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April 13, 2010

Decentralization and Local Democracy in India –
A Study of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Uttar Pradesh and Kerala

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An abstract of
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of Emory University in partial fulfillment
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Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Department of Political Science

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Abstract

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This paper aims to study how a diverse country, such as India, manages to promote a unified civil society. This question is addressed by focusing on decentralization in India through the local democratic institutions known as Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The panchayats were given formal authoritative governing power in 1992 through the 73rd constitutional amendment. This increased their roles and importance as local rural governing structures. The goal of the study is to answer the questions: What accounts for variations among the strengths of the panchayats? Does a strong panchayat necessarily translate into greater efficacy for the village community? These questions are examined both at an inter-state level through comparisons between Kerala and Uttar Pradesh and at an intra-state level by focusing within Uttar Pradesh. Dreze and Sen's categorizations of high facility, involvement, and equity define the variations in the strength of panchayat. The causes for these variations include mass mobilization and political participation in the two states studied. This study indicates that the amount of training and resources provided act as intervening variables to the variations in strength. Variations in the panchayat strength within Uttar Pradesh are highly dependent on the background and leadership of the panchayat chairperson. Furthermore, strong panchayats correlate to greater efficacy in community programs through greater economic development, social justice and development, and dispute resolution. This paper develops proxies that can be used to measure strength of panchayats and highlights the importance of improving these institutions for the functioning of India's democracy.

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I. Introduction

India was crowned the “world’s largest democracy” after adopting a democratic constitution in 1950 – governing a population of approximately 361,088,000 according to the 1951 Census. A federation of 28 states consisting of a heterogeneous population of multiple ethnicities, religions, castes and linguistic communities, India has long been studied by political scientists as a case of pluralistic democracy. Researchers have investigated the conditions under which this diverse nation has managed to maintain stability and withstand the test of time as a sixty-year-old democracy. India presents itself as the ideal case study for analyzing the challenge of how a country with such diversity manages to promote a unified civil society. This question urges one to think about the importance of decentralization and the factors accounting for variations in the efficacy of the local institutions across states, despite similar constitutional form and institutional structures.

Questions regarding democracy and decentralization have been central since India’s conception as a nation-state. Mahatma Gandhi, while leading the Indian independence movement, popularized the idea of *swaraj*, or “self rule” and emphasized “democracy is that under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest” (Pantham 1983). Gandhi was a strong advocate of democracy at the grassroots level. His support, along with Jayaprakash Narayan and Vinoba Bhave who were proponents of *swaraj* after Gandhi’s death, awakened a national movement for decentralization. The movement led to the emergence of local village councils, known as “gram panchayats.” After years of debate, in 1992, the groundbreaking 73rd amendment

was ratified, implementing the idea of swaraj by increasing the role of the panchayats¹ in village governance. The 73rd constitutional amendment in India transformed local governance because for the first time, it provided panchayats with greater powers since they obtained the position of elected ‘institutions of self government’ with legalized authority and administrative functions. These panchayats have arguably become the largest deliberative democratic institutions, evident in their widespread effects such as the interaction with over two million villages and 700 million rural Indians (Rao and Sanyal 2009, pp. 3).

This paper aims to study the role of the panchayats, the smallest bodies of local governance in rural India, within the context of Indian democracy. The goal of the study is to answer the following two questions: (1) What accounts for variations among the strengths of the respective panchayat; (2) Does a strong panchayat necessarily translate into greater efficacy for the village community? The study of both questions requires the panchayat to be the unit of analysis.

These questions will both be examined at an inter-state and intra-state level. First, a comparative study between Uttar Pradesh and Kerala will allow for greater generalizations through observations across two states in India. Secondly, variations within western Uttar Pradesh will be examined based on five weeks of fieldwork studying nine panchayats, allowing for an in-depth analysis of one region. Combined, both levels of analysis provide a more comprehensive assessment of the panchayats. A study of panchayats at the state level is a natural experiment since each state has varied

¹ Please note that the terms gram panchayat and panchayat will be used interchangeably and the terms refer to the basic administrative unit of local village councils in the Panchayati Raj System (village governance).

its policies regarding the power appropriated to panchayat institutions, allowing for the ability to compare and contrast effectively within India.

The theme is that the variation in the strength of the panchayats – defined through Dreze and Sen’s categorization of facility, involvement, and equity – across states is due to party competition and party cohesion combined with mass mobilization and citizen engagement. These elements, in turn, promote training for the elected members of the panchayat and for citizens regarding their rights and responsibilities. They also increase the resources available, leading to a stronger panchayat. Variations in the strength of the panchayats, within Uttar Pradesh are predominantly because of the leadership characteristics of the chairperson and family history in politics – specifically regarding governance of panchayats. I will argue that strong panchayats can promote economic development, social development and justice, and in dispute resolutions because they are able to engage with and address the needs of the community since the panchayats are at the local level.

Theoretically, I engage the scholarly literature discussing the relationship between democratic institutions and democratic practices by specifically examining the changes caused by the 73rd amendment, which directly affected local democratic practices in villages and the panchayat institutions. Although the amendment created a national level change in the governance of local bodies, it permitted state autonomy in implementing the policies governing the panchayats.

Current scholars, such as Dreze and Sen, as mentioned above, have provided literature measuring the proxies for strong institutions. Other factors facilitating the building of strong institutions include the historical background of the state, the

participation by the masses, and leadership of those in power. Other researchers, Keefer and Khemani, assess the role of strong institutions and connect them with the efficacy of public goods and development. These scholars will be discussed later in the literature review section.

My approach is novel because I will be connecting the literature regarding robust institutions with proxies that will be used to measure the strength of panchayats specifically. This study is crucial because the proxies defined here can be used in future research measuring variations in the strength of panchayat across states and within states. In addition, this is the first study providing a comparative analysis of the panchayats in Uttar Pradesh and Kerala. Although Dreze and Sen and other scholars have conducted extensive comparative studies regarding the variations in socio-economic development between Uttar Pradesh and Kerala, they do not focus on panchayats or institution building in these two states. Empirically, I hope to contribute to the field of scholarship concerning local institutions and capacity building in democracies by drawing from the qualitative analysis obtained from fieldwork in nine panchayats of western Uttar Pradesh.

Studying the panchayat is crucial because although the Indian national government has mandated local democratic rule with general requirements such as elections every five years and a general institutional structures of the panchayats, specifics concerning their implementation have been left to the discretion of the respective state government. Thus, each state has autonomy regarding the policies governing the panchayats, which has led to each adopting a slightly different model. Some examples of variations across states include the functions assigned and the resources provided to the panchayats. An inter-state analysis can help identify the

strengths and weaknesses of a particular model and contribute to the development of local democratization efforts in India.

This study is divided into six sections. First, a background section describes the panchayat's historical evolution, the structure and composition of the panchayat, and the responsibilities of the institution. It is followed by a literature review which summarizes relevant research about democratic institutions, democratic practices and decentralizations. The third section uses the literature to develop the hypothesis in details. The fourth section focuses on the methodology and the research design used to conduct this study. The fifth section discusses the findings and provides an analysis of the results. Finally, the last section concludes by highlighting the important findings, their implications, the weaknesses in the research, and possibilities for future investigations.

II. Background and descriptive facts

In order to understand the context under which the panchayat has evolved, it is important to acknowledge the diversity in the population of India and understand its significance. India is a federal parliamentary democracy that is subdivided into 28 states and seven union territories². As mentioned earlier, the central government has given each state considerable autonomous governing authority because of the unique composition and the economic and political challenges in each state. In terms of religion, according to the 2001 census, India's population identifies as 80.5 percent Hindu, 13.4 percent Muslim, 2.3 percent Christian, 1.9 percent Sikh, and 1.8 percent 'other.' In terms of languages, there are no fewer than 23 officially recognized languages. English is the main

² The following statistics regarding India's composition derive from the CIA World Factbook. Accessed 10 Oct 2009. Retrieved from <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html>>

language used for government documents, although Hindi is the most widely spoken (41 percent) language. After Hindi, the other widely spoken languages include Bengali (8.1 percent), Telugu (7.2 percent), Marathi (7 percent), Tamil (5.9 percent) and Urdu (5 percent). Ethno-identity groups vary tremendously and are based on linguistic and regional differences³.

Even with the growth of large cities and trends towards urbanization, nearly three-fourths of India remains rural. Specifically, in the states selected for this study, 74 percent of Kerala's population is rural while in Uttar Pradesh it is 79 percent⁴. Thus, the extent of allocating powers to local panchayats bodies and the implications of democratic decentralization have long been important questions discussed among the policy makers in Delhi. This study focuses on evaluating the strength of the panchayat institution and measuring their effect on community development after the panchayat's authority was expanded in 1993. Assessing states' policy decisions governing the panchayat can be beneficial to the debates regarding the best model to use for the decentralization efforts in India.

The following section reviews the evolution of the panchayat, the current administrative structure of the institution and its responsibilities. This understanding contributes in assessing the strength of the panchayat and its' impacts. Understanding the history of panchayats is vital to note because these governing bodies were not set up initially as formal institutions, but have been in existence through much of India's recorded history. Thus, the panchayats exemplify a system that has probably risen due to

³ Some examples of prominent groups include the Anglo-Indians, Assamese, Bengalis, Bodos, Gujaratis, Kannadas, Kashmiris, Maharashtrians, Manipuris, Mizos, Nagas, Punjabis, Tamils, Telugus, Tripuras and Gurkhas.

⁴ "Population". Government of India (2001). Census of India. Retrieved from <www.censusindia.gov.in> Date Accessed 03 March 2010.

the needs of the community. When observing the evolution of the panchayat system, it is helpful to track its slow disintegration and dissolution of powers, followed by its later re-emergence. In doing so, the historical evolutionary framework highlights the importance of the panchayat system as an institution of local governance and provides for a clear examination of the current situation.

A. History of Panchayats⁵

The existence of self-governing village bodies, known as *sabhas*, dates back to the Rig Vedas in 1200 BC. Over time, the sabhas evolved to be known as panchayats, literally “an assembly of five” in Sanskrit, reflecting the chosen respected elders in the community. Panchayats were greatly respected by the kings and were responsible for distributing land, collecting taxes, and paying the government revenue on behalf of the village (Rai et al. 2001, pp. 2). Disputes in the village were not taken to the royal courts but generally discussed in tribunals formed by the panchayat members or leaders of the caste within which the dispute arose (Baxi and Galanter 1978, pp.3).

When the Mughals invaded India in the sixteenth century, some of the panchayat’s functions dissolved as the Mughals introduced an elaborate administrative unit, especially for revenue collecting and a highly bureaucratized hierarchy of officials.

During British rule, the autonomy of the panchayats continued to decline with the establishment of local, civil, and criminal courts. Some functions and powers were delineated with the establishment of revenue collecting bodies and police organizations. Also, a greater emphasis was placed on the operation of the landholder system

⁵ The following section regarding the history of the panchayats has been retrieved from the following sources unless indicated otherwise: Rai, Nambiar, Paul, Singh and Sahni (2001), Sisodia (2005)

(*zamindari*) as compared to the village tenure system⁶. Consequently, land divisions were now based on fixed revenue payments to the British and the panchayats lost administrative control over land distribution. The peasants evolved into tenant farmers since they could not afford to own land under the British system. Finally, after the 1857 uprising against the British colonists, a small resurgence in decentralization to the local bodies was granted only in terms of public works projects, such as roads. Deliberation by the colonial authorities regarding local bodies continued until the passage of the Government of India Act of 1935, which marked the inauguration of provincial autonomy. Provincial authorities were then able to grant greater powers to local self-governing bodies. The Act was an important stage in the legal evolution of the panchayats.

