGING WITH THE POLITICAL

This thesis has presented a detailed examination of the interface of NGOs, local government institutions and poor people. It has documented the nature of these interactions; drawn out the implications for local government institutions, for village society, and for poor people (along the two dimensions of political capabilities and material benefits); and highlighted the factors that are associated with variations in the experiences of poor people. In doing so, it has drawn attention to the role and relevance of politics in shaping the levels of political capabilities and material benefits attained by poor people, and suggested that variations in these levels emerge from the interplay of different factors at the interface.

In order to analyse these interactions, dynamics and outcomes, the thesis has used comparative case-studies, which are set in two south Indian states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh whose governments have taken differing approaches to democratic decentralisation and related NGO interventions. This comparison has allowed for an in-depth understanding of the complexities and interconnections at the interface of grassroots-NGOs, Panchayati Raj Institutions and poor people in sixteen gram panchayats. In addition, the description of change over the time period 1994 to 2006 has enabled these findings to be contextualised and has drawn attention to the actors that influence dynamics at the grassroots.

This concluding chapter is divided into two sections. Section one discusses the political interplay in greater detail by pulling together the different findings discussed in the previous chapters. The second and third sections link these findings to existing literature and provide insights to academics, practitioners and policy makers. They also discuss future possibilities for research based on the findings of this investigation.

8.1 Unpacking Political Interplay

The discussion in the four empirical chapters (4, 5, 6 and 7) has helped to highlight the nature of variations in the experiences of poor people in relation to political capabilities and material benefits, and the factors that are associated with these variations. These chapters reveal that aside from the two main factors under study - political opportunity spaces and NGO interventions, four other factors (nature of democratic institutions; strategies, actions and the collective strength of sangha members; nature of political
competition, and the content and extent of implementation of the *Janmabhoomi* programme) also play a role in shaping the nature of experiences. Each of the four chapters offers a different insight into the dynamics and outcomes, but, it is only together that they provide a fuller understanding of the ways in which the different factors interact and shape the experiences of poor people. In this section, I begin by briefly recapitulating the main findings from these chapters. This review sets the stage for a more detailed discussion that unpacks the interplay between the factors.

Chapter 4 has revealed that at the interface of NGOs and PRIs, poor people attain higher levels of political capabilities (awareness, voice and influence) in comparison to material benefits. However, these levels vary between the sixteen *gram panchayats*. Further, across GPs, there are differences within the two dimensions.

In terms of political capabilities, poor people have relatively high levels of awareness in relation to electoral aspects of GP functioning, but they have limited knowledge about procedures relating to GP meetings and *gram sabhas*. Similarly, poor people have moderately high levels of political capabilities in relation to some passive or non-confrontational aspects of voice, like contacting local elected representatives (GP president - 49 percent or ward member - 41 percent), but have low levels of capabilities with respect to more active or confrontational aspects of voice, such as participating in protests and strikes (8 percent). In terms of influence, their record for shaping decision-making or capturing political power within a GP is very low. With respect to material benefits, they are able to secure community benefits like drinking water facilities (72 percent) and local village roads (53 percent), but have little success in acquiring individual benefits, such as *panchayat*-related daily-wage employment (26 percent).

Differences within the two dimensions underscore the advantages of being part of collectives and participating in collective action. Thus, the chances of poor people taking part in voice-related political practices like campaigns and protests are larger if they are part of a group. This collective strength is also useful in pressurising elected functionaries and bureaucrats to provide habitation or GP-wide material benefits like water tanks and street lights.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 have explored the extent to which the six factors are associated with variations in the experiences of poor people. Table 8.1 provides an assessment of the levels to which the six factors are observed in each of the sixteen study-GPs with respect to the 2000 GP term in Karnataka (plus one year of the 2005 GP term) and the 2001 GP term in Andhra Pradesh.
Table 8.1: Assessing Sixteen GPs across Six Factors with respect to the 2000 GP term in Karnataka (plus one year of the 2005 GP term) and 2001 GP term in Andhra Pradesh*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of GP</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>NGO</th>
<th>LC</th>
<th>Nature of political opportunity space (content and extent of implementation)</th>
<th>Janmabhoomi programme (only in Andhra Pradesh) (content and extent of implementation)</th>
<th>Nature of democratic institutions (democratic content)</th>
<th>Structure, policies and activities of grassroots-NGOs (quality and effectiveness)</th>
<th>Strategies, actions and collective strength of sangha members (quality and effectiveness)</th>
<th>Nature of political competition (democratic content)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GP 5</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>LC 2</td>
<td>Medium-to-high</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Medium-to-high</td>
<td>Medium-to-high</td>
<td>Medium-to-high</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 8</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>LC 2</td>
<td>Medium-to-high</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Medium-to-high</td>
<td>Medium-to-high</td>
<td>Medium-to-low</td>
<td>Medium-to-high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 4</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>LC 1</td>
<td>Medium-to-low</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Medium-to-low</td>
<td>Medium-to-high</td>
<td>Medium-to-low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 13</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>LC 4</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium-to-high</td>
<td>Medium-to-high</td>
<td>Medium-to-high</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Medium-to-low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 1</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>LC 1</td>
<td>Medium-to-low</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Medium-to-low</td>
<td>Medium-to-high</td>
<td>Medium-to-high</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 6</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>LC 2</td>
<td>Medium-to-low</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Medium-to-high</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Medium-to-high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 14</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>LC 4</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium-to-high</td>
<td>Medium-to-high</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP 12</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>LC 3</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium-to-high</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<td>GP 10</td>
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<td>GP 3</td>
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<td>GP 7</td>
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<td>GP 16</td>
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* Four ranking categories for assessment (in descending order): High, Medium-to-high, Medium-to-low, Low. These levels of influence are based on qualitative and quantitative data; Green colour indicates high and medium-to-high rankings; NA (Not Applicable); State – Karnataka (K) or Andhra Pradesh (AP); NGO – Akravati (A), Godavari (G), Teesta (T), Jamuna (J); LC - Legislative Constituency – Maddilpalli (LC 1), Reddapalli (LC 2), Yellapalli (LC 3), Bhushanapalli (LC 4).
The table separates the top-eight (top-performing) and bottom-eight (low-performing) GPs, and ranks the levels across four categories - high, medium-to-high, medium-to-low, and low. This subjective ranking largely draws on qualitative data, but in some cases it is supplemented by findings from the survey data. Cells that have a high or medium-to-high ranking are highlighted in green colour. The table also indicates whether the GP is located in Karnataka (K) or Andhra Pradesh (AP), the presence of a study NGO and its name [Akravati (A), Godavari (G), Teesta (T) and Jamuna (J)], the corresponding legislative constituency [Maddilpalli (LC 1), Reddapalli (LC 2), Yellapalli (LC 3) and Bhushanapalli (LC 4)]. In doing so, it visually illustrates that GPs in Kolar district and Reddapalli constituency (LC 2), and those associated with NGO Godavari and Akravati have the edge over their counterparts.

In terms of factors, Chapter 5 has demonstrated that the nature of political opportunity space is an important aspect, as it creates an enabling or unhelpful (as the case may be) environment for both NGOs and citizens to engage with PRIs. The policies adopted by chief ministers play a crucial role in shaping this space. This is especially evident in Andhra Pradesh where the chief minister’s flagship Janmabhoomi programme sidelined panchayats. Table 8.1 indicates that the content and extent of implementation of the panchayat legislation and associated policies is medium (medium-to-high or medium-to-low) in five out of the eight top-performing GPs (63 percent), but is medium (only medium-to-low) in only three out of the eight low-performing GPs (38 percent). In relation to the Janmabhoomi programme (only operational in Andhra Pradesh), the content and extent of implementation of the programme is medium-to-high in all three of the GPs that are part of the top-performing GPs, while it is only medium-to-high in one out of five GPs that are part of the low-performing GPs (the other four have a medium-to-low ranking).

Chapter 5 has also revealed that the impact of the political opportunity space is filtered by the political dynamics in the legislative constituency. In particular, the research findings call attention to the role of the ruling MLA. His or her conduct influences the nature of democratic institutions (amongst others, the institutions of free elections, free speech, free press, free organisation and assembly, and political and civil rights protected by the rule of law) within the legislative constituency, and shapes the interventions of NGOs that work on the subject of PRIs. Table 8.1 highlights that the democratic content of these institutions is medium (medium-to-high or medium-to-low) in seven out of the eight top-performing GPs (88 percent), and is medium (medium-to-high or medium-to-low) in five out of the eight low-performing GPs (63 percent).
Chapter 6 establishes that the role of grassroots-NGOs is relatively small but important. Grassroots-NGOs are largely able to make a difference in relation to the expansion of political capabilities of poor people, and are less successful in enabling them to secure *panchayat*-related material benefits. This is partly to do with the nature of NGO interventions and it is partly influenced by the nature of political opportunity spaces.

More importantly, the chapter reveals that grassroots-NGOs that choose to engage strongly with the political (in terms of their policies and activities) make a more substantive contribution than those that engage weakly with the political. In other words, poor people experience higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits in those GPs where grassroots-NGOs built the political capabilities of poor people in ways that move beyond *awareness* to more tangible, active and collective forms of political participation, thereby enhancing their *voice* and *influence*. In doing so, the chapter draws attention to the role played by donors and the NGO head, and it underlines the importance of well-defined political strategies, membership-based *sanghas* and collective action. It also establishes that the ‘hybrid’ nature of the NGO’s work (encompassing both advocacy and service delivery) strengthens their initiatives in relation to PRIs. Table 8.1 highlights that the effectiveness of the structure, policies and activities of the four study-NGOs is medium (medium-to-high or medium-to-low) in five out of the six NGO-operational GPs that form part of the top-performing GPs, and is low in both the NGO-operational GPs that are part of the bottom-eight GPs.

Chapter 7 documents that poor people acquire higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits in GPs where the nature of political competition is more democratic; and where the strategies, actions and collective strength of *sangha* members (members of the *sanghas* affiliated to the study-NGOs) is more effective. The chapter explains how democratic political competition and the collective actions of the *sangha* have helped to reconfigure local power-relations. In doing so, it draws attention to the importance of leadership, particularly in relation to the role of the GP president, *sangha* functionaries and the NGO frontline workers. Further, the chapter argues that evaluating the contribution of women elected presidents requires a more gendered understanding of the political arena. It also underscores the value of building a critical mass of *sangha* members within GPs.

Table 8.1 indicates that the effectiveness of the strategies, actions and collective strength of the *sangha* members is high or medium (medium-to-high or medium-to-low) in all four of the *sangha*-operational GPs that form part of the top-performing GPs, and is low in both the *sangha*-operational GPs that are part of the bottom-eight GPs. In
terms of the democratic nature of political competition, the table highlights that all eight of the top-performing GPs are in the high (38 percent) or medium (medium-to-high or medium-to-low) categories (62 percent); but only two of the bottom-eight GPs have a medium-to-low ranking (25 percent), while six GPs have a low ranking (75 percent).