As mentioned earlier, during the independence movement, Mahatma Gandhi was one of the few but most adamant proponents of empowering local village councils. He supported the panchayats as the most effective way to promote democracy at the grassroots level. He believed that the villages could not have self-rule (*swaraj*) unless power was vested to these panchayats. Subsequently, the Directive Principle of State Policy, Paragraph IV, Article 40 was included in the Constitution of India at the time of its formation – “The State shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.” (Rai et al. 2001, pp. 6). This was a very weak endorsement of local

⁶ With the village tenure system, land was divided to families on the basis of having cleared it for cultivation. Hence, the land belonged to the village community but plots were allocated by the panchayat depending of the individual families’ ability to utilize the land (Kuhnen 1982).

governance and the next few decades would consist of contention and debate concerning the most effective way to use resolve the local-central tensions.

After the debates in the preceding years, the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee was organized in January 1957 to consider how best to implement Community Development Programs in villages. The committee recommended a three-tier system of local governance, known as the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). These institutions consisted of (1) village level panchayat known as the *gram panchayat*, the (2) intermediate level panchayat at the block level known as *panchayat samiti*, and the (3) district level panchayat known as the *zilla parishad*. On January 1958, although the National Development Council (NDC) approved the PRIs, the states were not required to implement the recommendations.

In 1963, the K. Santhanam Committee, named after an adamant supporter of Gandhi's philosophy, was formed to address the fiscal capacity of the PRIs given their dilemma of limited sources of revenue. Issues concerning the sanctioning of state grants and the panchayats ability to levy taxes were debated. Subsequently, in 1978, the Ashok Mehta Committee gave birth to a second generation of panchayats and some states embraced the idea of requiring gram sabhas or village meetings on a regular basis to involve villagers in the decisions of the panchayat (Datta and Sen 2000, pp. 40). Thereafter, the G.V.K. Rao Committee in 1985 and the L.M.Singhvi Committee in 1986 were also both important since they made suggestions regarding the inclusion of local self-governments as elected bodies in the constitution and the need for reservations for marginalized groups in society. Over the years, these committees generated much debate

regarding the relation between central and local government and the extent of decentralization in India's democracy.

In 1984, Rajiv Gandhi attempted to steer the Congress (I), a secular center-left party, in a new direction and won elections by campaigning to reduce corruption and increase decentralization. Thereafter, the Congress (I) has been the prime force in initiating decentralization efforts. On May 15, 1989, a few months before the five-year term of the Congress (I) was about to expire, the party introduced amendments to decentralize government authority to two specific institutions (1) panchayats (in villages) and (2) municipal government (in towns/small cities). Due to the power of the opposition party, the Congress (I) failed to win the two-thirds votes required in the Rajya Sabha (upper house of Congress) and consequently called for new parliamentary elections and campaigned on the slogan "*jana shakti*" (power to the people). Following a few failed coalitions by other parties from 1989-1991, the Congress (I) formed the largest coalition with other parties and resumed power in 1991.⁷ Finally, in 1992, the Congress (I) led the ratification of the 73rd constitutional amendment promoting decentralization of powers and providing authority to local councils, such as the panchayats. In the next section, important changes regarding the structure and the responsibilities of the panchayat will be discussed in order to understand the institution and to highlight the points that will be significant in this study.

⁷ Inter-Parliamentary Union. (1991). Historical Archives- "India- Parliamentary Chamber: Lok Sabha." Accessed 17 March, 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2145_91.htm>

B. Structure and Composition of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)

Following the recommendations of the previous committees, the amendment facilitated the development of PRIs as a three-tier system with the gram panchayats (village level governance), the panchayat samiti (intermediate level), and the zilla parishad (district level). Each gram panchayat has around 1,000 to 10,000 members and between one to fifteen villages per jurisdiction. The voters select the members in the panchayat council, which can vary from five to fifteen, in proportion to the number of villagers under the jurisdiction.

The leaders of the gram panchayat, known as the *sarpanch* or *pradhan* (chairperson) and *upa-pradhan* (vice chairperson), are also elected directly. The council and its leaders are elected for a five-year term with new elections within six months in cases of suppression or dissolution. Leadership at the intermediate and district level panchayats are chosen through indirect elections. Decisions in the panchayat are generated through majority votes with the panchayat chairperson permitted no special veto powers. However, it should be noted that the chairperson is authorized with immense authority regarding the allocation of funds, the implementation of projects in the village, and thus has great influence regarding decisions. The position of a chairperson also contributes to an elevation in his/her status since the chairperson is a well-known figure within the villages under the jurisdiction of the panchayat, and among the other panchayat chairpersons from nearby villages. Each gram panchayat also has a secretary appointed by the intermediate level, who oversees the panchayat meeting minutes, allocation and distribution of funds, implementation of projects, etc.

Furthermore, positions within the leadership structure of the panchayat have been established with quotas for marginalized groups, such as women and the lower castes known as the dalits, politically termed as the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs)⁸. SC/STs are designations given by the Government of India to group castes that are economically and socially disadvantaged and are facing or may have faced discrimination associated with their lineage from birth. Other Backward Classes (OBCs) is a term first mandated by the Government of India under Article 340 of the Indian Constitution to identify groups in society that are “socially and educationally backwards” as a means of facilitating their social and economic development.

For the purposes of understanding the importance of reservation in seats within the panchayat for these groups, it is necessary to understand the *varna* (caste) system and the way it has formulated relations in Indian society. The *varna* system divides the society into four major categories – *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas*, and *Shudras*. Within each group, there are further subcategories, which create greater divisions within the caste’s population. Moreover, below the Shudras is another caste known as the *Dalits* who have often been neglected, abused and shunned from Indian society in the past⁹. These four groups are important to note but a greater distinction is with *jati* (subcastes). *Jati* reflects the social stratum into which one is born and the rules governing societal relations are predominantly concerning *jati*. There are thousands of *jatis* yet only four *varnas*.

⁸ Please note that the use of the term “backwards” is not considered offensive in India society but it treated as a factual label. These are stigmas associated with certain castes in this group but that is due to caste and societal relational-structures. The OBCs are more based on social/economic standard than castes.

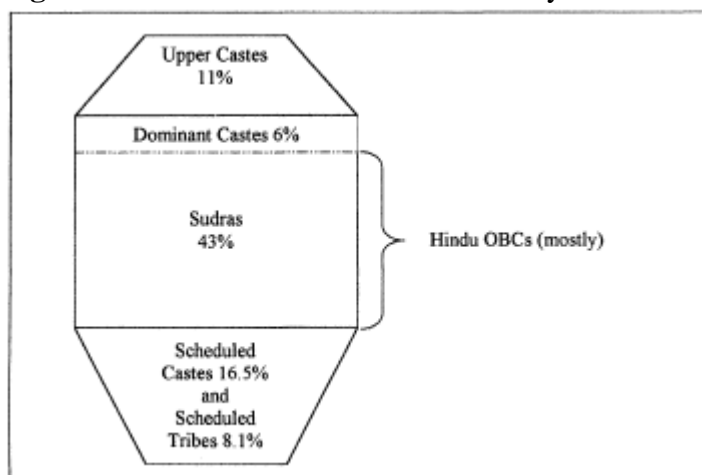
⁹ Dalits were formerly known as untouchables or harijans by Gandhi.

Members in the SC group include the dalits and have been identified as *neech jat* or *choti baradri* (lower caste)¹⁰. ST refers to people of various indigenous backgrounds, known as *adivasis*. Traditionally, SC/STs did not have any land ownership. In Uttar Pradesh, SC/STs gained land from *zamindars* (landowners) in 1950 through the “Zamindari Abolition and Land Reform Act” (ZALRA) in conjunction with the redistribution of this new land acquired by the government (Shanker 1991, pp. 1086-97). In Kerala, this occurred in the 1960s through various acts passed by the government, such as the Agrarian Relations Act and Land Reforms Act. Nevertheless, SC/STs are usually dependents upon the “General Class/Unreserved Class (UR)” for employment, mostly through farming or menial labor. Historically, self-employment was only possible through caste-dependent skill assignments such as: shoe cobbler – mostly concerning leather products (*mochi*), butcher (*kasai*), sweeper (*mehtar*), person who touches dead bodies (such as in a crematorium), barber (*nayi*), gardener (*mali*), clothes-washer (*dhobi*), tailor, mason, and fisherman¹¹.

According to the 2001 census, the SC group comprises 16.2 percent of India’s population while ST group is 8.2 percent of the population (Census of India 2001). Because SC/STs have historically been the lower caste, they are eligible for the government’s affirmative action program and have quotas for elected positions in the government, higher education, and employment in the public sector, including a position in the panchayat elected seats. Figure 1 displays the placement of the ST/SC group within India’s societal framework.

¹⁰ Some castes that fall within the SC/ST category include *Jatav*, *Balmiki*, *Kori*, *Pasi*, *Dhobi*, *Meena*, *Khatik*, *Deemar*, *Mehtar*, *Banjar*, and *Chamar*.

¹¹ These groups may be from the same varna classification but their jatis vary according to occupation and this plays a greater role in the societal relations.

Figure 1: All-India Hindu Ritual Hierarchy¹²

Source: Varshney 2000 (pp.9)

The OBC is a dynamic list of groups because castes and communities can be added or removed; this depends on changes in social, educational and economic factors over the years for communities in this category. The OBC category is not caste exclusive (as the SC/ST group) since castes belonging to all four varnas can technically be part of this category. Similarly, there are castes from the lower shudra community that are not part of the OBCs¹³. Currently, this group includes castes such as Lodhas, Teli, Pal, Mali and Maurya.

The Mandal Commission (1990)¹⁴ estimates the population of OBCs as 52 percent of India's population (Sakrikar 1994). However, this figure has been debated by

¹² Please note the non ST/SC figures are best estimates. The total is over 84 percent and not 100 percent because it is only focusing on the Hindu population in India (although it is over 82 percent, which is the Hindu population of India because some Christian SC/ST members are also included). These figures are from the 1991 Census and the Mandal Commission Report (1980)

¹³ Dominant castes within the shudra community that were substantial landowners such as Reddy, Kammas, Patels, Marathas, Nairs, etc. are not included in the OBC category because historically they have had many resources and generally been comparatively privileged.

¹⁴ The Mandal Commission was established in 1979 by the Government of India (headed by the Janata Party) in order to assess the need of reservations for "backward" classes. It used eleven social, economic and educational indicators to determine "backwardness."

various sources in Indian society. The National Sample Survey Organization, which exists under the ministry of statistics and program implementation, estimates the OBC population as 36 percent of the population, lowered to 32 percent if the Muslim population is not included (Anand 2006). The National Family Health Statistics estimates the OBC population as 30 percent, derived from survey research conducted in 1998 by the Directorate of Health Services (Anand 2006). Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that the Mandal Commission has contributed the most comprehensive data and its statistics have passed extensive scrutiny (FAQ Reservations 2006, pp.6).

The eleven indicators used by the Mandal Commission to determine “backwardness” are based on social, educational, and economic factors. Some of the indicators are caste/ classes where the (1) percentage of married women below seventeen is twenty-five percent above the state average in rural areas and ten percent in urban areas; and that of married men is ten percent and five percent above the state average in rural and urban areas respectively, (2) participation of females in work is at least twenty-five percent below the state average, (3) main livelihood is dependent on manual labor, (4) children between the ages of five to fifteen who have never attended school is at least twenty-five percent above the state average, (5) average value of family assets is at least twenty-five percent below the state average, (6) number of house-holds with consumption loan is at least twenty-five percent above the state average (Sakrikar 1994). Other economic indicators include the percentage living in *kacha* (temporary, not concrete) houses and the distance from sources of drinking water (Sarkrika 1994). This list helps understand the definition of “backward classes” and their positions in India. In addition, because there are certain reservations for this group and flexibility due to constant

changes of these factors, there has been a movement by some castes to urge the government to include their caste group in this list in order to gain the benefits from reservations in employment and education. As seen in Figure 1, most of the OBCs are from the shudra caste although other castes from other varnas, which are considered socially and educationally backwards, are also included.

After the recommendation by the Mandal Commission in 1979, OBC groups are entitled to 27 percent reservations in public sector employment, higher education, and elected positions such as within leadership in the panchayat. In some states, especially in the Southern Indian states, the reservation for OBCs is beyond the established quota. For example, in Kerala, the reservation for OBC is 40 percent (Varshney 2000, pp. 19).

In order to increase their stature, the government has implemented mandatory quotas for marginalized groups in various education and employment sectors, including in position of leadership in the panchayat. Women comprise one-third of the seats reserved, OBCs have 27 percent seats (due to the Mandal Commission), and SC/ST groups generally have seats reserved proportionally based on the population in the area (thus, the percentage varies according to district) (Singh and Sharma (2007). However, it should also be noted that the reservation for SC/STs is flexible since seats in the panchayat are not always guaranteed in some states while it is fixed in others (Bardhan and Mookherjee 2006, pp.170).

The block office (intermediate level) divides the total number of gram panchayat seats under its jurisdiction and selects the reservation of the chairperson according to the percentages listed above. This is based on a five year rotation schedule (each election cycle) to ensure the SC/ST and OBC population in each panchayat has an opportunity to

be selected for the role of chairperson. In addition, the percentages listed above apply to the composition of the entire panchayat council. Women, SC/ST, and OBC groups have been acknowledged as part of the marginalized population and thus their representation in leadership positions is vital because it can facilitate changes concerning the negative stereotypes that are associated with these groups, especially at the village level. There have been different formulas adapted by states to calculate the seats of the chairperson for the reserved categories. The formulas below represent the more common equations used to allocate these seats:

$$\text{SC} = \frac{\text{Total number of seats} \times \text{SC population}}{\text{Total population}}$$

$$\text{ST} = \frac{\text{Total number of seats} \times \text{ST population}}{\text{Total population}}$$

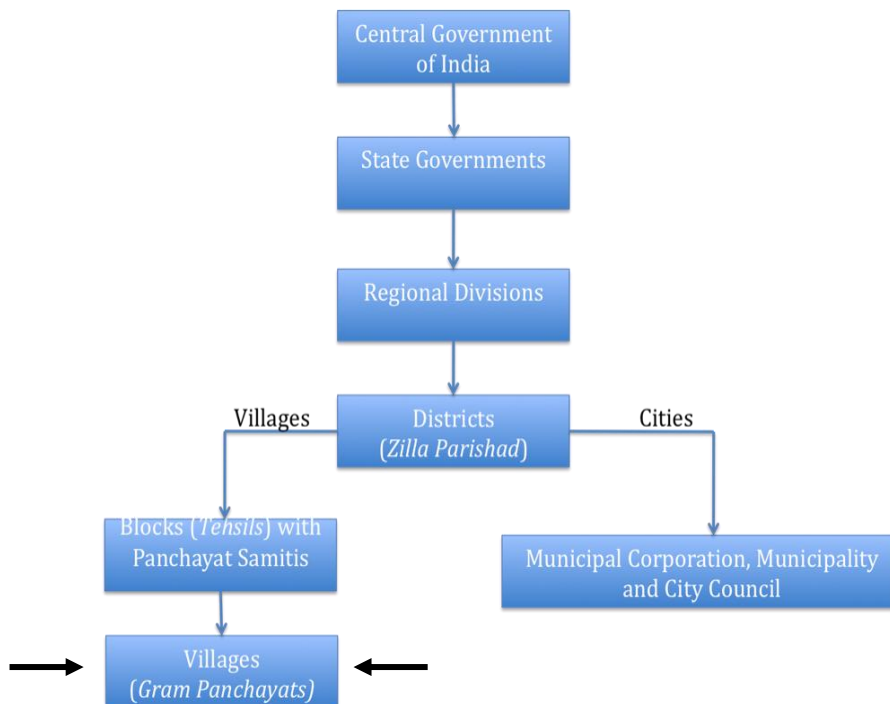
$$\text{OBC} = \frac{\text{Total number of seats} \times 27}{100}$$

$$\text{Women} = \frac{\text{Total number of seats}}{3}$$

It is also important to understand the scope of the panchayats elected officials in order to comprehend the range of its jurisdiction. According to 2000 Eleventh Finance Commission Report by the Government of India, there are about 3 million elected representatives between the three levels of the panchayat. There are 240,588 gram panchayats, 5930 panchayat samitis and 515 zilla parishad throughout India (Rai et al 2001, pp. 12-13). The presence of the number of villages within a gram panchayat varies according to state laws, depending on either the population or the number of villages in

that region. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between the central and state level governance to these local councils and the arrows denote the unit of analysis used in the research.

Figure 2: Devolution of power and the organization of political administration¹⁵



C. Responsibilities of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)

Now that the basic structure of the panchayat has been discussed, it is necessary to understand its responsibilities. These include (1) the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice and (2) the implementation of schemes related to the 29 subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution of India (Article 243G).

¹⁵ Source: Revised version from Wikipedia. "Gram Panchayat" Accessed 19 March 2010. Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gram_panchayat>.

These 29 subjects, which are listed in Table 1, state the development areas where the local governments can increase their role in participation and planning.

Table 1: 29 subjects outlined in the Eleventh Schedule

Agriculture, including agricultural extension	Land improvement, land reforms, land consolidation and soil conservation	Minor irrigation, water management and watershed development	Animal husbandry, dairying and poultry	Small scale industries, including food processing industries
Fisheries	Minor forest product	Libraries	Rural housing	Drinking water
Roads, culverts, bridges, ferries, and waterways	Rural electrification, including distribution of electricity	Technical training and vocational education	Khadi, village and cottage industries	Education, including primary and secondary schools
Adult and non-formal education	Poverty alleviations programs	Cultural activities	Markets and fairs	Family welfare
Health and sanitation, including hospitals, primary health centers and dispensaries	Social welfare, including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded	Welfare of the weaker sections, in particular scheduled castes and tribes	Public distribution system	Maintenance of community assets
Social forestry and farm forestry	Fuel and fodder	Non-conventional energy sources	Women and child development	

Source: Constitution of India, Eleventh Schedule, Article 243G¹⁶

Apart from the functions listed above, the panchayat also has the power to collect appropriate taxes and to distribute them as they see fit – increasing its role as a legal institution of self-governance (Goel and Rajneesh 2009, pp. 4).

¹⁶ CommonLII Databases “Constitution of India”. Accessed 17 March 2010. Retrieved from <<http://www.commonlii.org/in/legis/const/2004/38.html>>

In addition to benefits and quotas established for SC/ST and OBC groups, people ‘below the poverty line,’ or BPL groups, also receive assistance from the government and in turn from the panchayats in rural areas. The panchayat decides the families chosen for the BPL category and helps with the distribution of funds and implementation of schemes for these families. Each state has its own policies regarding the criteria for BPL families. It is determined by factors such as landlessness, unemployment, quality of housing, etc. The criterion is established through questionnaires determined by the state government and distributed through the gram panchayats. For example, for 2005 – 2006, the income based poverty line in India was 368 rupees per month (\$8 USD) per head in rural areas and 560 rupees (\$12.2 USD) in urban areas (Government of India 2007). This is generated by calculating the bare minimum needed to provide food and does not include other essential items such as health and education. Understanding the list for how BPL groups are generated is important because the panchayats assist them in obtaining facilities identified by the state government.

Gram panchayats allocate resources for BPL families through anti-poverty programs improving their economic and social conditions. BPL families benefit from projects initiated by the panchayat such as constructing concrete houses (such as the Indra-AWAZ project), providing toilets in their homes, subsidizing food, employment, scholarships and providing cheap credit. Gram panchayats are also commissioned to distribute small plots for farming from common property resources owned by the panchayat. The formation of BPL groups is a government effort to address the issue of economic deprivation rather than basing it on caste identity. Consequently, families from relatively disadvantaged groups (such as SC/ST) that are wealthier do not qualify for this

program and families that are from higher castes but with low incomes are eligible (Rao and Saynal year, pp. 10). This emphasizes that BPL groups are not based on castes, but rather on family income.

Generally, the list of BPL families has to be publicly ratified at the *gram sabha*, balancing the power of the gram panchayat. The gram sabha is defined in the 73rd amendment as a statutory unit, which is a body of persons registered in the electoral list relating to a village located within the area of a panchayat. Understanding the history, structure, composition and responsibilities of the panchayats provides the essential background to understand the complexity of these institutions. The magnitude of the panchayat's power concerning functions and possibilities of implementing programs for the welfare in the villages should also be noted.

III. Literature Review

Next, it is imperative to examine existing literature in order to conceptualize the framework within which the panchayat operates as an institution of local governance. This section is essential because it highlights the findings, from the literature, regarding the strength and outcomes of the panchayats. It also serves to emphasize the existing gaps within previous studies.

A. Strength of the panchayat

According to Dreze and Sen, "in assessing the past achievements and future potential of Indian democracy, it is useful to distinguish between democratic ideals, democratic institutions, and democratic practices... Democratic ideals include political characteristics that can be seen as intrinsically important in terms of objective of democratic social living, such as freedom of expression, participation of the people in deciding on the factor governing their lives, public accountability on leaders, and an

equitable distribution of power. Democratic institutions include instrumental arrangements as constitutional rights, effective courts, responsive electoral systems, functioning parliaments and assemblies, open and free media, and participatory institutions of local governance. Democratic practices depend, among other things, on political participation, the awareness of the public, the vigor of the opposition, the nature of political parties and popular organizations, and various determinants of the distribution of power”(2000, pp. 6).

Dreze and Sen’s distinctions quoted above among democratic ideals, institutions and practices are inconspicuous and often neglected in other literature concerning democracies. As categorized above, these definitions are valuable to note in this study of democracy and decentralization since the panchayats are democratic *institutions* based on the democratic *ideals* of participation, accountability, and equality expressed through democratic *practices*. However, as argued by some participatory democracy theorists, democratic institutions and democratic practices are both significant dimensions in achieving democracy but the *presence of the former does not guarantee the latter* (Dreze and Sen 2002, Vaddiraju and Mehrotra 2004). It is essential to recognize the dimensions of democratic practices in order to categorize the strength of a governing institution such as the panchayat.

Dreze and Sen have identified democratic practices as facility (functional democratic institutions), involvement (informed public engagement with these institutions), and equity (a fair distribution of power). I will use Dreze and Sen’s taxonomy to investigate the strength of panchayats – in Uttar Pradesh and to compare the panchayats of Uttar Pradesh and Kerala. In the next section, I will assess the validity of these three factors as a measure of democratic institutional strength.

First, when referring to “facility”, the Weberian vertical problem of democracies regarding power must be addressed. This refers to the top-down approach of many new democracies that suffer due to weak forms of integration between state and citizens. Many citizens are unable to hold the state accountable because the state-societal relations are often dominated by patronage and populism. Also, it is possible that in cases where the citizen is able to engage effectively, the local government structure is often weak or not present, thereby diminishing the capacity for engagement. The 73rd amendment was designed to address this vertical problem by providing greater resources and rights to the local panchayat institutions. The requirements included a certain number of meetings with the gram sabha and the gram panchayat per year in order to engage the citizens directly. However, apart from setting general regulations, the national government provided the state governments with extensive jurisdiction regarding the implementation of the three-tier panchayat system within the state. Therefore, a comparison between Uttar Pradesh and Kerala will serve as an examination of state-societal relations and will enable us to determine if ‘facility’ varies by state.