Overall, the table indicates that the top-eight GPs have performed better than the bottom-eight GPs across all six factors. However, each of the four chapters has revealed that variations between GPs cannot be explained by one factor in isolation. Although some factors are more important than others (discussed later in sub-section 8.1.7), all four chapters have drawn attention to the interconnected role of the different factors across various tiers of government (state, intermediate panchayat and gram panchayat). The interplay of these six factors is discussed in more detail in the following six sub-sections, and is illustrated visually in Figure 8.1. The figure depicts interactions across three levels of government – state, intermediate panchayat (IP) and gram panchayat (GP). The thin arrows indicate moderate influence while the thick arrows indicate strong influence. The oval shapes relate to the six factors while the rectangles highlight the main players that influence these factors and their interplay.

8.1.1 Nature of Political Opportunity Space

This space varies between the two states because of the mixed support it attracts from various actors. Panchayat legislation-related policies originate at the level of state government. At this level, the key actors that help to shape the nature of this space are - the chief minister (most importantly), the panchayat minister, and senior bureaucrats in the Panchayati Raj and Rural Development departments. However, as these policies travel from the state to the gram panchayat, they are continually ‘filtered’ by the influence of other actors at lower tiers of government. So, at the grassroots, citizen engagement with PRIs is circumscribed by the content and extent of the ‘mediated’ political opportunity space.

Although, Karnataka’s legislation devolves relatively greater powers and resources than its counterpart in Andhra Pradesh, implementation within the study-GPs is often slack and prone to political interference. This lax execution reflects insufficient top-down supervision on the parts of elected functionaries and government officials associated with panchayats, the limited accountability of bureaucrats to elected functionaries and citizens, and the inadequate use of certain existing vertical accountability mechanisms like social audit.
Figure 8.1: Delineating Political Interplay

**Key:**
- GP: gram panchayat
- IP: intermediate panchayat
- Only in AP: Janmabhoomi

**Content of Panchayati Raj legislation (and policies) and extent of implementation – Nature of PRIs or Political Opportunity Spaces**

**State-level**
- Chief Minister – political will/ leadership
- Only in AP: Janmabhoomi – content and extent of implementation

**IP level**
- IP level (president, members, leaders) - conduct
- Senior IP officials - conduct
- Donor – nature of support
- NGO head - leadership
- MLA – conduct

**GP level**
- GP President - conduct
- Other GP level (members, leaders, secretary) - conduct
- Strategies, actions and collective strength of sangha members
- Level of political capabilities and material benefits attained by poor people at the interface

**GP level**
- Senior rural development & panchayat bureaucrats - leadership
- PRI Minister - leadership

**Structure, policies and activities of NGO in relation to PRI**
- NGO frontline staff & sangha functionaries – quality of facilitation
- Sangha members – attaining critical mass

**Nature of democratic institutions**
- Nature of political competition
- Nature of PRIs or Political Opportunity Spaces

**Nature of political competition**

**Nature of PRIs or Political Opportunity Spaces**
Even in relation to devolution, Karnataka’s legislative provisions relating to financial disbursements, decision-making in *gram sabhas*, and internal resource generation at the GP level were only significantly enhanced towards the latter half of the 2000 GP term. Moreover, the system of *indirect* elections for the post of GP president has meant that in almost all study-GPs in Kolar, *panchayat* funds in the 2000 term tended to be *equally* distributed between the GP members who had the ‘quorum’ (they were part of the party-in-power), with a smaller amount allocated to the ‘opposition’ party. Access to a uniform but limited pot of funds has meant that even GP members affiliated to the party-in-power provide benefits that are few in number, and they largely take the form of community-oriented (rather than the individual) benefits.

Further, in most cases, ward members cut corners by implementing poor quality ‘works’, providing low wages, or employing their own family members and a few supporters. This helps to explain the limited satisfaction expressed by poor people in the study-GPs of Kolar in relation to securing material benefits from *panchayats*. Although the legislation provides GPs with opportunities to raise their own financial resources, the collections are poor and are largely utilised for salary disbursals. At all three levels of PRIs in Kolar, and especially at the GP-level, functioning is also undermined by the system of split terms for GP presidents. It limits their opportunity to gain sufficient leadership experience, and strengthens the hand of more experienced and knowledgeable leaders or patrons, both ‘outside’ and within the council.

Nevertheless, over the study-period, GPs in Kolar have gradually gained in strength. There is broad continuity in state government’s *panchayat* policies, and *panchayats* are now considerably more institutionalised than their counterparts in Anantapur. This has helped to promote the expansion of political capabilities. Poor people in the study-GPs of Kolar have experienced a higher expansion in political capabilities than their counterparts in the study-GPs of Anantapur. The political opportunity space has also fostered a more democratic form of political competition at the grassroots in Kolar compared to Anantapur. In turn, this has contributed to a loosening of traditional hierarchical relationships. Further, in contrast to Anantapur, the GPs in Kolar are characterised by a relatively greater emphasis on collective leadership (owing to the system of indirect elections for the post of GP president), and a stronger role for elected functionaries vis-à-vis the bureaucrats.

The quality of the political opportunity space, and the support extended by state-level bureaucrats and politicians to NGO involvement in *panchayat* issues has also made it easier for the two study-NGOs in Kolar to engage with PRIs, when compared to the two
NGOs in Anantapur. The situation in relation to the GPs in Aantapur is discussed in more detail in the next sub-section.

8.1.2 Content and Extent of Implementation of the Janmabhoomi programme

In Andhra Pradesh, relatively weak panchayat legislation suffered further neglect during implementation. The chief minister bypassed panchayats and executed an alternative decentralisation experiment – Janmabhoomi - that became the main conduit for the disbursement of development funds. In the initial phase of this bureaucrat-driven venture, attempts were made to make government more responsive and accountable to citizens. Interest in the ‘gram sabha’ was revived, and it was ‘mandatory’ for officials to attend and administer these ‘participatory’ forums. Decision-making at the GP level was privileged over higher tiers of local government. The Janmabhoomi programme was awash with funds. In comparison, panchayats obtained negligible funds, were inadequately staffed, and received little support from government officials.

Even though the existence of the Janmabhoomi programme meant that the average citizen had greater access to material benefits, the advantages were short-lived. Within a few years, it was apparent that a combination of factors was thwarting implementation and curbing expansion of the programme. These included an explicit dependence on a top-down centralised system of administration, weak bureaucratic accountability to citizens and elected functionaries, overt party control over disbursal of funds and contracts, and a fiscal crisis within the government.

Despite the odds stacked against them [inadequate powers and resources (most study-GPs were unable to generate internal revenues), political interference, insufficient bureaucratic support, and existence of parallel institutions], panchayats continued to limp along in the case-study GPs of Anantapur district351.

These limitations curbed the expansion of political capabilities of the poor, but the situation in relation to material benefits was mitigated to an extent in some study-GPs that were led by TDP-affiliated GP presidents (de facto or de jure). These presidents augmented the meagre resources of panchayats by ‘controlling’ access to the funds and benefits provided by the Janmabhoomi programme and state-administered development projects (like those relating to watersheds), and channelling some of the benefits to their supporters. However, this control was largely possible because the GP

351 As of 2006, it was too early to see the effects of the Congress state government’s policies in relation to panchayats (they replaced the TDP in the 2004 assembly elections). Nevertheless, it was apparent that there was no real change in the government’s stance on panchayats. It had shifted from antagonism to indifference.
presidential system in Andhra Pradesh is heavily weighted in favour of the president. The existing system of direct elections for the position of GP president, places an emphasis on individual control rather than collective power-sharing. In addition, GP members have inadequate powers (especially, in relation to checking the dominance of GP presidents), which dampens their enthusiasm to engage with panchayats. This in turn limits their opportunities to expand their own political awareness and skills.

The quality of the political opportunity space and the deliberate sidelining of PRIs have also limited the opportunities for the two grassroots-NGOs in Anantapur to engage with panchayats. The limited institutionalisation of panchayats has meant that most of the NGO’s initiatives are restricted to awareness-generating measures, and there is less of an emphasis on converting the awareness of poor people into voice and influence. The open disregard for panchayats in the higher echelons of government has also thwarted NGO attempts to lobby for PRI-related changes.

However, while Janmabhoomi limited the expansion of PRI-related political capabilities, it rejuvenated interest in gram sabhas, increased contact between officials and citizens, and expanded opportunities for people from traditionally marginalised groups (like women) to participate in public forums.

In addition, the Janmabhoomi programme and the proliferation of user-groups opened up alternate spaces for citizens from marginalised sections to gain leadership experience. However, most of these non-elected user-groups were dominated by TDP leaders and this limited the ‘democratic’ content of political competition. Aside from being non-representational, these non-statutory bodies were also not accountable to both elected representatives and citizens.

8.1.3 Nature of Democratic Institutions in the sub-district Arena
The sub-district arena brings to the fore the inter-connected role of the MLA, grassroots-NGOs, local political leaders and elected functionaries (GP and intermediate panchayat level), and associated government officials. Of these, the most significant player is the MLA.

The MLA is the local representative of the state government. He or she can be an extremely influential player in the arena of the legislative constituency. The MLA’s hand is particularly strengthened if they are allied to, or belong to the same party as the ruling government at the state level. This increases their potential to influence panchayat-related functioning within the legislative constituency. Differences in political
opportunity spaces and associated policies (for instance, powers to select beneficiaries for panchayat-related housing programmes) define the extent to which they can shape the dynamics within the constituency.

The MLA’s conduct affects the nature of democratic institutions, which in turn influences the functioning of the NGOs. In turn, the initiatives of the NGO influence the nature of democratic institutions, but to a lesser degree. It is the interplay of these two factors that mediates the nature of political opportunity space at this level. NGOs and PRIs work best when the MLA is relatively non-intrusive and non-obstructive. Differences in the actions and policies of MLA are reflected in the varying levels of political capabilities and material benefits attained by poor people in the four legislative constituencies.

The sub-district arena also highlights the role of intermediate panchayats (IPs). It helps if intermediate panchayats are strong enough to offset the dominance of the MLA. Nonetheless, this is only possible if the party-in-power at the intermediate panchayat level is different to that of the MLA’s, and also if this tier has access to sufficient powers and resources. Thus, the relatively bigger and more powerful intermediate panchayats in Kolar district are in a better position to challenge the authority of MLAs compared to their counterparts in Anantapur.

8.1.4 PRI-related structure, policies and activities of grassroots-NGOs

Each of the four study-NGOs has a different organisational make-up and approach towards panchayats, and this influences their impact at the grassroots. All four make a contribution but the extent varies. NGO intervention is mediated by factors internal to the NGO (like the conduct and supervision of the frontline staff and sangha functionaries) and external to the NGO (like the nature of political opportunity spaces and the nature of democratic institutions).

The different panchayat-related initiatives of the four grassroots-NGOs reflect the influence of two key actors – NGO heads and donors. Of the two, the nature of the NGO leadership is crucial. It affects both the content and extent of implementation of the panchayat initiatives. Donors are also important because these activities need long-term funding and support. This is because challenging existing power-relationships and building the collective capabilities of poor people requires long-term involvement on the part of the NGO. The sometimes violent nature of grassroots competition also makes it important for NGO heads to indicate that they are in for the long-haul, so as to allay fears that they will withdraw support during the process.
In terms of the internal structure of the NGO, the factors that mould the quality of NGO interventions relate to the quality of the NGO head’s and senior staffs’ leadership, the presence of adequate and capable frontline staff, provisions for transparent and decentralised decision-making amongst staff, and ready access to an up-to-date database for monitoring and evaluation.