Furthermore, when quantifying ‘facility’, the power of local elites and their connection to the government structure must also be examined since elite citizens often play a pivotal role in the formation of state-societal relations. However, according to Mitra’s study of the impact of local elites, “the evaluation of their contribution to the functioning of local government... remains inconclusive” (Mitra 1991, pp.103). This is due to the diversity of the laws governing the local institutions and their relationship with the local elites.

Nevertheless, Mitra does concede that the local government has allowed new resources to enter the Indian political system, improving the resilience and legitimacy of India. Local governing institutions have been most effective in areas where the national policy and state governments align and provide support to the local institution, such as the panchayat. The comparative case. This study will aim to assess the power of local elites through a comparative case study of Uttar Pradesh and Kerala.

Dreze and Sen's second factor for strong institutions, 'involvement', has been discussed in literature examining participatory democracy. Civil society activists argue, "decentralization and democratic government create more opportunities for ordinary citizens to engage [with] the state and to play a meaningful role in shaping public allocation and [in] local decision making" (Heller 2007). If the local government is weak or absent, then there is a low citizen involvement with the state since the mode for engagement is lacking. The 73rd amendment aimed to produce a strong local democratic institution in hopes of providing citizens with an opportunity to participate in local governance. However, even with a national agenda, variations with citizen involvement in the panchayat are apparent across states in India. A comparative study between Kerala and Uttar Pradesh will allow for the examination of state-specific factors accounting for differences in local mobilization and decentralization after the 73rd amendment.

'Deliberative democratic' theorists state that debate and discussion aimed at producing reasonable, well-informed opinions and engagement can increase the demand for accountability and therefore, place deliberation as a priority for legitimizing the institution (Chambers 2003). Also, as noted by Heller, Harilal and Chaudhuri, "In the developing world, participation is seen as critical to increasing the overall capabilities of

citizens (Dreze and Sen, 1995), strengthening fragile democracies, improving the quality of governance, and countering the influence of organized and powerful dominant groups (Avritzer, 2002)” (2006, pp.627). These studies indicate the importance of citizen involvement in strong institutions.

Finally, the crucial role that ‘equity’ plays in democratic practices and in the functioning of strong democratic institutions is evident in the literature. As a result of the generally low participation in discussions by members of the lower castes in panchayat meetings, the significance of equity among citizens is valuable when addressing the strength of the institution (Besley, Pande & Rao 2005; Ban & Rao 2009). According to Tilly (1994), it is apparent that this discrimination is based on categorical inequalities, such as those based on caste, class, and gender rather than against the individuals themselves (Heller 2007, pp. 1). This phenomenon alludes to the Tocquevillian horizontal problem of democracy, which focuses on the quality of associational life in diverse communities. Tocqueville’s theory states that the pervasive inequalities in society reduce the rights of some citizens and in doing so, greatly excludes some members from the larger village community. He argues that participation cannot be meaningful if the citizenry does not have equity.

However, one of the goals of the 73rd amendment is to provide greater equity among gender, castes and class via affirmative action and to equalize the distribution of political power through reservation of elected panchayat seats for women and underprivileged castes (Rao 2009). It has been shown that with the participation of these groups in the council and in positions of decision-making on policy, the distribution of public goods can be shifted towards the preferences of disadvantaged communities,

creating greater equality in terms of resources in the villages (Duflo 2004). Based on this theory, the change in the distribution of public goods is a variable which can vary according to the caste or gender of those in leadership positions; it can also affect the research question regarding the outcomes in relation to the panchayat.

Moreover, by reserving seats for marginalized groups to promote equity, gram sabhas meetings are based on competition and not on consensus. Hence, they often act as an arena for villagers who are poor and from the marginalized sectors to seek dignity and become equal and active citizens (Rao and Sanyal 2009). This is a factor that emphasizes the variations in style of deliberative democracies and will be discussed in the conclusions.

Although categories such as facility, involvement and equity are derived from Dreze and Sen's research, it should be noted that often these three factors are interrelated and it is sometimes difficult to differentiate among them. For example, the involvement of various castes and class groups in society during the panchayat meetings concerns all three mechanisms. Therefore, although this study provides data for the three categories, it is not always easy to distinguish the proxy measures which should be in each category.

B. Explaining variations in strength of panchayats

In order to further the investigation of strong institutions, I will explore the literature concerning the root causes for variations in facility, involvement and equity.

1. Between Kerala and Uttar Pradesh

First, party competition and party cohesion are significant factors which increase accountability. High party competition helps improve the credibility of political promises

since the party understands the consequences it can face during re-elections if the promises are unfulfilled. Democratic values, such as party competition, permit the citizen rightfully to demand their economic rights (Dreze and Sen 2002, pp. 5). Accordingly, party competition enables both the citizens to demand what is needed and for the political parties to be high performing and transparent regarding their policies.

However, it should be noted that party competition and party cohesion must be combined with mass mobilization. Mass mobilization is a vital factor because the awareness of the citizens compels a greater level of accountability by the political parties. As stated by Keefer and Khemani, “Even in developing countries that are democracies, politicians often have incentives to divert resources to political rents and to private transfers that benefit a few citizens at the expense of many” (2004, pp. 1). Mass mobilization reduces the power of political elites and the electorate must be more responsive to the needs of the larger citizen body.

Furthermore, mass mobilization usually helps decrease polarization in society since different groups must come together to work towards a common goal. This is important because in a socially polarized or ethnically fragmented society, voters are more likely to select candidates they identify with on a demographic basis, such as caste, ethnicity or religion. Consequently, information regarding public performance and policy records is not highly sought, reducing the accountability demanded from the political party (Keefer and Khemani, 2004, pp. 15). This shows that mass mobilization is equally important to political participation.

Thus, mass mobilization improves accountability of the political parties and creates informed voters which all help lead to strong institutions. Real mass mobilization

also result in an increase in equity since groups from various sectors of society must unite in order to encourage change.

Political competition and mass mobilization are important factors in determining the strength of a democratic institution and lead to the presence of other intervening variables which are equally important in this correlation. These include the extent to which the government provides training and resources to the institution, which, in this case, is the panchayat.

“Informational constraints adversely impact the provision of social services to the poor by reducing the ability of citizens to hold politicians accountable, and by encouraging politicians to cater to special interests” (Keefer and Khemani 2004, pp. 8). Providing training to elected officials and the villagers is a significant way to impact the dissemination of information. The increase in the awareness of villagers lead to an increase the accountability of the elected officials.

Along with training, the availability of local fiscal resources is another important factor which can determine the strength of the panchayat. It is a managerial responsibility of the state since they determine the division in the allocation of funds for the panchayat. These funds are important in institution building because they provide the resources necessary to build facilities, such as the panchayat house.

This leads to the following hypothesis: If party competition and party cohesion work in tandem with mass mobilization and citizen engagement, the result is an increase in resources for the panchayat and in training for elected officials and citizens. The latter two factors will in turn lead to a stronger panchayat. All independent and intervening

variables are evaluated through continuous data and will be discussed in detail in the methodology section.

2. Within Uttar Pradesh

The strength of the panchayat within Uttar Pradesh will also be measured by the proxies of facility, involvement, and equity. The study within Uttar Pradesh will be focused in one district, Mathura, and variations found in the district. As will be shown, the historical trends relating to party competition and mass mobilization are similar in the areas studied. Even though when compared to Kerala, all the panchayats studied in this report would be considered weak, variations within the weak panchayats is also possible. This leads to the question, what accounts for variations in the strength of panchayats within Uttar Pradesh?

Leadership roles are one of the most crucial components in the functioning of an organization. Variations in the strength of the leadership is due to (1) personality traits of the leader himself, (2) his manner of community with the followers, (3) the perception of the leader by the followers as the satisfier of their needs (Bhatt 1994, pp. 26). These three components will be used to evaluate the difference in rural leadership in the area studied.

Rajasthan provides a case-study of research conducted on the role of panchayat leadership. Rajasthan adhered to the advice from the Ashok Mehta Committee and introduced a three-tier system of governance. In 1981, C. S. Chaudhary conducted a study examining the changes in the leadership of the village panchayats members after

the system was implemented¹⁷. He discovered that the grass-root leadership was mostly based on persons from larger families, higher castes, highly educated sectors, and who were economically well-off. In addition, the criterion of age and caste as dominating traits for traditional leadership positions was losing its significance with the establishment of elected panchayat bodies which are monitored through state elections. The rich class with more than one source of income was emerging as the leaders of the panchayat. However, there was no change in the knowledge of the leaders regarding panchayati raj system and awareness about their rights.

Additionally, in 1974, Rangnath researched rural leadership in Uttar Pradesh and assessed the changes in the pattern of leadership during that time period¹⁸. His observations regarding the leadership patterns focused on the causes for the shifts in the styles of governance. His observations will provide proxies in assessing the leaders of the panchayat in Uttar Pradesh and will be discussed in the methodology section. Although leadership styles in panchayats have been studied, connections with the literature on strong institutions has not been made and my study will fill this gap.

This leads to the following hypothesis: If the pradhan's leadership ethos is community conscious and the background of the pradhan is high in status in terms of age, caste, family origin in politics, and education then the panchayat is likely to be strong. The leadership style and background will be evaluated through qualitative data from fieldwork through various dichotomous, ordinal and continuous variables. Panchayat

¹⁷ Choudhary, D. S., *Emerging Rural Leadership in an Indian State*. Rohtak. Manthan Publications, 1981. Retrieved from Bhatt 1994, pp. 21- 22.

¹⁸ Bhatt 1994, pp. 22

strength will be measured through ordinal data in categories of high, medium, or low. This will be discussed in detail in the methodology section

One of the functions essential to a leader is the ability to identify a common purpose or goal. Thus, when studying the leadership styles of the pradhan, this aspect will also be identified. This is important because it will help determine if a stronger pradhan is able to formulate better programs and contribute to the relationship between strong institutions and outcomes, as discussed in the next section.

C. Explaining effects of strong institutions to outcomes

In order to examine the second question – does a strong democratic institution actually produce better outcomes – we must engage the literature regarding such correlation. According to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) local governments are agents responsible for provision of public goods and services that affect communal welfare¹⁹. When evaluating communal impact of the panchayat, implementation of economic development and social justice programs will be measured because these two roles were listed as responsibilities of the panchayat in the 73rd amendment. Also, the traditional role of the panchayat has been one of a council which mediates dispute. Therefore, its ability to monitor conflicts will be a third factor in output that will be analyzed.

Scholars, such as Barrington Moore in the 1960s, criticized the attempts at revival of local governance, such as the panchayat, as a romanticized idea and were dismissive

¹⁹ International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). (1995). “Colombia: Local Government Capacity: Beyond Technical Assistance” (Report no. 14085-CO). Washington, DC: Country Department III, Country Operations Division I, Latin America and the Caribbean, World Bank, pp. 49

regarding its effectiveness for development (Mitra 2001, pp. 110-112). However, according to a survey conducted across India, when asked about trust in the central, state, and local governments, the local governments received the percentage with the greatest level of trust (Mitra 2001, pp. 110-112). Although trust is an abstract concept and difficult to measure, it is affected by the visibility and effectiveness of the government structure. Herein the question lies as to whether a strong panchayat is able to produce outcomes such as the implementation of effective economic development programs.