On the whole, the two grassroots-NGOs in Kolar are able to have a greater impact on the lives of poor people than the two in Anantapur district. This is particularly noteworthy in relation to political capabilities. However, they are less successful in enabling poor people to secure panchayat-related material benefits. This is partly because of the limited panchayat finances (associated with the political opportunity space) provided by the two state governments (in Karnataka, this only changed during the 2000 GP term), and it also relates to the nature of policies and activities undertaken by the NGOs. Although each of the four NGOs has different strengths and weaknesses, my research indicates that there are certain policies and activities that work better than others.

NGO-affiliated poor people are able to acquire higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits in those GPs where grassroots-NGOs work specifically with poor people rather than with the whole population of the GP, as this allows the NGO to concentrate their efforts in favour of the most disadvantaged. It also helps if NGOs work with both poor men and women. Reconfiguring power-relationships within the village and influencing decision-making within the council requires their combined support and actions.\(^\text{352}\)

Further, NGOs that work through sanghas or collectives are better able to mobilise poor people to raise ‘collective’ demands. In turn, these collective efforts help to augment the voice and influence of sangha members as they help to step-up the pressure on leaders, elected functionaries and officials, both within and outside the GP. These collective capabilities can take both electoral (capturing political power within panchayat councils) and non-electoral forms (for instance, protests and petitions).

The research findings indicate that NGOs that encourage sangha members to form alliances with sections of the non-poor are better able to strengthen the sangha’s chances of capturing political power. This is more feasible if NGOs secure adequate geopolitical coverage of the sangha within the GP and the legislative constituency.

\(^\text{352}\) Although the two top-performing GPs (GP 5 and GP 8) are associated with NGOs that work primarily with women, the high performance is influenced by the interplay of different factors and not the NGO interventions alone.
However, this also requires investing efforts in building the socio-economic strength of marginalised and vulnerable households through the direct provision of service delivery programmes (like agricultural support or skills training), and indirectly, by supporting their demands for socio-economic benefits from the government (like loans and subsidies). This helps to reduce dependence on large land-owners, moneylenders and traditional village leaders.

Further, networking with other NGOs that work on panchayat-related issues, and with politicians and bureaucrats at the levels of district and state government enhances the ability of NGOs (especially the smaller NGOs) to influence policy making and implementation.

8.1.5 Strategies, Actions and Collective Strength of Sangha members

Sangha members experience higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits in gram panchayats where the strategies, actions and collective strength of sangha members are more effective. The type of strategies and actions that are employed and the extent of collective strength are conditioned by the presence of a ‘critical’ mass of sangha members, and the quality of facilitation extended by NGO frontline workers and sangha functionaries.

Frontline staff and sangha functionaries play an important role in terms of building the individual and collective political capabilities of sangha members, disseminating panchayat-related information, devising appropriate tactics, assisting and mobilising sangha members, and supervising the functioning of sanghas. In turn, the actions of these groups and individuals are influenced by other factors; such as the structure, policies and activities of the four grassroots-NGOs, and the nature of political opportunity spaces.

In terms of strategies, sangha members are better able to influence decision-making within the GP when they pursue a range of different strategies, like expanding membership, federating sanghas within GPs, and building alliances with individual leaders and/or the neutral population and sections of the non-poor. For example, in a few GPs, sanghas have captured a large share of ward member positions in the 2005 GP elections by expanding membership and building alliances. These strategies have also contributed to a reduction in election expenses for sangha members and their allies. In turn, electoral victories have translated into opportunities to influence the allocation and distribution of material benefits. It also places the sangha leaders in a superior bargaining position in relation to non-panchayat matters.
Similarly, in terms of actions, sangha members are able to have a higher level of influence over the functioning of the GP when they undertake more active (like contesting in panchayat elections) or confrontational actions (like protests), and engage with panchayats in a larger variety of ways.

The findings also indicate that efforts to bring about systemic change within the GP are strengthened when sangha membership reaches a ‘critical mass’ – when sangha members are in a position where their collective strength can significantly influence electoral outcomes or decision-making within the GP. Both the grassroots-NGOs in Kolar are better able to build the collective strength of their sangha members than their counterparts in Anantapur. In turn, the sangha’s collective efforts help to expand the existing political opportunity space and improve the nature of political competition.

The ‘democratic’ content of political competition is strengthened when sangha members are represented by their own candidates in local elections, and are successful in challenging the dominance of both traditional gatekeepers (mainly upper caste) and newly ascendant leaders (amongst the Backward Castes/ Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes). However, all-women sanghas have found it hard to mobilise support from men. In addition, internal divisions within the sangha can make progress uneven and damage the prospects for collective action. The unity of the sangha is strengthened when sangha members are involved in collective action like campaigning in elections, staging protests, working together to improve a fellow sangha member’s agricultural land, and jointly protecting a forest.

In the higher-performing GPs, sangha members have also fortified their position by networking with the MLA and bureaucrats at the intermediate-tier. This has increased their chances of acquiring material benefits from different tiers of panchayats.

8.1.6 Nature of Political Competition at the Grassroots

In some gram panchayats, competition is largely political party based, and in others, like those where the sanghas operate, it is a mix of party and non-party based competition. The findings indicate that in panchayats where political competition between leaders within the GP has become more democratic (pluralistic – representing multiple interests and groups, and inclusive – encompassing autonomous representation from lower castes), there are greater opportunities for poor people to engage with panchayats and obtain material benefits.

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353 Not directed by upper castes.
Over the study time-period, political competition has increased in all sixteen GPs. However, the nature of competition (the extent to which it is democratic) varies across the different GPs. Seven different features help to assess the extent to which political competition is democratic within each gram panchayat - level of cross-party competition between leaders; level of within-party competition between leaders; proportion of leaders from lower castes (SC/ST and Backward Castes) and religious minorities; level of competition for post of GP member; level of competition for post of GP president; extent of autonomy of lower caste contestants for post of GP president; extent of autonomy of lower caste contestants for post of GP member.

In all GPs, the emergence of small-time leaders from marginalised backgrounds and the rising levels of political competition have contributed to destabilising the hold of traditional elites. Male GP presidents from vulnerable and marginalised backgrounds are increasingly able to hold their own against traditional elites. In the past, they were largely subservient to them, but now they negotiate and have greater leverage over decision-making within the council. The strategies used by some of the GP presidents from marginalised backgrounds include forging alliances with sections of the non-poor or traditional elites, and extending their support base by channelling benefits to their supporters – many of whom are poor. In some cases, these presidents have also benefited from the support of the sangha and the NGO. These changes have meant that some of the new elites now come from the lower castes.

On the whole, the problem of elite-capture (in terms of the dominance of elites belonging to the upper castes) is on the decline in both Kolar and Anantapur. This is significant because the findings indicate that GP presidents are one of the key actors that shape the nature of political competition and the experiences of poor people.

Although issues relating to gender-bias continue to hamper the effective functioning of women GP presidents (across castes and religions), the thesis highlights that assessing the participation and role of women GP presidents requires a more gendered understanding of the political arena. Women GP presidents have made small and often informal contributions to the everyday decision-making processes within the gram panchayat that have helped them to form new public identities, reconfigure existing political spaces, and redefine traditional conceptions about the role of women in public spaces.

354 These changes are less evident in the operation of non-elected bodies like watershed committees or tank user-groups that are still largely controlled by the upper-caste leaders or newly ascendant leaders from Backward Castes.
The findings also indicate that GP presidents play a more prominent role in the study-GPs of Anantapur compared to those in Kolar. Decision-making is more centralised and individualistic in the GPs in Anantapur, and more decentralised and collective in the GPs in Kolar. This is because Karnataka’s system of indirect elections for the post of GP president increases the leverage and standing of GP members and local leaders vis-à-vis the president because they ‘approve’ his or her candidature, and the president can only remain in power if he or she receives their support. In addition, the authority of the GP president in Kolar is also curtailed by the system of split tenures. The increasingly close electoral contests for GP ward members in Kolar also ensure that additional pressure is made to bear on presidents by the opposition party.

On the other hand, in the Anantapur GPs, the weak powers of GP members, the system of direct elections, the limited accountability of the president to GP members, and a fixed five year term mean that power is concentrated in the hands of the GP president or a smaller group of leaders. In these GPs, political competition for the position of GP president has increased but not for the post of GP members. Thus, the differences in political opportunity space also influence the nature of political competition at the grassroots. In addition, as explained earlier in sub-section 8.1.5, political competition is influenced by the strategies, actions and collective strength of sangha members.

To conclude, the discussion in the previous six sub-sections has highlighted the interconnected role of the six key factors. The interplay highlights the important role that leadership, political competition, collective action and the NGO’s advocacy efforts play in shaping the everyday dynamics of village society and the experiences of poor people at the grassroots. It helps to underscore the importance of ‘politics’ in the day-to-day life of poor people. Further, it draws attention to the complementary roles played by democratic institutions and democratic political practices.

However, the analysis also suggests that some of the factors play a more important role in shaping the experiences of poor people than others. In the next sub-section, I compare the relevance of the six principal factors.

**8.1.7 Comparing Relevance of the Six Factors**

From my study of the sixteen GPs, and based on the qualitative and quantitative findings discussed in the four empirical chapters, I believe that certain factors play a more significant and influential role than the others.
Of the six factors, the most vital factor is the nature of PRI-related political opportunity space. The overall trends in the interviews and survey data in chapter 4 (summarised in sub-section 8.1.1) highlight that in order to have the opportunity to acquire a standard set of political capabilities and material benefits from panchayats, citizens need to be supported by a stable devolution of essential powers and resources (like in Karnataka). Successive state government regimes need to sustain or enhance their devolution initiatives. If state government regimes continually neglect, bypass or undermine existing panchayat legislation (like in Andhra Pradesh); it is unreasonable to expect poor people to invest their time and efforts in participating and improving the functioning of local government.

The second crucial factor relates to the nature of political competition within gram panchayats (the competition is more democratic in each of the top-eight GPs compared to the bottom-eight GPs). The analysis in the four empirical chapters has revealed that despite the inadequate devolution in Andhra Pradesh, the inimical dynamics in legislative constituencies like Yellapalli, and the absence of PRI-related NGO interventions; in gram panchayats like GP 12 where the political competition is more democratic (pluralistic and inclusive), poor people have a greater chance of acquiring PRI-related political capabilities and material benefits than in gram panchayats where the competition is still dominated by the elites, like in GP 16 (located in the fairly stable Bhushanapalli legislative constituency) and GP 10 (where NGO Teesta operates). The discussion in chapter 7 has indicated that GP-level leaders, especially GP presidents can help to make competition more democratic by supporting leaders from traditionally marginalised backgrounds and/or challenging the domination of traditional elites.

Next in importance are the nature of NGO interventions and the role of the sangha (six of the top-eight GPs are NGO operational and of these four operate through the medium of sanghas). I have listed these two factors together as the empirical findings reveal that NGO interventions are less effective in the absence of membership-based sanghas. Although the literature documents a rise in the number of NGOs working on PRI-related issues, not all choose to work through the medium of sanghas. The findings in chapter 6 and 7 draw attention to the value of facilitating membership-based groups, as they nurture leadership and enable collective action, which in tum allows members to exert a greater degree of influence over decision-making and functioning within the GP.

As discussed in chapter 6 (summarised in sub-section 8.1.4), NGO interventions are able to have a larger impact on the lives of poor people if the interventions cover a
range of key policies and activities, and are supported by certain structural features. Of these the most relevant are that the NGO is headed by individual/s who are committed to working on PRI-related matters, the NGO has a well-defined political strategy, it provides both advocacy and material-based support, the target group primarily involves poor people (men and women) in membership-based sanghas, and NGOs receive stable long-term funding from donors.

The next factor that features on the scale of importance relates to the nature of democratic institutions within the legislative constituency. The study establishes that the main influence on the dynamics within the constituency is the MLA (discussed in chapter 5 and sub-section 8.1.3). Poor people are better able to participate and secure benefits from PRIs in legislative constituencies (like Reddapalli) where citizens have access to key democratic institutions like those relating to free elections, free speech, and free organisation and assembly. In constituencies where this is not the case, poor people are less likely to engage with and benefit from panchayats (like Yellapalli). Nevertheless, even amongst the four GPs in Yellapalli, the presence of a more important factor like the democratic nature of political competition has enabled a certain gram panchayat (GP 12 which is part of the top-eight GPs) to perform better than the others (the remaining three are part of the bottom-eight GPs).

The least important factor out of the six is the one that pertains to the content and extent of implementation of the Janmabhoomi programme (applicable only in Andhra Pradesh). Its absence in Karnataka did not negatively affect the political capabilities and material benefits acquired by poor people in the eight GPs located in Kolar. As elaborated in chapter 5 (highlights were discussed in sub-section 8.1.2), in the eight GPs based in Anantapur, this programme usurped the role of statutory panchayats, and replaced it with a bureaucrat-driven programme that primarily benefited TDP-affiliated leaders. Rather than implementing this parallel initiative, the TDP government could have invested efforts in strengthening PRIs; but this would have limited top-down control, and reduced opportunities for party leaders to capture and distribute contracts and benefits.

Thus, the discussion in this sub-section has highlighted that although each of the six factors has a role to play, some factors have a more decisive and influential role than others. In the next section (8.2), I explain how these findings have made a contribution to the theoretical literature. This is followed by the final section (8.3), which examines the implications for practitioners and policy makers. Both sections also identify avenues for further research.
8.2 Contributions to Theory

In this section, I outline the key theoretical contributions of the thesis by discussing the importance of the overall findings and drawing on the relative significance of the six factors.

This thesis is the first comparative study of its kind to provide a structured and detailed insight into the nature of interactions between NGOs, local government institutions and poor people. The study has exposed a complex web of interactions [in terms of the levels (intensity) and types (pattern) of interactions, and the multiple factors that mould the nature of the interactions], which in itself might not appear to be surprising to scholars and practitioners. However, it is in the description and interpretation of this complexity that the thesis has made an important contribution, as it has identified and described the different factors that are associated with the interface, established their relative importance, and elucidated how these factors shape village dynamics and the experiences of poor people.

In doing so, it has drawn attention to the role and relevance of politics in shaping the experiences of poor people, the functioning of panchayats, and the interventions of NGOs. Aside from demonstrating the role of high politics – politics at the level of state governments and legislative constituencies, the thesis has also highlighted the role of deep politics - politics at the level of gram panchayats. At the grassroots, the findings have pointed to the increasing politicisation of everyday village life. This rising politicisation has both positive and negative benefits for people from vulnerable and marginalised backgrounds. Further research is required to examine the extent and relevance of these findings in other settings. The study has also demonstrated that at the grassroots, the impact of the interactions is not explained by any one factor in isolation, but is an outcome of the ‘interplay’ of six principal factors located at different tiers of government.

As discussed in sub-section 8.1.7, the most important factor relates to the nature of political opportunity space. The thesis has extended the literature on democratic decentralisation and panchayats by expanding on DeSouza’s metaphor of ‘opportunity space’ (2002) and introducing the concept of political opportunity space. This concept helps to direct attention to the mobilising potential of PRIs. It also highlights the malleable nature of this space. The form and shape of the space can be influenced by the actions of different actors located at various tiers of government. The comparative study of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh has helped to underscore the importance of
political opportunity space as it has demonstrated that this space has enabled poor people to attain higher levels of political capabilities and material benefits in the study-GPs of Kolar as compared to Anantapur. In the latter district, the limitations of the *Janmabhoomi* programme and the user-groups have reinforced the importance of harnessing the potential of ‘statutory’ forums.

The concept of political opportunity space also extends the literature on ‘political space’ frameworks (Webster and Engberg-Pedersen, 2002; Cornwall, 2004b; Cornwall and Coelho, 2006) - by unpacking the nature of this space, identifying the factors that mould its content, and reinforcing the importance of analysing shifting dynamics within political environments. In addition, the thesis makes a small contribution to the literature on ‘political opportunities’ (Eisinger, 1973; Tilly, 1978; Tarrow, 1998). Although this literature has evolved largely in relation to social movements, I have used the concept with respect to NGOs. The study has drawn attention to the mobilising potential of NGOs that aim to build the political capabilities of poor people in relation to local government. It has demonstrated that NGOs which mobilise their target group to engage in collective action and more struggle-oriented issues are able to have a larger influence on the dynamics within GPs.

The second key factor that the research has helped to highlight relates to the nature of political competition at the grassroots. The thesis has established its relevance within GPs, described the ways in which political competition is becoming more democratic, and documented the process by which it has helped to reconfigure existing power-relationships. In doing so, it has shed light on the rising influence of leaders and GPs presidents from traditionally marginalised backgrounds. Although there is some literature on the changing nature of leadership in the context of rural India (Krishna, 2001; Vohra, 2004; The Hunger Project, 2006; Krishna, 2007), there is a dearth of detailed and systematic scholarship on the contribution of leadership in different tiers of government. This study has extended the literature by shedding light on the role of political leaders across various tiers. At the level of state governments, it has brought out the role of chief ministers who play a key role in shaping the nature of political opportunity space (and associated policies), and the opportunities for NGO involvement on PRI-related issues. Within legislative constituencies, it has drawn attention to the actions and policies of MLAs; and the leadership of the NGO head/s. At the level of *gram panchayats*, it has documented the role of GP presidents, *sangha* functionaries and NGO frontline workers.
The thesis has also brought out the need for a more gendered understanding of the political arena. These findings are particularly relevant for academics that focus on the grassroots. They call for a more nuanced and gendered analysis of the transformations taking place within habitations and GPs. In addition, the changes in the study time-period suggest that traditional conceptions of the form and magnitude of ‘elite-capture’ need to be reassessed. Increasingly, the emerging elites come from marginalised caste groupings, especially from within the Backward Castes. This signals a need for detailed research that examines contemporary understandings of elites and gatekeepers in rural India.

The third factor that the research findings underline relates to the nature of NGO interventions with respect to PRIs. The thesis has extended the literature on NGO interventions by providing a detailed insight into the structure, policies and activities of NGOs that work on issues relating to local government (especially, in relation to the experiences of poor people). It has also drawn attention to the actors that influence the effectiveness of these interventions (in particular NGO heads, donors and frontline workers), the contextual factors that mould the interventions (like the nature of support extended by the state government and MLAs for the NGO’s PRI initiatives), and the challenges that accompany this involvement (for instance, securing stable and adequate financial support to sustain interventions, and regularly supervising the conduct of frontline workers).

In doing so, the study has demonstrated that NGOs are inescapably bound up with the realm of politics and government institutions. So, NGOs can make their interventions more effective by engaging with the political. This engagement is not limited to fostering the organisational and political participation skills of their target population but also involves networking with other advocacy NGOs, bureaucrats and activists; and encouraging poor people to engage in various forms of collective action, and negotiate electoral alliances with non-poor local (GP level) and supra-local (legislative constituency level) political leaders. At the same time, the study has revealed that grassroots-NGOs do not find it easy to engage with political issues. They are constrained by the local political dynamics within the legislative constituency and individual GPs, state government policies towards panchayats and NGOs, and the national government’s stance on the ‘political’ role of NGOs. Thus, the thesis calls for a more pragmatic approach towards evaluating the role of grassroots-NGOs that work on the subject of local government – one that takes account of organisational constraints and the complex socio-political realities in which NGOs themselves are embedded.
The next key factor that the research underscores is closely associated with the nature of NGO initiatives – it relates to the role of the sangha. The study extends the literature on NGO interventions, membership-based groups and collective action by highlighting the importance of sanghas or collectives which are primarily made up of poor people and are facilitated by the NGOs; elucidating the ways in which sanghas can influence decision-making and functioning in relation to panchayats (for instance, by securing a critical mass of members within the GP and capturing political power); describing the challenges associated with developing, strengthening and expanding groups (like the tussle for power amongst leaders within the sangha); unpacking the ways in which the sangha can be strengthened (for example, through the hybrid interventions of NGOs that cover both advocacy and service delivery); and identifying other factors that shape the sangha’s collective strength and unity (for instance, the political history and dynamics within the legislative constituency).

This study has also made a contribution to the literature on the ‘local state’ (Corbridge et al., 2005) and the role of the MLA. It has described the political dynamics in the sub-district arena, and drawn attention to the relevance of democratic institutions within the legislative constituency for poor people (especially in the context of PRIs). In doing so, it has underlined the value of fostering democratic institutions like free speech, and the free and regular conduct of elections; and highlighted the ways in which MLAs can influence the NGO’s PRI-related interventions (for instance, by being supportive or obstructive), and mould the functioning of officials, political leaders and elected functionaries within the constituency (for example, through the transfer of panchayat secretaries). Although there have been some studies that have looked at the role of MLAs (Wilkinson, 2007; Jaffrelot and Kumar, 2009), the sub-district arena has not received sufficient attention in the existing literature. The findings have underscored the importance of this arena and highlighted the need for further research.

Although the content and extent of implementation of the Janmabhoomi programme in Andhra Pradesh is the least relevant of all the six factors, the thesis has helped to contribute to the literature that documents the role of the Janmabhoomi programme and related parallel institutions like user-groups and stakeholder-committees. It has explained how the Janmabhoomi programme and the associated groups undermined the functioning of panchayats at the grassroots (for example, by utilising resources allocated to PRIs and sideling the role of elected representatives within the GP), identified the key actors that shaped the content and implementation of the programme (in particular, the chief minister, bureaucrats and TDP-affiliated leaders), and described
how it has influenced the experiences of citizens (especially, poor people and political leaders) within GPs, and shaped the functioning of NGOs (for instance, by reducing opportunities for NGOs to work on PRI-related issues).

Despite *Janmabhoomi*’s many shortcomings, the study has also revealed that the programme rejuvenated interest in *gram sabhas*, increased face-to-face contact between officials and citizens, expanded opportunities for people from traditionally marginalised groups (like women) to participate in public forums, and opened up alternate spaces for citizens from deprived backgrounds to gain leadership experience. In addition, it has highlighted the link between the *Janmabhoomi* programme and enterprising GP presidents from lower castes who were affiliated to the TDP. They augmented the meagre resources of the GP by controlling the distribution of contracts and benefits associated with the programme. This allowed them to build their political base by addressing demands of leaders, supporters and poor people. At the same time, the comparative study with the GPs in Kolar district demonstrates that some of the positive benefits of the programme could have also been achieved by strengthening PRIs, but this would have reduced the ability of bureaucrats and TDP leaders to maintain control over resources and benefits.