According to Mitra, “local government is at its most effective when local institutions enjoy the trust and confidence of local elites and are simultaneously accountable to the local electorate” (2001, pp. 123). On the contrary, although local elites are important, in order for the panchayat to produce better outcomes for the whole village, then mass mobilization (a criterion is important. According to Keefer and Khemani, politicians will not undertake reform projects that benefit a large member of the voters if the voters do not believe these promises (2004, pp. 2). This indicates that as mentioned earlier, the extent to which the panchayat in a specific village is accountable to its electorate is indicated by the participation of the villagers in the meetings. This affects the ‘facility’ measure of its strength and produces effective outcomes.

Similarly, equity is another important contributor to the strength of panchayats and it can also affect the development projects implemented by the panchayat. “The provision of high quality social services to the poor suffers when societies exhibit deep polarization” (Keefer and Khemani 2004, pp. 15). As defined in the first hypothesis, a strong institution is one with equity; and with greater equity, the panchayat will be better able to implement programs relating to economic development for the voter population.

Another scholar, Varshney (1998), argues that religion, caste and communal identities are blocking the economic construction of rural interests. Conversely, I would argue that ideally, the panchayat institution has provided a platform for these identities to have influence, particularly via reservations for marginalized group. Consequently, direct participation of these groups will allow the panchayat to be more efficient in working for the rural interests.

The challenge should be noted – Can a strong panchayat established as a functioning democratic institution on the principles of high involvement and high equity with the participation of marginalized castes lead to better outcomes for the village? The second part of this study will attempt to provide some explanations regarding this problem.

According to the first hypothesis, political participation and mass mobilization are important factors, leading to the creation of strong institutions. Mass mobilization allows for an informed voter population to act in order to increase accountability and enable the establishment of strong institutions. Without an informed voter population, the political pressures to improve public services – such as health and education – are lacking since the citizens can neither evaluate the quality of these systems nor correlate the service with the group/person responsible for providing the service (Keefer and Khemani 2004, pp. 2).

According to another scholar, Edralin, the success of local government in local economic development (LED) “largely depends upon the government’s commitment and capacity to plan and manage the LED process” (1996, pp. 3). Consequently, training and resources are important to the creation of a strong institution, and in turn they contribute to the economic development in the region.

According to Dreze and Sen, “social opportunity” should not be contrasted with “economic opportunity” because often, the economic arrangements are central to the social opportunities present in society (2002, pp. 6-7). Dreze and Sen state that changes in these measures are based on factors such as participation and demands for equality, variables which attribute to the strength of an institution.

As stated by Keefer and Khemani, “governments can accelerate economic development through their decisions regarding public expenditures” (2004, pp. 1). This refers to the amount of resources the panchayats receive from the government as well as the way the panchayats spend these resources, which is often based on training of the elected panchayat officials. Hence, since these two variables contribute to the strength of the panchayat, the conclusion can be made that a strong panchayat can lead to greater economic development projects for the village.

Kohli, another scholar studying heterogeneous societies, states that when control over government decisions are centralized in a pluralist society such as India, then government legitimacy becomes harder to sustain and violence and poverty dominate the political landscape (2000, pp. 206-227). On the other hand, the panchayat has been regarded as “the largest experiment in decentralization of governance in the history of humanity.” (Rai et al. 2001, pp. 11). This is crucial because if the panchayat system has successfully decentralized and is strong, as measured by the three indicators above, then violence and poverty should decrease. Hence, a strong panchayat ought to be capable of placing effective economic development programs and act as a mediator for conflict resolution. Other types of outcomes can include the panchayats authority to oversee issues of conflict or participate in conflict resolution for the community.

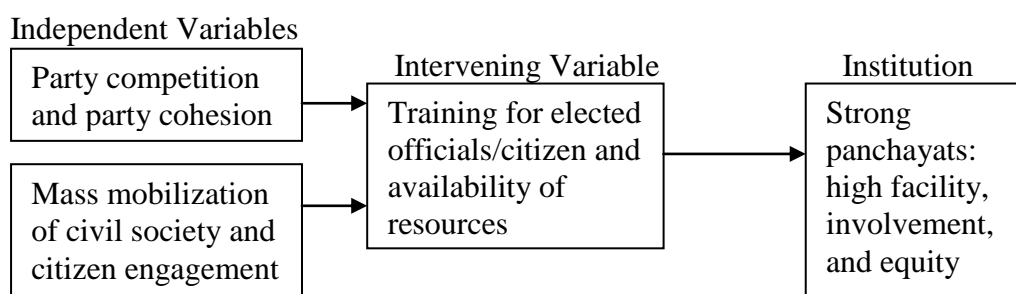
This leads to the following hypothesis: If the panchayat is a strong democratic institution, then it will be able to produce better outputs for the village in terms of economic development, social development and justice, and dispute resolution. The three dependent variables are measured through continuous data in the Kerala and Uttar Pradesh comparative study and through qualitative data obtained via interviews in the within Uttar Pradesh study.

IV. Hypothesis

This section will summarize the hypotheses identified in the literature review.

Using facility, involvement, and equity as the three elements describing the strength of panchayats, this research attempts to assess the derivatives needed for strong panchayats and their effectiveness with the following hypotheses:

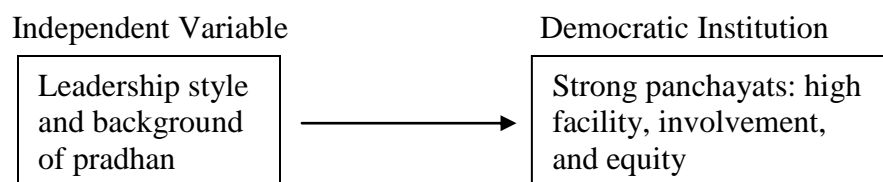
H1: If party competition and party cohesion work in tandem with mass mobilization and citizen engagement, the result is an increase in resources for the panchayat and in training for elected officials and citizens. The latter two factors will in turn lead to a stronger panchayat.



Hypothesis 1 determines the strength of the panchayat as evaluated between the comparative case study of Kerala and Uttar Pradesh. It states that (1) high party competition and party cohesion in the state politics combined with (2) mass mobilization

of civil society and citizen engagement, including an active associational life, enable the elevation of specific intervening variables while leading to a strong panchayat. The intervening variables include (1) training for elected officials of the panchayat and citizens regarding their rights and responsibilities and (2) availability of resources.

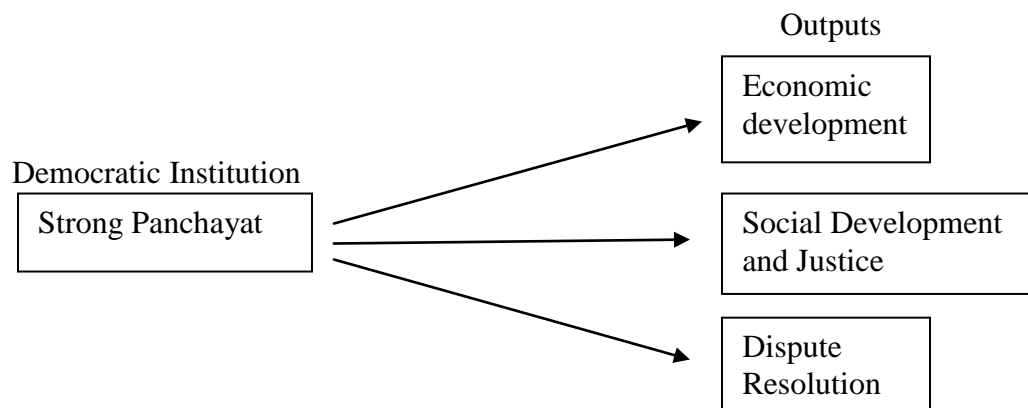
H2: If the pradhan's leadership ethos is community conscious and the background of the pradhan is high in status in terms of age, caste, family origin in politics, and education then the panchayat is likely to be strong.



As stated in Hypothesis 2, for comparative cases within western Uttar Pradesh, the leadership and background of the pradhan, such as the influence of family in politics affects the strength of the panchayat institution.

As shown in the literature review, there are many theories regarding the relationship between decentralization and development. My intent is to assess the relationship between a strong decentralized institution, the panchayat, and greater outputs and growth for society with the following hypothesis:

H3: If the panchayat is a strong democratic institution, then it will be able to produce better outputs for the village in terms of economic development, social development and justice, and dispute resolution.



As stated in Hypothesis 3, a strong democratic panchayat institution will facilitate more effective policy and stronger results. The results will be measured according to three key factors: (1) Economic development projects as produced and implemented by the panchayats for the improvement of conditions in the village. This includes schemes concerning provisions regarding housing, education, and health facilities. The panchayat is also supposed to build roads and provide employment opportunities for families below poverty line (BPL). (2) Social development and social justice will be assessed by deciding whether the allocation of seats in leadership for the marginalized groups is actually making significance changes in the types of resources allocated to them. This will be noted by observing trends in changes of granted accessibility to facilities such as education, health, etc. specifically for the marginalized groups. (3) Finally, the panchayat's ability to operate as a body for dispute resolution in the village will be examined since it represents the traditional role of the institution.

These three factors will be assessed within Uttar Pradesh through observations and interviews and thus, more qualitative data will be available.

When testing all three hypotheses, the unit of analysis will be the panchayat. In the first and second hypothesis, the panchayat is the dependent variable. In the third hypothesis, the panchayat is the independent variable.

V. Research Design and Methodology

A. Why Kerala and Uttar Pradesh?

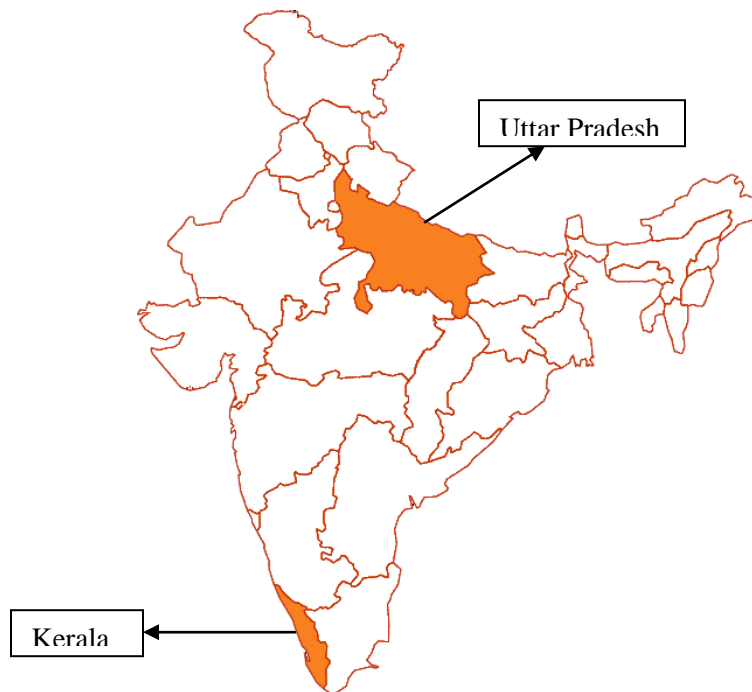


Figure 3: Map of India²⁰

Uttar Pradesh and Kerala are vastly different states with variations in geographic area, population, languages spoken, religious compositions and history of politics at the state level. A comparison of Uttar Pradesh and Kerala are of interest because “the most determined effort at democratic decentralization has been in the state of Kerala” (Heller,

²⁰ Modified from <<http://www.reportex.co.uk/resources/IndianStates.jpg>>

Harilal and Chaudhuri 2006, pp.626). This refers to the Decentralization Campaign in Kerala launched in 1996 in an attempt to improve the authority of the panchayats. In contrast, Uttar Pradesh did not have such a campaign and it is a generally weak state in terms of the strength and effectiveness of panchayats (Mathew 2001, Lieten 1996, Vincentnathan 2007). Keefer and Khemani have also attempted to explain the failures of social services in Uttar Pradesh as opposed to the well- performing services of Kerala (2004). Therefore, as evidenced through the investigation of previous scholars, Uttar Pradesh and Kerala are prime examples for researching the variations in the strengths of the panchayats. Although this study draws on research provided by other scholars, it retains novelty by conducting a comparative state study between Uttar Pradesh and Kerala regarding the panchayats and their outcomes.