Aside from the six factors discussed above, the thesis has extended the literature by providing some overarching insights into the role of political capabilities and the importance of methodology.

The research has provided a detailed analysis of the experiences of people from impoverished backgrounds. It has examined the experiences of poor people in relation to two dimensions that are perceived to be important by poor people themselves – political capabilities and material benefits. In doing so, it has provided a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of various factors, and highlighted the importance of both dimensions in the lives of vulnerable and marginalised people.

I have developed the concept of political capabilities by linking Sen’s capability approach with the literature on political participation. In this thesis, political capabilities are evaluated only in relation to *Panchayati Raj* institutions. Sen’s approach allows for a multi-dimensional perspective when analysing the experiences of the poor while also placing importance on their agency. I have linked his approach with PRI-related political participation by examining ‘functionings’ or achievements with respect to 1) the awareness of poor people in relation to different aspects of PRI-related political participation, 2) the physical practices associated with this political participation, and 3)
the effectiveness of this political participation. In other words, I have assessed the awareness, voice and influence of poor people.

By developing the concept of political capabilities, I have tried to address three of the criticisms levelled against Sen’s approach - the neglect of politics and the political, the neglect of collective capabilities and the purely instrumental view of the role of groups, and the absence of a unique list of capabilities.

The first contribution has been in terms of examining a capability that takes account of politics. In this thesis, the concept of political capabilities relates to various aspects of political participation in the context of formal political institutions. By analysing and assessing poor people’s awareness, voice and influence over PRIs in different contexts, I have drawn attention to the importance of factoring in the role of politics in shaping the everyday experiences of vulnerable and marginalised people. In particular, the research has brought out the value of their engagement in confrontational (like taking part in protests) and electoral activities (like contesting elections and capturing power within the council).

The second contribution is that the concept encompasses both individual and collective capabilities. Following Ibrahim, collective capabilities are defined as capabilities that are generated through collective action or through membership in a social network that help people achieve the lives they value (2006). The thesis has helped to shed light on the need to strengthen individual capabilities, but more importantly, it has underlined the significance of nurturing collective capabilities. This has been brought out in the performance of the top-four GPs (GP 5, GP 8, GP1 and GP4) and the experiences of sangha members within these GPs. The study reveals that poor people find it hard to challenge the domination of traditional and newly emergent elites on an individual basis. They have greater influence over decision-making and functioning within the GP when they are part of a collective or group, and/or when they have taken part in different forms of collective action. In addition, the research findings have demonstrated that although groups have an instrumental importance in terms of enlarging individual capabilities, they also have an intrinsic role, as they influence people’s choices and values (for instance, when voting for a candidate in the GP elections). This is particularly relevant in terms of altering prevailing mindsets and reconfiguring existing power-relationships.

Thirdly, the thesis has reinforced the usefulness of not being restricted to a unique list of capabilities. Scholars like Nussbaum that work on the capabilities approach have
argued for the development of a list of core capabilities (2000). However, my research reveals that freedom from such a restriction allows for the development of a more pertinent list of capabilities that are in line with the subject and context of the research. Interviews with poor people in different political contexts within Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh enabled identification of the key aspects of political capabilities that needed to be examined in relation to panchayats. This has helped to increase the relevance and reliability of the research findings.

As discussed earlier, expanding capabilities has both intrinsic and instrumental value. So, I have also examined the role of political capabilities (individual and collective) in securing material benefits. I have developed an analytical framework that traces the process of expansion of political capabilities of poor people (awareness, voice and influence) and their acquisition of material benefits, in relation to PRI-related ‘political opportunity spaces’ and the interventions of grassroots-NGOs. This framework helps to shed light on those aspects of awareness, voice and influence that are useful for poor people at the interface; and it also makes a contribution to the literature that links citizen voice and responsive government, as it builds on the work of Goetz and Gaventa (Goetz and Gaventa, 2001; Goetz, 2003). Their work has highlighted the linkage between the government’s role in creating an enabling environment, and the ability of citizens to utilise the associated opportunities in ways that enhance their power over the decision-making, planning and monitoring of public services. My research has taken this forward by unpacking the nature of opportunities offered by PRIs in various political contexts and linking this to - the content and extent of political capabilities and material benefits acquired by poor people, and the different interventions of grassroots-NGOs.

The thesis findings have also reinforced the importance of examining differences between poor people on the basis of individual characteristics like gender and caste groupings. These differences are only clear-cut in relation to some groupings and certain aspects of political capabilities, suggesting that more detailed research needs to be conducted to understand the evolving nature of variations within the different groupings.

Methodologically, the study has brought out the value of using gram panchayats as a unit of analysis and taking a longitudinal perspective. Adopting this methodology has allowed for a systematic comparison of the dynamics at the grassroots in different contexts and a more nuanced understanding of the factors that facilitate systemic change. The thesis has also demonstrated how an interdisciplinary framework can be
strengthened by using mixed-methods of research. I have shown how qualitative and quantitative techniques complement each other, and provide a more grounded understanding of the explanations that lie behind inter-GP variations in the experiences of poor people. The research findings have also suggested that *intra*-GP variations are important, but, an accurate assessment would require more detailed research.

Thus, this section has described the various ways in which the thesis has extended the literature, while also highlighting avenues for further research. In the light of this discussion, the next section draws attention to the key implications for practitioners.

### 8.3 Contributions to Practice

While, this study has important implications for people associated with NGOs, it also provides practical insights to bureaucrats, politicians and policy makers.

For practitioners within and outside government, the comparison of the two states has underlined the central role of political opportunity space. It has established that this space can play a key role in bringing about systemic change by influencing the nature of political competition within the GP and increasing poor people’s incentive to engage with local government. In addition, it has shed light on the need to strengthen the content and extent of this space, as it has revealed that the potential to bring about change for poor people is maximised when the democratic dimension is complimented by adequate decentralisation of administrative and financial powers and resources. These findings are useful for practitioners as it enables them to push for a greater devolution of functions, funds and functionaries to local government.

Moreover, the analysis alerts them to the problems associated with limited devolution; and the dangers that parallel institutions like the *Janmabhoomi* programme, user-groups and stakeholder-committees can pose for democratically decentralised bodies (like marginalising their role, and reinforcing the power of bureaucrats and traditional elites).³⁶⁵

The study also draws the attention of practitioners and policy makers to the changing nature of political competition at the grassroots in rural India and the factors that promote a more democratic form of contestation (for instance, the devolution of powers and resources to PRIs). Further, it has highlighted the diverse ways in which leaders influence dynamics and change in various political settings (especially, in relation to the

³⁶⁵ At the same time, the *Janmabhoomi* programme has brought to light some positive features which can improve the functioning of PRIs (like promoting the participation of women in *gram sabhas*, and increasing opportunities for face-to-face contact with officials).
experiences of poor people), and the value of factoring in their role at different tiers of
government. In particular, it has alerted practitioners to the importance of undertaking a
gendered analysis of the role of elected *panchayat* functionaries, understanding the
political context within the GP and the legislative constituency (especially, with respect
to the role of the MLA), and factoring in the condition of democratic institutions within
these arenas when formulating and implementing interventions.

Furthermore, the thesis offers several practical insights to people working within NGOs
and those working alongside them (like donors, bureaucrats and policy makers). In the
Indian context, the findings from the detailed examination of the nature of interactions
between NGOs, local government institutions and poor people has particular relevance
for other middle-order Indian states where NGOs are working on PRI-related issues,
and where state governments have made some attempts to devolve powers and
resources to lower levels of government. They provide a critical assessment of the
potential at the NGO-PRI interface, and they also offer a realistic account of the
challenges and limitations that are part and parcel of these interactions. In addition,
they draw the attention of practitioners and policy-makers to the importance of
examining the influence of other contextual factors. These insights could be explored
further by using a larger survey sample, and comparing a more comprehensive set of
NGOs and states.

The research findings also have a resonance for other countries where NGOs are
working on issues relating to local government. Although more country or region-
specific research needs to be conducted to understand the dynamics in other contexts,
the thesis provides some overarching insights in relation to NGO interventions, which
are discussed below.

The detailed comparison of the four grassroots-NGOs has demonstrated that these
NGOs operate within the realm of politics and government institutions. They often work
with poor people in hierarchical and politically-charged environments. So, they can
make a more effective contribution if they are aware of other factors that they need to
take into account while making interventions, especially in relation to the political
history and dynamics within the legislative constituencies and GPs where they operate.
The comparison has also highlighted that reconfiguring power relationships at the
grassroots requires a long-term commitment from NGOs as it is a slow, uneven
process (involving both setbacks and incremental progress) that is fraught with risks
and dangers. Moreover, the research findings have documented the value of building
the individual and collective political capabilities of poor people. These different insights
are useful for practitioners working with NGOs as they alert them to the importance of formulating and implementing more realistic and appropriate strategies.

In addition, the research has underscored the importance of supporting the efforts of NGOs that work on more active and confrontational (struggle-oriented) aspects of political participation. Poor people in GPs associated with these NGOs have had a greater influence over decision-making and functioning within the GP. The impact of the more successful study-NGOs has the potential to encourage other NGOs and donors who have remained aloof to invest efforts in working with democratically decentralised institutions and supporting more struggle-oriented interventions.

The discussion on the structure, policies and activities that enable successful NGO interventions has also underlined the value of engaging with the political. This engagement can take various forms but the thesis emphasises the role of mobilisation, networking and collective action. The more favourable experiences of poor people associated with certain NGOs indicates that other NGOs that work on the topic of panchayats could improve the impact of their interventions by developing a comprehensive political strategy, and building the organisational and collective strength of poor people. This would require stronger engagement with both elected and non-elected functionaries at different levels of government, and the long-term investment of resources to create and sustain membership-based sanghas.

For practitioners and policy makers associated with NGOs, the findings have established the value of working through the medium of ‘groups’. The study has shed light on the importance of membership-based sanghas of the poor and the value of a critical mass of sangha members within the GP. It has demonstrated that the NGO’s policy of building the organisational and collective strength of poor people is best achieved through groups that have a sizeable geo-political presence within the GP. The sanghas provide poor people with opportunities to engage in collective action and they also help to develop their unity and leadership potential. In addition, the research findings have highlighted the importance of including both men and women in these groups, and supporting their efforts through regular supervision and support. So, practitioners would do well to devote time and efforts towards - the formation and expansion of groups, the strengthening of the organisational and collective power of poor people, and the monitoring and support of these groups.