B. Measuring variations in institutional strength

1. Between Kerala and Uttar Pradesh

When testing the strength of the panchayat between Kerala and Uttar Pradesh, political competition and mass mobilization will be the two essential factors, which are the independent variables in my question. Political competition will be determined by the number of political parties in the state. Mass mobilization will be reflected by (1) the history of movements in the two states, and (2) number of active votes and citizen engagement.

Training and resources will be based on research regarding (1) the implementation of training programs for the elected panchayat officials by the state government, (2) finances under the panchayats control, and (3) forms of mass

communication such as community TV center, cable TV connections, formation of cooperative society and self-help groups.

The strength of the panchayats in Uttar Pradesh and Kerala will be measured through the factors of facility, involvement, and equity. Facility will be operationalized by (1) the number of functions and functionaries distributed to the panchayats by the state government, (2) the effect the campaign in Kerala had on the functionality of the democratic institutions as compared to the lack of campaign in Uttar Pradesh. Involvement is characterized by the participation of the citizens in gram sabha meetings. Equity is determined by (1) the percentage of involvement of women within the panchayat and, (2) the 'real' involvement of women in positions of leadership in the panchayats.

Although there will be variations across the dependent variable, it will also be possible to hold some controls in this comparative analysis. Table 2 provides basic facts in population and area regarding Kerala and Uttar Pradesh.

Table 2: Basic demographic facts between Kerala and Uttar Pradesh

Total	Kerala	Uttar Pradesh
Population	31, 838, 619	166, 052, 859
Rural Population	23,574,449	131,658,339
Area	38,863 sq. km	240, 928 sq. km
Percent of India's Land	1.2 %	7.4 %
Pop density per sq. km	819	689
Number of Villages	1,364	107,452

Average pop per village	17283.3	1225.3
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Source: 2001 Census²¹

First, as indicated by Table 2, Uttar Pradesh is a much larger state with almost five times the population of Kerala. Conversely, Uttar Pradesh also has over six times as much land mass as Kerala within the Indian subcontinent. Also, the population density per square kilometer for Kerala is actually larger than Uttar Pradesh. However, from all the states and territories in India, Uttar Pradesh and Kerala rank 28 and 29 respectively in terms of population density per square kilometer. Therefore, although the population density is not exact, it is comparable. Population density is an important variable to control since other scholars can argue that Kerala is able to build stronger institutions and more effective development programs because they have a smaller population and it is easier to navigate through the state. However, when measured by population density per square kilometer, there is not a significant difference as compared with other states in India and thus this will present a control in this study.

Furthermore, as indicated by Table 3, according to the GINI index, both Kerala and Uttar Pradesh have generally shared similar historical background in terms of income inequality since the 1950s. As indicated by the 1990s, the rural income inequality was 29 percent for Kerala and 31.8 percent for Uttar Pradesh. Income inequality ought to be taken into consideration given that societies with greater income inequality are more likely to have better economic development programs. However, since there are few

²¹ Retrieved from <<http://www.indiastat.com/demographics/7/density/75/stats.aspx>> , <http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_data_finder/A_Series/Number_of_Village.htm>, <http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_data_finder/A_Series/Rural_Population.htm>. Date Accessed 15 November 2010

differences between Uttar Pradesh and Kerala, income inequality will be held as a control while measuring the strength of the panchayat and the results in lieu of economic development.

Table 3: Percentage of inequality as defined by the GINI measure for income distribution. (A higher value indicates greater inequality)

	1950s		1960s		1970s		1980s		1990s	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
KE	31.0	37.7	29.6	36.1	27.2	29.6	29.0	31.7	29.0	33.0
UP	34.7	31.0	32.3	38.0	33.3	39.1	33.5	38.8	31.8	37.8

Source: Urdal and Henrik 2008

Next, it is important to account for the scheduled castes/tribes in the two states as it can be argued that the greater presence of these groups will result in less economic development in the region because of the social discrimination faced by these groups. Areas with marginalized groups tend to have less development overall (Keefer and Khemani 2004, pp. 15-17). As indicated by Table 4, according to the 2001 Census, 21.1 percent of Uttar Pradesh's population consists of SC members. It is ranked first in terms of the absolute number of the SC population and fourth in terms of SC's proportion to the total population as compared with other states and union territories. The Scheduled Castes are predominantly rural as 87.7 percent live in villages. Uttar Pradesh has a minute population of ST with only 0.21 percent of its population. Comparably, 9.8 percent of Kerala's population consists of SC castes according to the 2001 census. Predominantly

rural, 81.8 percent of SCs reside in villages²². According to the Mandal Commission, the national average for ST/SC groups is 22.5 percent²³. Kerala's population of SC/ST groups is less than that of Uttar Pradesh²⁴.

Table 4: Caste Composition of marginalized groups in Kerala and Uttar Pradesh as percentage of population (Source: 2001 Census)²⁵

Caste	Kerala	Uttar Pradesh
Scheduled Castes (SC)	9.8 %	21. 2 %
Scheduled Tribes (ST)	2 %	0. 2 %
Total	11.8 %	21. 4%

There are no exact figures regarding the OBC population specifically according to states. However, it is estimated that 560 households out of 1000 in rural areas of Kerala are in the OBC category. This figure is 527 households from 1000 in rural Uttar Pradesh²⁶. Thus, the two estimations are comparable and the percentage of OBC population can be controlled.

²² 2001 Census of India. Retrieved from <http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_sc_kerala.pdf>, and http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_sc_up.pdf. Date Accessed 28 February 2010

²³ Mandal Commission. Retrieved from <http://www.socialjustice.in/documents/Documents/II%20Backward%20Commission%20Report%20%20-%20Recommendations.pdf>. Date Accessed 25 March 2010

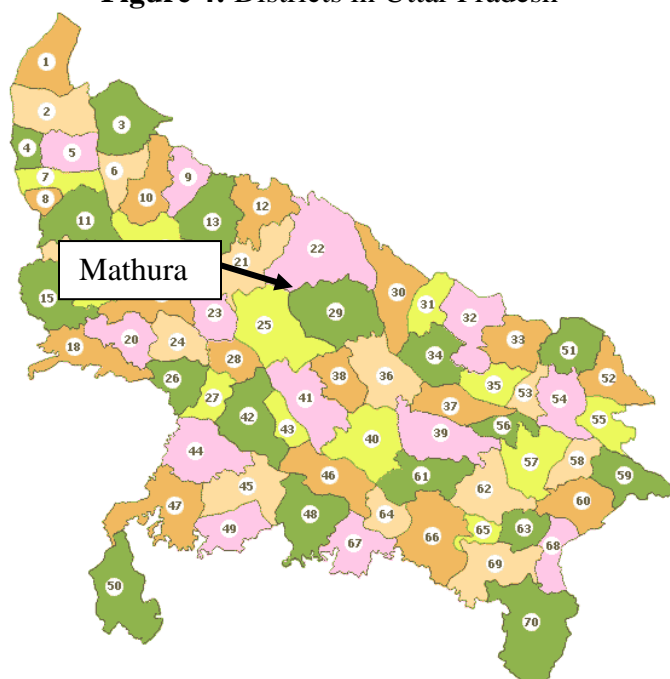
²⁴ The percentage of the SC population cannot be a variable controlled between the two states and this will be noted in the conclusions

²⁵ Retrieved from indiatat.com. Date Accessed 15 November 2010

²⁶ Source: Compiled by statistics released by Household Consumer Expenditure and Employment-Unemployment situation in India. NSS Report No. 480, 59th round (January- December 2003). Retrieved from <<http://www.indiatat.com/demographics/7/otherbackwardclassesobcsprimitivetribegroups/16897/stats.aspx>>. Date Accessed 25 March 2010.

2. Within Uttar Pradesh

Figure 4: Districts in Uttar Pradesh



The panchayats in the sample are from the Mathura district (zilla parishad) in Uttar Pradesh and 736 inhabited villages. Within the Mathura zilla there are ten blocks (tehsils) spread over an area of 3329 square kilometers with a rural population of Mathura of 1,487,493²⁷. Within the ten blocks, the Maat tehsil consists of thirty-nine panchayats. From these thirty-nine panchayats, eight panchayats were chosen through random selection from a list of all panchayats provided by the block officer. The eight panchayats from the sample comprised a total of 39 villages. Each panchayat from the sample had a total of 11 to 15 elected panchayat members responsible for assisting with the functioning of the panchayat.

²⁷ Source: Economics and Statistics Division, Government of Uttar Pradesh

A preliminary assessment of the nine panchayats enabled me to quantify the variations of the strength of the panchayats, on the basis of facility, involvement, and equity within the Mathura district. Facility is measured by (1) regular gram sabha meetings, (2) regular gram panchayat meetings, (3) the establishment of a panchayat house, (4) the criminal record of the pradhan; Involvement is measured by (1) the percentage of villages attending gram sabha meetings, (2) the percentage of villages attending the panchayat meeting; Equity is measured by (1) the real power of the pradhan if she is a woman, (2) percentage of representation of women in gram sabha meetings.

After the preliminary assessment, I conducted an in-depth comparative case study of two of the panchayats. This was done in order to assess the correlation between strong panchayats and the outcomes. I understand that a small sample can be seen as a weakness due to the limited number of observations and the inability to generalize across India. However, this research is not a test of an existing theory but a test from plausible hypothesis drawn from the literature. Therefore, a small sample can serve as a better instrument than a large-N study, providing the means for an in-depth analysis to assess the existing causal mechanisms more accurately. A small sample will allow me to gain concrete evidence rather than draw broad generalizations regarding the strength and the effectiveness of the panchayats. In addition, due to the time constraints I had in the field, only a small sample within westerns Uttar Pradesh was possible.

These two case-studies will assess the hypothesis regarding leadership and family dynamics as important components for explaining variations in the strength of the panchayats. Bhatt's study will be used to explain variations in the strength of the leadership with the following proxies (1) personality traits of the leader himself, (2) his

manner of community with the followers, (3) the perception of the leader by the followers as the satisfier of their needs.

Using Rangnath's research studying leadership styles in rural Uttar Pradesh, I will assess the leadership style of the panchayat pradhans with the following measures. This includes determining the leader's (1) authority structure, (2) the family background, (3) age, (4) caste, (5) economic status, and (6) education.

The presence of non-government organizations (NGOs) will be controlled for the intra-state analysis because the area studied within Uttar Pradesh did not have NGO activity. This is a key variable since NGOs prove to promote development and thus can lead to variations when measuring the results for rural areas. Other controls include history of the region in terms of conflicts since it is such a small region. I was also able to control for the accessibility to resources since they were both close to the Yamuna River and have equal access to water for the land under their jurisdiction.

a. Interviews

I conducted interviews with current and past elected officials from the panchayat in each village. Such officials included the pradhan as well as the other panchayat members. In terms of my informants, my target population was adults, both males and females, from the represented groups in the villages (these include SC/ST, OBC and general, etc). Correspondingly, I interviewed the block level officer who oversees the functioning of all the panchayats within that block.

At each level, I asked questions that enabled me to draw on the indicators of facility, involvement, and equity. Also, I asked each person individually about the past and present relationship among the various caste groups within the village. I also asked them about programs implemented by the panchayat and outcomes produced, both in terms of economic development and in addressing issues concerning the particular village. The villagers included members from the SC/ST, OBC, and general category. The members interviewed were randomly chosen as I was walking through the village, in order to ensure fair and equal recruitment of subjects. All individuals were allowed to accept or reject and withdraw anytime from the interview.

I interacted with the participants using semi-structured interview questions. A list of these questions is included in Appendix 1. My interview questions were designed to 1) obtain a more accurate measure of the strength of the panchayat as the key local governing institution, and 2) assess my second hypothesis relating a strong panchayat with more effective outcomes for the village.

Traveling to the villages and conducting interviews allowed me to obtain two specific types of information. First, I gathered qualitative data and evaluate the real strength of the panchayat by measuring the democratic practices in the village community. Furthermore, collected information regarding the effectiveness of the panchayat by assessing the socio-economic programs it has implemented in the villagers and its ability to monitor disputes.

C. Explaining effects of strong institutions to outcomes

1. Between Kerala and Uttar Pradesh

As indicated by hypothesis three, strong institutions lead to greater levels of economic development, social development and justice, and dispute resolution.

The economic development variable is measured by changes between the two states in (1) per capita GDP (state domestic product) from agriculture, (2) rural per capital expenditure, (3) rural headcount index of poverty, (4) percentage of households with electricity, and (5) percent of households with permanent homes.

Social development includes changes in social human development indicators such as (1) school attendance rate, (2) under five-mortality rate, (3) percent of children fully vaccinated, (4) health centers available in rural areas.

Social development and justice will be evaluated at an aggregate state level by assessing changes in socio-economic progress for marginalized groups. The proxies that will be used to measure this are: (1) the changes in the state's population below poverty line (BPL) and (2) the schemes implemented for universal health care for BPL groups, (3) changes in literacy rate for women in rural areas, and (4) changes in literacy rates for scheduled castes in rural areas.

Dispute resolution will be measured by evaluating changes in the number of cases brought before the panchayat for settlement.

2. Within Uttar Pradesh

Economic development is assessed by the implementation of programs, as evident by interviews the villages and through my own fieldwork in the village. Social

development and justice programs will be evaluated through interviews from the marginalized populations of the village. Finally, dispute resolution will be examined by the trust placed by the villagers on the panchayat by approaching it during times of conflicts. It is noted that most of the data is based on interviews and this will be later discussed in the conclusions.

VI. Findings

A. Measuring variations in institutional strength

1. Between Uttar Pradesh and Kerala

Kerala and Uttar Pradesh will be compared because as cited earlier, the literature shows that Kerala is considered to have a stronger system of panchayat governance. According to the Eleventh Finance Commission Report (2000) by the Government of India, in Uttar Pradesh, there are 58,620 gram panchayats, 904 tehsil panchayats, and 83 district panchayats. Comparatively, Kerala has 990, 152, and 14 panchayats respectively (Rai et al. 2001, pp. 12-13). The evolution of these panchayats has been a slow process and the period post the 73rd amendment was crucial depending on the initiatives taken by individual state governments.

As stated by E.M.S. Namboodiripad, the first chief minister of Kerala (1957-1959) and an adamant supporter of local democracy, “If at the level of center-state relation the constitution gave us democracy, at the level of state-panchayat relations, the constitution gave us bureaucracy.” (Chaudhuri 2006, pp. 153). The Left Democratic Front (LDF), a coalition of the leftist parties, led by the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) attempted to change the bureaucracy controlling local governance when

they came into power from 1996 to 2001. They launched the People's Campaign for Decentralized Planning on August 17, 1996. This movement was based on mass mobilization and political competition. 1,214 local bodies were given greater decision-making authority as well as direct control over 35-40 percent of the state's development expenditure (Chaudari 2006, pp. 190).

Studies analyzing the results of Kerala's campaign have shown that it allowed for a significant reorganization of the state and governance and was successfully able to achieve its scope of decentralization better than most (and possibly all) Indian states (Issac and Franke, 20002; Veron 2001, World Bank, 2000). According to Heller, the decentralization program was unique in Kerala because it reexamined the question of political participation not only by the electoral participation but also through direct participation. With the People's Campaign, the Communist party was hoping to engage the civil-based participation, which has remained poor.

For the purpose of empowering the PRIs, the Kerala Decentralization Campaign occurred in five key phases: (1) gram sabhas meetings were held at the ward level, (2) development seminars and extensive training was provided to the representatives by experts, (3) task forces were created to transform the development proposals into plans that could be implemented, (4) planning exercise concerning the budget of the proposal, (5) integration of local plans at the district level and were some of the crucial institutional changes for the panchayats due to the campaign in Kerala. The campaign has been successful since "it went beyond a government sponsored program and soon assumed the nature of a movement resulting in an alliance of all those who reposed faith in

decentralization” (Mathew 2000, pp. 155). It has been considered the keystone in changing local democracy in Kerala.

On the other hand, Uttar Pradesh did not have such a campaign to promote local democracies. As a result of the 73rd amendment, in 1994, the government of Uttar Pradesh amended the United Provinces Panchayati Raj Act of 1947 and the Uttar Pradesh Kshetra (block) and Zilla Panchayat Adhiniyam (Act) of 1961 in order to incorporate the provisions stated by the 73rd amendment. The acts helped redefine or clarify the jurisdiction of panchayats and the three- tier system of governance. In 1999, the government of Uttar Pradesh made a few more amendments to these acts but there was no drastic scheme to improve the power allocated to local panchayats.

Table 5 provides a comparison between Kerala and Uttar Pradesh based on descriptive facts regarding the regulations of the panchayats in both states. These statistics are helpful in evaluating the ‘facility’ of panchayats in Uttar Pradesh and Kerala since they contribute to the functional aspects of the panchayats.

Table 5: Descriptive Facts about Panchayats in Kerala and Uttar Pradesh

	Kerala	Uttar Pradesh
Size of the Panchayat Council (depends on pop)	10 – 20	9- 15
Number of villages (2001)	1,364	107,452
Average population per elected body (in 1,000s)	21.6	1.9
Name for the chairperson	President	Pradhan
Mode of election for the chairperson of panchayat	Indirect	Direct
Reservation for SC/ST classes	No reservation	In proportion to their population but not exceeding 27 percent

Average number of villages per gram panchayat	1.40	1.50
Average number of people per gram panchayat	20512	1230
Number of gram sabha meetings per year	At least 4 (at the ward level)	At least two
Number of gram panchayat meetings per year	12	12
No confidence motion against the chairperson	Notice by ½ of the members. Motion is carried out by 2/3 members. No notice within six months after if its rejected.	By a majority of the panchayat members present- at least 2/3 must be present at the time of voting. No motion in the first year and in case the motion fails, it cannot be called for again within one year.
Committees System	Functional committee (for different subjects such as agriculture, sanitation, communication, public health, and education)	6 committees: Samta Samiti (welfare); Vikas Samiti (development); Gram Shiksha Samiti (education); Administration; Water management; Construction
Date of Conformity Act (after 73rd amendment)	April 23, 1994	April 24, 1994

Source: Rai et al (2001); Chaudari 2006, pp. 168; 2001 Census²⁸

As indicated in Table 5, the gram panchayat in Kerala has a much larger population as compared to Uttar Pradesh. This is because a gram panchayat has jurisdiction over a greater land and thus a greater population. Therefore, in Kerala, the gram sabha meetings are vital in providing awareness to the gram panchayat regarding the needs of the area. There are also four required gram sabha meetings at the ward level as compared to two in Uttar Pradesh. Furthermore, it is vital to note that there is no reservation for SC/ST groups in Kerala while in Uttar Pradesh the SC/ST reservation is

²⁸ Retrieved from

<http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_data_finder/A_Series/Number_of_Village.htm>, <http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_data_finder/A_Series/Rural_Population.htm>. Date Accessed 25 March 2010

proportional to the population. In addition, the position of the chairperson of the panchayat in Kerala is chosen through indirect elections (based on the elected panchayat members) while it is through direct elections in Uttar Pradesh. Although this opposition to national regulations will not be pursued in this study, it is important to note that both indirect elections and the lack of reservations for SC/ST are against Article 243 of the 73rd Amendment. Finally, both Uttar Pradesh and Kerala will allow for accurate comparisons of changes post-1992 Amendment since the two states both implemented changes in April 1994.

Facility refers to the functions and subjects assigned to the panchayat by the state government. According to Edralin for local institutions to develop as strong local governments they must be provided with the adequate legal structure and proper institutional structure (1996, pp.3). Table 6 indicates the number of Schedule 11 items for which legislation enacted and/or government orders issued the transfer of power. This transfer of authority stems from the changes instituted by the 73rd amendment. As shown in Table 6, the state government of Kerala has transferred 15 funds, all 29 of the functions/subjects, and 15 functionaries to the village panchayats. On the contrary, the panchayats in Uttar Pradesh have only transferred 12 funds, 13 of the subjects and 9 of the functionaries. This indicates that in terms of the functional democratic institution or facility, as defined by transfer of power, the panchayats of Kerala have greater command than the panchayats of Uttar Pradesh.

Table 6: Number of Subjects Transferred to Panchayati Raj Institutions in Kerala and Uttar Pradesh as of 2001

State	No. of Subject transferred to Panchayats			No. of subjects yet to be transferred		
	Funds	Subjects/ Functions	Functionaries	Funds	Subjects/ Functions	Functionaries
Kerala	15	29	15	14	-	14
UP	12	13	9	17	16	20

Source: India Panchayat Raj Report, 2001, Vol. I-National Institute of Rural Development²⁹

In addition, the government of Kerala attempted to define the 29 subjects from the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution from general development areas as precise functional areas. This provided a clear and recognizable range of roles for the local governments with objectives to reach (Mathew 2000, pp. 156). On the other hand, the state government of Uttar Pradesh appointed an Administrative Reforms and Decentralized Commission to operationalize these provisions. In 1997, the Committee identified thirty-two departments that can help execute these provisions and the state government ordered twenty-eight departments to transfer some functions to the PRIs. However, according to Mathew, “[in Uttar Pradesh] all important decisions [continued to be vested] with the government departments and the transfer of functions to the elected bodies has little operational significance” (2000, pp. 296). For this reason, Uttar Pradesh still faces the Weberian problem of vertical associations since the system has not been decentralized to give panchayat the powers needed.

²⁹ Retrieved from Bardhan and Mokerjee 2006, pp. 178

Apart from facility, **involvement** is another aspect considered crucial to a strong democratic institution. In Kerala, the gram panchayat consists of a population between 10,000 to 75,000 people. Due to the panchayat's large constituency, it has been divided into smaller sectors, called wards, which hold a gram sabha/ward sabha separately. Leaders from these meetings then act as liaisons and report the needs of the villagers in that ward at the gram panchayat meeting. The laws implemented due to the campaign also made it obligatory for the chairperson/chief of the panchayat to explain to the gram sabha why a particular decision or a set of decisions that had been agreed upon by the sabha could not be implemented by the panchayat. The gram sabhas functions assigned in the two states are listed in Table 7.