Furthermore, the research has drawn attention to the NGO’s intra-organisational features (for instance, ready access to up-to-date baseline information for monitoring
and evaluation, and transparent and decentralised decision-making amongst the staff) that allow for more effective and viable interventions. It has also brought out the importance of the ‘hybrid’ role of NGOs that work on panchayat-related issues (working on both advocacy and service delivery). The higher performance of sangha members in the top-four GPs has served to demonstrate that the provision of a measure of socio-economic and legal support places sangha members in a stronger position to mobilise and agitate, which in turn boosts their chances of influencing the dynamics within the gram panchayat. However, in order to provide this facilitation, NGOs require stable and long-term donor-support. The study has revealed that donors can play a key role in improving the impact of NGO-interventions by providing both material and non-material support (for instance, by providing stable funding and linking NGOs that are working on panchayat-related issues). These findings also allow donors to gain an insight into the nature of funding strategies that would best support these NGO interventions.

Thus, the discussion in these last six paragraphs has highlighted that the thesis has provided NGO-related practitioners and policy makers with a range of insights into those elements of the NGO’s organisational set-up, policies and activities that both strengthen and hamper its efforts to work on issues relating to local government.

These findings are also of use to practitioners that are working on politics, power and rights-based issues. They demonstrate the value of investing time and efforts in expanding the individual and collective political capabilities of vulnerable and marginalised people, while also underlining the need for a more contextualised understanding of the changing nature of state, legislative constituency, GP and habitation-level politics.

To sum up, this thesis has brought out the role and relevance of politics at the interface of NGOs, local government and poor people. In doing so, it has drawn attention to the importance of poor people actively engaging with politics, and highlighted the contributions of NGOs that choose to engage strongly with the political. It has demonstrated that the enactment of legislation and the creation of a statutory three-tiered system of local government have not ‘automatically’ translated into better experiences for poor people. Instead, the opening of spaces from above needs to be accompanied by the ‘active’ political participation of vulnerable and marginalised communities from below. For substantive change to occur, factors at both the high-end of politics and deep-end of politics need to complement each other.


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## APPENDICES

### Chapter 1

### Appendix 1.1: A Comparative Overview of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh across select indicators as of 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Stat</th>
<th>Karnataka</th>
<th>Andhra Pradesh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>52.85 million</td>
<td>76.21 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Rural Population (%)</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>72.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Household size</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Ratio (females per thousand males)</td>
<td>965</td>
<td>978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Rate (%)</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>60.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Participation Rate (%)</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivators as per cent of population</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Labourers as per cent of population</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Caste as Percent of Population</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Tribe as Percent of Population</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area in Square kilometres</td>
<td>191,791</td>
<td>275,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of parliamentary constituencies</td>
<td>40*</td>
<td>60*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of legislative constituencies</td>
<td>224**</td>
<td>294**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative Councils in operation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Only as of 2007#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Districts</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Cities</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Villages</td>
<td>29406</td>
<td>28123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-specific poverty level as of 1994-94 (percent of total population)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-specific poverty level as of 2004-05 (percent of total population)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net State Domestic Product in Rs. Million as of 2005-06</td>
<td>311,069</td>
<td>345,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net State Domestic Product Growth Rate percent (1990-91 to 1999-00)</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>5.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net State Domestic Product Growth Rate percent (2000-01 to 2005-06)</td>
<td>7.98</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural sector growth rate per annum (2000-01 to 2005-06)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing sector growth rate per annum (2000-01 to 2005-06)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary sector growth rate per annum (2000-01 to 2005-06)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Party system

- **Karnataka**: Three main parties – Congress, JD (S), BJP
- **Andhra Pradesh**: Two party plus – Main parties - Congress and TDP, ‘plus’ others like BJP, CPI(M), CPI and TRS

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* In K 28 of these are Lok Sabha seats and in AP the corresponding figure is 42. The remaining seats are associated with Rajya Sabha. **Plus one nominated seat from the Anglo-Indian community. # Disbanded under the 1985 TDP regime

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\[356\] In the census, a village is often understood to include smaller habitations or hamlets.

\[357\] These are calculated at 1980-81 prices.

\[358\] TRS – Telangana Rashtra Samithi formed in 2001 by a former TDP leader. These parties have a relatively smaller role to play but they have the potential to mould electoral outcomes by being part of the bipolar alliances.
Appendix 2.1: Historical Origin of districts in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh along with associated maps

Historical Origin of Karnataka’s 27 Districts. The state capital is Bangalore

1. **Hyderabad Karnataka** was associated with princely state of Hyderabad (under the Nizam): Bidar, Gulbarga, Raichur, Koppal
2. **Bombay Karnataka** was associated with the erstwhile British ruled Bombay Presidency: Bijapur, Belgaum, Dharwad, Uttara Kannada and also includes the relatively newly carved districts Bagalkot, Haveri and Gadag.
3. **Southern Karnataka** has diverse origins and the largest number of districts:
   a. Princely State of Mysore contributed the largest share: Shimoga, Chitradurg (later split to form Davangere district), Chikmaglur, Hassan, Mysore (Chamrajnagar was formed from part of erstwhile Mysore district and one taluk of the erstwhile Madras state), M andya, Bangalore (urban and rural), Kolar, Tumkur
   b. Madras Karnataka associated with the erstwhile British ruled Madras Presidency: Bellary (since it adjoins Hyderabad Karnataka it is often associated with those districts) and South Kanara (later split into Dakshina Kannada and Udupi) and one taluk which was added to Chamrajnagar
   c. Coorg or Kodagu: a former independent state
4. Hyderabad Karnataka has the poorest socio-economic indicators among the three main regions.
5. Agro-climatically K as a whole is divided broadly into three segments – coastal (Udipi, Dakshin Kannada, Uttara Kannada); **malnad** (meaning hilly areas, includes Chikmaglur, Hassan, Shimoga, Kodagu and the uplands of Dakshina Kannada, Uttara Kannada, Udipi, Belgaum and Dharwad); southern and northern **maidans** (plateaus) which comprise the remaining districts (Government of Karnataka, 2006).

Historical origin of Andhra Pradesh’s 23 districts. The state capital is Hyderabad.

1. **Telangana** was associated with princely state of Hyderabad (under the Nizam): Khammam, Nalgonda, Warangal, Karimnagar, Medak, Nizamabad, Adilabad, Mahbubnagar, Hyderabad and Rangareddi.
2. **Coastal Andhra** associated with Madras Presidency: Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Prakasam and Nellore
3. **Rayalaseema** associated with Madras Presidency: Kurnool, Cuddapah, Chittoor and Anantapur.
4. The coastal districts are agro-climatically and economically better off than the other two regions.
District Maps of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh


Appendix 2.2: A Comparative Profile of Kolar and Anantapur Districts as of 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features of District</th>
<th>Kolar in K</th>
<th>Anantapur in AP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>2.54 million</td>
<td>3.64 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Population (%)</td>
<td>75.3</td>
<td>74.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Households</td>
<td>504,185</td>
<td>779,052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Household size</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Ratio (females per thousand males)</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Rate (%)</td>
<td>62.84</td>
<td>56.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivators as percent of population</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Labourers as percent of population</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Caste as Percent of Population</td>
<td>26.49</td>
<td>14.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Tribe as Percent of Population</td>
<td>8.11</td>
<td>3.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Development Index ranking inter-district</td>
<td>17 out of 27</td>
<td>20 out of 23*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area in Square kilometres</td>
<td>8223</td>
<td>19130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of National Highways running through district</td>
<td>3 (No 7, 4, 207)</td>
<td>3 (No 7, 63, 205)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Lok Sabha Parliamentary constituencies within district</td>
<td>2 out of 28** state-wide</td>
<td>2 out of 42** state-wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Legislative constituencies (LCs) within district</td>
<td>12 out of 224** state-wide</td>
<td>14 out of 294** state-wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of taluk / mandals within district</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of gram panchayats within District***</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>1005****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Villages 359 within district</td>
<td>2919</td>
<td>925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of villages having Drinking water facilities</td>
<td>2797</td>
<td>925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of villages having Safe Drinking water</td>
<td>2781</td>
<td>925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of villages having Electricity (Power Supply)</td>
<td>2785</td>
<td>925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of villages having Primary school</td>
<td>2342</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of villages having Middle schools</td>
<td>1073</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of villages having Secondary/Sr Secondary schools</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of villages having Colleges</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of villages having Primary Health Centres</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of villages having Primary Health Sub-Centres</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of villages having Post, telegraph and telephone facilities</td>
<td>1211</td>
<td>807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of villages having Bus services</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of villages having Paved approach roads</td>
<td>1726</td>
<td>767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of villages having Mud approach roads</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India 2001

- **** 31 Notified (larger GPs with executive officer in charge of administration) and 974 Non-notified GPs (smaller GPs lacking executive officer)

---

359 In the census, a village is often understood to include smaller habitations or hamlets.
Chapter 4

Appendix 4.1: Caste/Religion Classification and Percentage within Population in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Varna/Religion</th>
<th>Name of main castes within sub-group in Karnataka</th>
<th>K % of pop*</th>
<th>Name of main castes within sub-group in Andhra Pradesh</th>
<th>AP % of pop**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>Brahmins (general/forward caste)</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Brahmins (general/forward caste)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kshatriyas</td>
<td>Kshatriyas (general/forward caste)</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>Kshatriyas (general/forward caste)</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaishyas</td>
<td>Komati/Shetty (general/forward caste)</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>Komati/Shetty (general/forward caste)</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shudra Dominant Castes in K/AP</td>
<td>Lingayats (backward class/caste status in K)</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>Kamma (general/forward caste)</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shudra Dominant Castes in K/AP</td>
<td>Vokkaligas (backward class/caste status in K)</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>Kapu/Reddy (general/forward caste)**</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Shudra dominant/ gen. castes in K/AP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Velama (general/forward caste); Baljiga/Balija (business)**</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Shudra Backward Castes found in Kolar and Anantapur districts.</td>
<td></td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>Idiga (Toddy tappers)</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These castes are part of the OBCs or Other Backward Classes, which can also include people of other religions or dominant castes. For example, both Muslims and Vokkaligas in K benefit from BC reservations</td>
<td>Idiga (Toddy tappers)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Madiga (untouchable leather worker caste)</td>
<td>16.2****</td>
<td>Madiga (untouchable leather worker caste)****</td>
<td>16.2****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others:</td>
<td>Malla (untouchable agrarian labour caste)</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>Malla (untouchable agrarian labour caste)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugali/Lambani</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Others:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhovi/Vadde (stone cutters/rope makers)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Beda jangam/ budga jangam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koracha (Yerukula)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* K % of pop* refers to the percentage of population in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh for the respective castes.
** AP % of pop** refers to the percentage of population in Andhra Pradesh for the respective castes.

Note: Specific details on the distribution and percentages of various castes within the populations of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh are provided.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Varna/Religion</th>
<th>Name of main castes within sub-group in Karnataka</th>
<th>K % of pop*</th>
<th>Name of main castes within sub-group in Andhra Pradesh</th>
<th>AP % of pop**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Beda jangam/budga jangam Chennadasari</td>
<td></td>
<td>Relli</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Valmiki/Gorika/Bedara/Nayaka or Boya/Bayol (hunters) Hakkipikki/Yanadi</td>
<td>6.6****</td>
<td>Sugali/Lambani Yanadi (rat catchers) Yerukula (basket making and pig-rearing)</td>
<td>6.6*****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>Classified as Backward Class in K</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>General/Forward Class grouping in AP (from 2007 socially and educationally backward muslims are listed as OBCs)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Minorities</td>
<td>(# Kshatriyas, Komati), Christian, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, etc. While Christians and Jains are classified as backward classes, all the others fall into General/Forward Class grouping in K</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Christian, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, etc. General/Forward Class grouping in AP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


# Their percentage is included in the last row under ‘other minorities.’

** From (Ram Reddy, 1989), which in turn is taken from census 1921. However, his article does not include any data for STs. His percentage break-up only covers general, backward, SCs, muslims and other minorities. The corresponding figures for Anantapur district are – Brahmin (1.8), Kshatriya (1.2), Komati (4.3), Kapu/Reddy (4.6), Kamma (4.5), Velama (0), OBC (47.4), SC (9.3 comprising Madiga - 8, Mala – 1.3).

*** The classification of the Kapu caste varies in different parts of AP.

**** In (Ram Reddy, 1989), balija is included as BC and the corresponding figure is accounted for in the total BC percentage of 46.1. However, in the central list of backward classes for AP, only some sub-sects of the balija caste are classified as Backward Castes (http://ncbc.nic.in/backward-classes/ap.html) [Accessed 20 June 2008], in all other cases, balija is a forward or general caste.

***** Within SC, the two primary caste groupings are Madiga and Mala. Figures for Madiga – 7.3 and Mala - 9.7, compiled from 1921 census by Ram Reddy are fairly consistent with the 2001 census total for SCs.

****** Census of India 2001
Appendix 4.2: Broad qualitative trends across 16 GPs for 2000 GP term in K (includes first year of 2005 GP term) and 2001 GP term in AP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>GP 1</th>
<th>GP 2</th>
<th>GP 3</th>
<th>GP 4</th>
<th>GP 5</th>
<th>GP 6</th>
<th>GP 7</th>
<th>GP 8</th>
<th>GP 9</th>
<th>GP 10</th>
<th>GP 11</th>
<th>GP 12</th>
<th>GP 13</th>
<th>GP 14</th>
<th>GP 15</th>
<th>GP 16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of habitations</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of habitations studied</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of households</td>
<td>1325</td>
<td>1446</td>
<td>1720</td>
<td>1260</td>
<td>1570</td>
<td>1470</td>
<td>1268</td>
<td>1590</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dist. in kms from taluk/mandal HQ</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5 (?)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of higher castes and SC/STs</td>
<td>10 and 53</td>
<td>36 and 30</td>
<td>12 and 71</td>
<td>34 and 30</td>
<td>23 and 50</td>
<td>40 and 25</td>
<td>23 and 44</td>
<td>8 and 26</td>
<td>11 and 24</td>
<td>35 and 11</td>
<td>32 and 43</td>
<td>59 and 20</td>
<td>21 and 28</td>
<td>35 and 22</td>
<td>25 and 15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote or Non-remote</td>
<td>Non</td>
<td>Rem</td>
<td>Non</td>
<td>Rem</td>
<td>Rem</td>
<td>Non</td>
<td>Non</td>
<td>Rem</td>
<td>Non</td>
<td>Rem</td>
<td>Non</td>
<td>Rem</td>
<td>Non</td>
<td>Non</td>
<td>Rem</td>
<td>Non</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO operational</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>NGOA</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes NGO A</td>
<td>Yes NGO G</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes NGO G</td>
<td>Yes NGO T</td>
<td>Yes NGO T</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes NGO J</td>
<td>Yes NGO J</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of habitations in which NGO wks</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of sangha</td>
<td>Mem, daily wage, wom &amp; men</td>
<td>Mem daily wage wom &amp; men</td>
<td>SHG wom</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>SHG wom</td>
<td>SHG VSC wom &amp; some men</td>
<td>SHG VSC wom &amp; some men</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>No sangh a &amp; no target group</td>
<td>No sangh a &amp; no target group</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

360 All data compiled from fieldwork research.
361 Includes villages and hamlets.
362 Includes dominant castes and above. Also includes baljigas.
363 Any discussion in relation to NGOs or sanghas is only in relation to the study-NGOs, unless otherwise stated.
364 All NGOs largely work with SC/STs except NGO J. Mem – membership based, wom – woman, SHG – self-help group (micro-credit), VSC – forest committee
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>GP 1</th>
<th>GP 2</th>
<th>GP 3</th>
<th>GP 4</th>
<th>GP 5</th>
<th>GP 6</th>
<th>GP 7</th>
<th>GP 8</th>
<th>GP 9</th>
<th>GP 10</th>
<th>GP 11</th>
<th>GP 12</th>
<th>GP 13</th>
<th>GP 14</th>
<th>GP 15</th>
<th>GP 16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of GP mem. (including pres.)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of staff</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time panchayat sec.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality and conduct of GSs</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Only Janmabhoomi gram sabhas under Naidu and a few scheme based (Indramma, NREGA) gram sabhas under YSR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct of ward sabhas</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social audit conducted</td>
<td>Once</td>
<td>Once</td>
<td>Once</td>
<td>Once</td>
<td>Once</td>
<td>Once</td>
<td>Once</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>Zero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual funds in lakhs * (includes own sources)</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual own sources of income in Rs.</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>1 lakh</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>75,000</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>30,000 – once in 5yrs</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>30,000 annual</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*10 lakhs is one million

---

365 Consists of rent from shops and funds from tank auction.
Chapter 5

Appendix 5.1: Break-up of results in Parliamentary and Assembly Elections of AP, K, Anantapur and Kolar districts from 1991-2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of Union Govt.*</th>
<th>Party in Power in the Union Govt.</th>
<th>Lok Sabha** Parliamentary Election (National) in K, out of 28</th>
<th>Lok Sabha Parliamentary Election (National) in AP, out of 42</th>
<th>Year of State Govt. Election (Assembly)</th>
<th>Party-in-power in Assembly Election in K followed by runners-up out of 224</th>
<th>Party-in-power in Assembly Election in AP followed by runners-up out of 294</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kolar district: 1 JD and 1 Congress</td>
<td>Anantapur district: 1 TDP and 1 Congress</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the focus is primarily on the period from 1994, I have included 1991 in the table because the 1991 tenure of Lok Sabha members (MPs) in both states was valid until 1996.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of Union Govt.*</th>
<th>Party in Power in the Union Govt.</th>
<th>Lok Sabha** Parliamentary Election (National) in K, out of 28</th>
<th>Lok Sabha Parliamentary Election (National) in AP, out of 42</th>
<th>Year of State Govt. Election (Assembly)</th>
<th>Party-in-power in Assembly Election in K followed by runners-up out of 224</th>
<th>Party-in-power in Assembly Election in AP followed by runners-up out of 294</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Appendix 5.2: Comparing favourable responses in relation to Political Capabilities across district and legislative constituencies (LCs)****

| Questions in relation to political capabilities administered to 320 survey respondents, 160 respondents in each district, 80 in each legislative constituency (LC) | Percentage out of 160 in each district | Percentage out of 80 in each legislative constituency (LC) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kolar | A.pur | Kolar | Anantapur |
| **AWARENESS** | | | | |
| In the last GP elections-name the person you voted for? | 83* | 78* | 82** | 84** | 76** | 65** | 80** |
| Who decided which candidate to vote for in the last GP elections? Scores for Myself | 63* | 64* | 55** | 71** | 63** | 65** | 80** |
| Do you know the name of your present ward member? | 88 | 37 | 83 | 94 | 34 | 40 | 80** |
| How many different political parties have you heard of? Scores for more than one | 89 | 88 | 88 | 90 | 88 | 88 | |
| Do you know about gram sabha (GS) relating to beneficiary selection for poverty alleviation programmes? | 3 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 0 | |
| Do you know about GS procedures relating to social audit/ review of progress? | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | |
| In AP only: do you know the difference between Janmabhoomi GS and PRI GSs? | NA | 9 | NA | NA | 14 | 4 | |
| **VOICE** | | | | |
| Electoral Practices | | | | |
| Did you vote in the last GP elections (2005 in K or 2001 in AP)? | 98 | 83 | 98 | 99 | 74 | 93 | |
| Have you voted in previous GP elections in 2000 and 1993 in K, and 1995 in AP? (Ans. include scores for one or more elections) | 93 | 38 | 96 | 90 | 19 | 58 | |
| In the last panchayat (any tier) elections in AP/ last two in K: Did you campaign/canvass on behalf of any candidate? | 28 | 13 | 39 | 18 | 6 | 20 | |
| General Political Practices | | | | |
| Have you participated in any of the following in the last 5 years in relation to PRIs - signed a collective petition outlining demands or submitted an individual petition/application? (Scores for both or either) | 54 | 55 | 38 | 70 | 51 | 59 | |
| Have you participated in any of the following in the last 5 years in relation to PRIs – taken part in a protest / strike? | 13 | 2 | 4 | 23 | 0 | 4 | |
| Has your interest in participating in electoral and political practices like campaigning, making petitions and taking part in strikes increased in the last five years compared to when the panchayat elections started about 10 years ago? | 16 | 4 | 19 | 14 | 5 | 3 | |
| In the past 5 years, have you contacted any of the following representatives in relation to GP: GP President? | 31 | 68 | 9 | 42 | 71 | 65 | |
| In the past 5 years, have you contacted any of the following representatives in relation to GP: GP member? | 77 | 6 | 78 | 76 | 6 | 5 | |
| In the past 5 years, have you contacted any of the following officials in relation to GP: panchayat | 29 | 51 | 26 | 33 | 54 | 49 | |
### Questions in relation to political capabilities administered to 320 survey respondents, 160 respondents in each district, 80 in each legislative constituency (LC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Percentage out of 160 in each district</th>
<th>Percentage out of 80 in each legislative constituency (LC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the past 5 years, have you contacted any of the following representatives in relation to GP: IP member?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the past 5 years, have you contacted any of the following representatives in relation to GP: ZP member?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the past 5 years, have you contacted any of the following officials in relation to GP: EO/MPDO?</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the past 5 years, have you contacted any of the following officials in relation to GP: DC?</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the number of times you have contacted the representatives/officials increased in the past 5 years compared to the time the panchayat elections started about 10 years ago?</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often in the last five years have you attended the panchayat gram sabha (GS) (yes implies at least once)?</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you deliberated on beneficiary selection in relation to poverty alleviation programmes in GSs in the last 5 years?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you deliberated on social audit issues in GSs in the last 5 years?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the quality and conduct of GS improved in the past 5 years compared to the time the panchayat elections started about 10 years ago?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you a member of a political party?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage is not calculated out of 160 but out of 157 who voted in Kolar and 133 who voted in Anantapur.
** Percentage is not calculated out of 80 but out of 78 who voted in LC 1, 79 in LC 2, 59 in LC 3 and 74 in LC 4.
*** Percentage is not calculated out of 160 but out of 59 who attended GS in Kolar and 103 in Anantapur.
**** Percentage is not calculated out of 160 but out of 17 who attended GS in LC 1, 42 in LC 2, 48 in LC 3 and 55 on LC 4.
*****Blue colour indicates highest percentage in a row between districts and green colour indicates highest percentage in a row for legislative constituencies
Appendix 5.3: Comparing favourable responses in relation to material benefits from PRIs across districts and legislative constituencies (LCs)*

| Questions in relation to material benefits administered to 320 respondents, 160 respondents in each district, 80 in each legislative constituency (LC) | Percentage out of 160 in each district | Percentage out of 80 in each legislative constituency (LC) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Kolar | A.pur | Kolar | Anantapur |
| Do you think your GP has been satisfactorily addressing the following issues/providing the following local services for you: Minor Roads? Yes includes answers for good and satisfactory | 49 | 58 | 49 | 49 | 45 | 71 |
| Do you think your GP has been satisfactorily addressing the following issues/providing the following local services for you: Potable Water? Yes includes answers for good and satisfactory | 71 | 74 | 70 | 71 | 71 | 76 |
| Do you think your GP has been satisfactorily addressing the following issues/providing the following local services for you: Lighting of streets? Yes includes answers for satisfactory | 26 | 7 | 21 | 30 | 13 | 1 |
| Has your household benefited from any wage employment programmes like SGRY which have been implemented through panchayats during the last 5 years? | 26 | 27 | 25 | 26 | 35 | 19 |
| Has your household benefited from housing distributed through panchayats during the last 5 years? | 21 | 12 | 16 | 25 | 10 | 14 |
| Has your household benefited from pensions distributed through panchayats during the last 5 years? | 24 | 24 | 25 | 15 | 34 |   |
| Have services and benefits from the GP increased over the last 5 years compared to the time the panchayat elections started about 10 years ago? | 26 | 13 | 19 | 33 | 6 | 19 |

*Blue colour indicates highest percentage in a row between districts and green colour indicates highest percentage in a row for legislative constituencies
Appendix 5.4: A Comparative Overview of Legislative Constituencies (LC 1 to LC 4) and Intermediate *Panchayats* under study (IP 1 and IP2 in K and IP3 to IP 6 in AP), as of 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of District</th>
<th>Kolar in K</th>
<th>Anantapur in AP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Legislative Constituency</td>
<td>LC 1</td>
<td>LC 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Intermediate <em>Panchayats</em> (IPs) within Legislative Constituency (LC)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population in LC</td>
<td>221,517</td>
<td>231,302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area in Square kms of LC</td>
<td>743**</td>
<td>751**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of IPs</td>
<td>IP 1</td>
<td>IP 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population in Intermediate Tier</td>
<td>169,689</td>
<td>231,302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Rural Population (%)</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Households</td>
<td>36,668</td>
<td>44,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Household size</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Ratio (females per thousand males)</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Rate (%)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivators as per cent of population</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Labourers as % of pop</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Caste as %of pop</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Tribe as % of pop</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of GPs</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of inhabited villages and hamlets</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area in Square kms of IP</td>
<td>820**</td>
<td>751**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approx. distance of IP headquarter from district headquarters in kms</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Census of India 2001

- ** As of 2003-04. The area of the IP is larger than the LC because parts of the former are included in other LCs. This has only changed with the delimitation exercise of 2008. [http://nitpu3.kar.nic.in/samanyamahiti/smenglish_0304/default.htm](http://nitpu3.kar.nic.in/samanyamahiti/smenglish_0304/default.htm) (Accessed 23 October 2008)
### Appendix 6.1: Comparing favourable responses in relation to Political Capabilities between NGO-operational and non-NGO operational GPs***

**Questions in relation to political capabilities administered to 320 survey respondents, 160 respondents in eight NGO GPs & 160 in eight non-NGO GPs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency percentage out of 160</th>
<th>8 NGO GPs %</th>
<th>8 Non-NGO GPs %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AWARENESS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the last GP elections-name the person you voted for?</td>
<td>81*</td>
<td>80*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who decided which candidate to vote for in the last GP elections? Scores for Myself</td>
<td>61*</td>
<td>65*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know the name of your present ward member?</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many different political parties have you heard of? Scores for &gt; 1</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know about gram sabha (GS) procedures relating to beneficiary selection for poverty alleviation programmes?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know about GS procedures relating to social audit/review of progress?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In AP only:</strong> do you know the difference between Janmabhoomi GS and PRI GSs?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VOICE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electoral Practices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you vote in the last GP elections (2005 in K or 2001 in AP)?</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you voted in previous GP elections in 2000 and 1993 in K, and 1995 in AP? (Ans. include scores for one or more elections)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the last panchayat (any tier) elections in AP/ last two K: Did you campaign/canvass on behalf of candidate?</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Political Practices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you participated in any of the following in the last 5 years in relation to PRIs - signed a collective petition outlining demands or submitted an individual petition/application? (Scores for both or either)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you participated in any of the following in the last 5 yrs in relation to PRIs – taken part in a protest / strike?</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has your interest in participating in electoral and political practices like campaigning, making petitions and taking part in strikes increased in the last 5 yrs compared to when the panchayat elections started about 10 years ago?</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the past 5 years, have you contacted any of the following reps in relation to GP: GP President?</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the past 5 years, have you contacted any of the following reps in relation to GP: GP member?</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the past 5 years, have you contacted any of the following officials: Panchayat secretary?</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the past 5 years, have you contacted any of the following reps in relation to GP: IP member?</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the past 5 years, have you contacted any of the following reps in relation to GP: ZP member?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the past 5 years, have you contacted any of the following officials: MPDO/EO?</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the past 5 years, have you contacted any of the following officials in relation to GP: DC?</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Questions in relation to political capabilities administered to 320 survey respondents, 160 respondents in eight NGO GPs & 160 in eight non-NGO GPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>8 NGO GPs %</th>
<th>8 Non-NGO GPs %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the past 5 years, have you contacted any of the following non-PRI elected representatives: MLA?</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the number of times you have contacted PRI-related representatives/officials increased in the past 5 years compared to the time the panchayat elections started about 10 years ago?</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often in last 5 years have you attended the panchayat GS (yes implies at least once)?</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you deliberated on beneficiary selection in relation to pov. alleviation programmes in GSs in the last 5 yrs?</td>
<td>2**</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the quality and conduct of GS improved in the past 5 years compared to the time the panchayat elections started about 10 years ago?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of a political party?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These scores are not out of 160 but are relative to the number of respondents who had voted. For NGO-operational GPs it was 143 respondents in all and for non-NGO operational GPs it was 147

** These scores are not out of 160 but are relative to the number of respondents who had attended a gram sabha. NGO-operational GPs had a total of 90 respondents and non-NGO operational GPs had 72; *** The green colour is for the highest score in one row

### Appendix 6.2: Comparing favourable responses in relation to material benefits across NGO-operational and non-NGO operational GPs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>8 NGO GPs %</th>
<th>8 Non-NGO GPs %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think your GP has been satisfactorily addressing the following issues/providing the following local services for you: Minor Roads? Yes includes answers for good and satisfactory</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think your GP has been satisfactorily addressing the following issues/providing the following local services for you: Potable Water? Yes includes answers for good and satisfactory</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think your GP has been satisfactorily addressing the following issues/providing the following local services for you: Lighting of streets? Yes includes answers for satisfactory</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has your household benefited from any wage employment programmes like SGRY which have been implemented through panchayats during the last 5 years?</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has your household benefited from housing distributed through panchayats during the last 5 years?</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has your household benefited from pensions distributed through panchayats during the last 5 years?</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have services and benefits from the GP increased over the last 5 years compared to the time the panchayat elections started about 10 years ago?</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The green colour is for the highest score in one row
Appendix 6.3: GP-wise disaggregated scores across NGO-affiliated and non-affiliated respondents **

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>GP 1</th>
<th>GP 4</th>
<th>GP 5</th>
<th>GP 8</th>
<th>GP 9</th>
<th>GP 10</th>
<th>GP 13</th>
<th>GP14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administered to 160 respondents</td>
<td>Sang* of 11</td>
<td>NonS of 9</td>
<td>Sang of 11</td>
<td>NonS of 9</td>
<td>Sang of 12</td>
<td>NonS of 8</td>
<td>Sang of 10</td>
<td>NonS of 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>** POLITICAL CAPABILITIES **</td>
<td>NGO A area</td>
<td>NGO G area</td>
<td>NGO T area</td>
<td>NGO J area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name ward member</td>
<td>82 67</td>
<td>82 67</td>
<td>92 88</td>
<td>100 100</td>
<td>33 13</td>
<td>40 60</td>
<td>45 NA</td>
<td>45 NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS beneficiary selection awareness</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>33 0</td>
<td>10 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>8 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted in most recent GP election</td>
<td>100 100</td>
<td>91 89</td>
<td>100 100</td>
<td>100 100</td>
<td>83 100</td>
<td>50 50</td>
<td>100 NA</td>
<td>85 NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted in previous GP elections</td>
<td>91 100</td>
<td>100 78</td>
<td>83 87</td>
<td>100 100</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>50 80</td>
<td>95 NA</td>
<td>75 NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaigned</td>
<td>73 33</td>
<td>73 33</td>
<td>33 25</td>
<td>0 10</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>10 10</td>
<td>35 NA</td>
<td>25 NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petitioned</td>
<td>27 0</td>
<td>36 44</td>
<td>67 100</td>
<td>70 60</td>
<td>17 50</td>
<td>50 60</td>
<td>75 NA</td>
<td>50 NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in a strike/protest</td>
<td>9 0</td>
<td>18 0</td>
<td>67 0</td>
<td>80 20</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>NA 0 NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact President</td>
<td>27 11</td>
<td>45 44</td>
<td>33 50</td>
<td>60 60</td>
<td>33 75</td>
<td>90 80</td>
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<td>Contact GP membe.</td>
<td>64 78</td>
<td>82 78</td>
<td>50 87</td>
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<td>0 0</td>
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<td>Contact GP Sec.</td>
<td>64 22</td>
<td>9 11</td>
<td>25 37</td>
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<td>42 25</td>
<td>80 60</td>
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<td>65 NA</td>
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<td>Attended GS</td>
<td>45 11</td>
<td>45 22</td>
<td>83 75</td>
<td>60 50</td>
<td>50 62</td>
<td>60 70</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>** MATERIAL BENEFITS **</td>
<td>Sang* of 11</td>
<td>NonS of 9</td>
<td>Sang of 11</td>
<td>NonS of 9</td>
<td>Sang of 12</td>
<td>NonS of 8</td>
<td>Sang of 10</td>
<td>NonS of 10</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>NGO G area</td>
<td>NGO T area</td>
<td>NGO J area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road</td>
<td>82 89</td>
<td>18 22</td>
<td>83 75</td>
<td>40 10</td>
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<td>90 100</td>
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<td>95 NA</td>
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<td>91 67</td>
<td>67 75</td>
<td>70 80</td>
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<td>Wage-employment</td>
<td>36 11</td>
<td>9 22</td>
<td>16 37</td>
<td>30 30</td>
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<td>40 30</td>
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<td>GP services increased</td>
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<td>0 0</td>
<td>30 NA</td>
<td>10 NA</td>
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</table>

*Sang – Sangha member (NGO-affiliated), NonS – Non-sangha member (non-affiliated). These percentages are out of the total number of sangha or non-sangha respondents interviewed within each GP.

** Green colour indicates those GPs where sangha members performed better than non-sangha members and vice versa in yellow. In NGO Jamuna’s area (GP 13 and GP 14), green colour indicates scores above 50%.

***NA – Not Applicable as NGO Jamuna did not operate through the medium of sanghas.