Table 7: Functions assigned to gram sabha in Kerala and Uttar Pradesh

Functions	State(s)
1. Prepare and submit a list of schemes, beneficiaries and locations of development works	Kerala and Uttar Pradesh
2. Mobilize voluntary labor and contribution in kind and cash for community welfare programs	Kerala and Uttar Pradesh
3. Render assistance in implementation of development schemes and rendering services to villages	Kerala and Uttar Pradesh
4. Undertake programs for adult education and family welfare within the village	Kerala and Uttar Pradesh
5. Promote unity and harmony among all sections of society	Kerala
6. Consider and scrutinize existing schemes and all kinds of activities of panchayats	Kerala
7. Maintain a complete register for all development works undertaken by gram panchayat or by any other government department	Kerala
8. Scrutinize the completed works and all kinds of activities of gram panchayat	Kerala

Source: Paper by S.P. Jain presented in the National Conference on Gram Sabhas held at NIRD, Hyderabad on July 28- 29, 1999³⁰

³⁰ Retrieved from Datta and Sen 2000, pp. 44

Table 7 indicates that the functions concerning scrutinizing the schemes and activities of the gram panchayat and maintaining accurate records of work undertaken by the gram panchayat are only given to the gram sabhas in Kerala. These provisions allow for a greater accountability of the gram panchayat and, thus, are important when evaluating the facility of the institution. Providing such functions can increase the involvement of citizens in the gram sabhas when compared across the two states.

A research conducted by Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) on gram sabhas shows that Kerala is the only state where the suggestions of the gram sabhas concerning projects are binding to the gram panchayats (Datta and Sen 2000). In other states, such as Uttar Pradesh, citizens are not only uninformed about the time and venue for gram sabha meetings but also about the usefulness of these meetings since it becomes apparent that their suggestions are not being implemented by the panchayat. Hence, in Uttar Pradesh involvement in gram sabhas is less than in Kerala.

Regular village meetings and high levels of participation (Besley, Pande, Rao 2007, pp.661) characterize the panchayats in Kerala. On average, more than 1.7 million people participate in the village assemblies, which are responsible for allocating the budget (Sandbrook, Endelman, Heller, and Teichman 2007, pp. 88). As shown in Table 7, the panchayats of Kerala have more functions assigned and more power in terms of its relation with the state government. This may be one of the indicators for greater citizen involvement within the panchayat system.

Furthermore, citizens are more involved in Kerala than in Uttar Pradesh because of greater responsibilities and an understanding of the impact of their rights. For example, the villagers in the gram sabha of Kerala have an explicit right to remain informed about

the budgetary provisions, i.e. the details regarding fund allocation and cost estimates for projects undertaken by the gram panchayat. This has helped increase the monetary accountability of the panchayats and produced better results in terms of addressing the development needs of an area (Datta and Sen 2000). Therefore, because the citizens understand that they can make a difference in the decisions of the panchayat, there is greater citizen involvement in Kerala. Such a provision is absent in Uttar Pradesh, causing not only a reduction in accountability of the panchayat but also a reduction in citizen involvement.

When evaluating citizen involvement in the panchayats, it is also imperative to study the third dimension in determining the strength of an institution – **equity**. According to a survey conducted of twenty-four panchayat across two states in India, 55.6 percent of the people in lower caste felt their influence had increased due to the presence of the panchayats (Wildmalm 2008, pp. 93-94). Therefore, with an increase in representation, the lower castes may be able to construct economic programs mirroring their interests rather than those of the elites.

First, as a component of equity, it is crucial to determine the statistics regarding the inclusion of women members at the three-tiers of the panchayat system. Although a one-third reservation was established for women in positions of leadership through the 73rd amendment, Uttar Pradesh only enforced a one-fourth reservation for women. It was not until the 2005 elections that Uttar Pradesh implemented the reservation quota of one-third women for seats in the panchayat council and chairperson in the block. Table 8 shows the number and percentage of women elected to the three levels in 1999. Even with a reservation imposed by the national government, Uttar Pradesh's decision not to

follow the reservation quota indicates the inequality of women in the region when compared to men. In contrast, even though the reservation is only 33 percent for women, the data indicates that in Kerala, women also won non-reserved seats at all three levels of panchayati raj. This helps marks the stark contrast of equality of women in Uttar Pradesh as compared to Kerala.

Table 8: Elected Women members in Kerala and Uttar Pradesh at all three levels of governance in 1999³¹ (Unit: 100,000)

State	Gram Panchayat			Panchayati Samiti			Zilla Parishad		
	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%
KE	3883	10270	37.81	563	1547	36.39	104	300	34.67
UP	174410	682670	25.55	14002	58165	24.07	648	2551	25.4

Source: India Panchayat Raj Report, 2001, Vol. I- National Institute of Rural Development

Moreover, according to a survey conducted in six Indian states, including Uttar Pradesh, by PRIA (Society for Participatory Research in Asia), after elected as leaders of the panchayat, 25 percent of women reflect on the noticeable change in their status within their families. In addition, 60 percent of women stated that they would encourage other women to contest election. 60 percent of women surveyed are contemplating contesting PRI elections again (Pal 2004, pp. 142). This helps mark the gains being made by women in leadership and status in the community. However, other studies have shown that in many areas, such as western Uttar Pradesh, many of the women who have been elected as panchayat leaders are ‘namesake’ members only and do not fully comprehend

³¹ In 1999, Uttar Pradesh only had 25% reservations for women in elected position in the panchayat

their responsibilities and power (Pai 1998; Lieten 1996). Such women run for election only because the seat in their constituency has been reserved for a woman and thus they are told to do so; in reality however, the woman's husband, son or father-in law asserts the power. Therefore, not only does Uttar Pradesh have a lower percentage of women in positions of leadership, it also has more women as 'namesake' members.

"It has been emphasized that unless reservations are accompanied by female literacy, independent voting rights and change in status of women in family and society, women will continue to act as mere namesake representatives of the male members of their families" (Pai 1998). The fact that as of 2001, Kerala has a rural female literary rate of 86.8 percent as compared to Uttar Pradesh, where it is 38.6 percent, indicates that literacy can potentially play a role in establishing real power of women leaders in these two states (Chaudari 2006, pp. 166). This will be discussed in the conclusions.

Also, some argue that in reality, reservations actually impede economic growth because part of the illiterate population has gained access to leadership positions via quotas and is now making decisions without the necessary skills and proper education. Proponents of reservations defend their position by stating that if these marginalized groups are not placed into position of power, then successful policies improving their stature, through education, etc. will be difficult to attain. This conundrum will be revisited in the conclusion.

Moreover, as argued by Heller (2000), in Kerala, "subordinate classes have been effectively empowered and mobilized and have seen their interests institutionalized in the state... Most notably, the upper-caste landlords who once ruled with absolute social and economic authority over Kerala have disappeared as a social class, and the caste system,

though still an important source of identity and social life, no longer mirrors political and economic power hierarchies.” (Sandbrook et al. 2007, pp.66). The Campaign for Decentralized Planning was crucial to the historically marginalized groups, such as the SC/ST and women since they played an active part in this campaign (Chaudhuri, Harilal, and Heller 2004). This indicates that the lower marginalized groups in society, such as the SC/ST, have gained power; as a result there is a greater incentive towards promoting equity than before through their mobilization and participation.

In contrast, in Uttar Pradesh, such improvements for SC/ST groups in society have not been apparent. In fact, in a statement released in July 2009, Buta Singh, the chairman for the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) stated that “the largest number[s] of atrocities against SCs are being reported from Uttar Pradesh.”³²

a. Explaining institutional strength

The evidence above shows that the panchayats are stronger institutions in Kerala as compared to Uttar Pradesh. Since this study is assessing the validity of the hypothesis that high political competition and mass mobilization leads to stronger institutions, the first two variables must be analyzed in greater detail.

The diversity in the initial conditions across states at the time of formation during the independence struggle is important to keep in mind when considering the design, scope, and impact of state-level devolution efforts. Therefore, a brief history of these two states will provide the context for understanding the current political situation. In Kerala,

³² Indo Asian News Service (IANS). “Most atrocities against Scheduled Castes in Uttar Pradesh: Buta Singh.” July 21, 2009. Retrieved from < http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/politics/most-atrocities-against-scheduled-castes-in-uttar-pradesh-buta-singh_100221141.html>. Date accessed 25 March 2010.

1957 marked a crucial year in its political history as the Communist Party of India (CPI) was voted into power for the first time. Although short-lived, this victory was based on the activation of the poor tenants and landless laborers demanding social justice. The CPI had emerged as a party representing the anti-colonial struggle, a caste-reform movement, and an agrarian movement. Therefore, these issues became central in the politics of Kerala and any party seeking to win had to address these concerns. Thereafter, the government of Kerala has generally fluctuated between the Communist or the Congress led coalitions. With either government, the power of the poor and marginalized groups in society has been apparent in shaping the politics and policies. In a state with one of most rigid caste systems, the political competition and mobilization from the masses has led to a transformation in the agrarian social structure (Sandbrook et al. 2007, pp. 74-77). Along with party competition, party cohesion is equally important. For example, the cohesive and disciplined nature of communist party in Kerala enabled it to fuse nationalism, caste reform, and anti-landlord demands into a broad-based ideologies for the lower-class to unite and mobilize in order to win elections and initiate redistributive reforms (Sandbrook et al 2007, pp.67).

On the contrary, in Uttar Pradesh, parties have not been as competitive as the alteration in Kerala. From the time of independence, the Congress party dominated the political spectrum, until 1989. Since that time, there has been an increase in party competition with the rise of them major parties such as Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), and the Samajwadi Party. The BJP, BSP, and Congress have alternated in power since 1989, with the Samajwadi Party rising for only brief periods in the middle. However, although party competition has increased in Uttar Pradesh, it is not

based on mass mobilization. The basis for the BJP lies in Hindu nationalist, the BSP appeals to the SC/ST populations, and the Samajwadi is generally supported by the OBCs and Muslim populations in Uttar Pradesh. Many times, the platforms for these parties are not even evident as they are running on the “face-ticket” of their candidate and appealing to certain castes, religions, or classes³³.

As shown, Kerala’s political history has been contingent upon party competition since independence. Coupled with mass mobilization versus group-based mobilization (as is the case in Uttar Pradesh), party competition has led to an accountable elected body that is more responsive to the needs of the community. However, when political participation did develop in the 1990s, it did not occur due to mass mobilization or responsive to the electorate; it was based on specific caste and religious based groups. This establishes that political participation as well as mass mobilization are both equally important and together, they facilitate in the creation of strong political institutions, such as the panchayats.

As indicated by Wilkinson’s data regarding party competition, in February 2002, Uttar Pradesh had an average of 4.99 effective parties while Kerala had 6.16 (2005, pp. 20). These results show that the historical basis for political competition has not only had an impact on the leading parties competing for power, but also on the smaller parties which have developed as in these states. Therefore, on average, Kerala has a larger number of parties than Uttar Pradesh, lending to greater choices for the masses. In order

³³ Retrieved from <<http://uplegisassembly.gov.in/CHIEF%20MINISTERS.HTM>>.Date accessed 26 March 2010.

to win their votes, the parties must respond to the needs of the public. Hence, greater participation by the public encourages higher accountability.

In Kerala, after the decentralization campaign, the state government actively supported the panchayat, distributing greater powers to the local institutions. This is not true of Uttar Pradesh and can help explain the power of the local elites in shaping panchayat politics.

Furthermore, Table 9 provides details regarding political participation and mass mobilization in Kerala and Uttar Pradesh. It is based on a household survey distributed in 1998 in seven localities in each state and 100 randomly-selected households in each locality. From the sample, one-third of the respondents were women. These statistics reveal participation at the aggregate state level and are not specific to the local levels; however, although this sample is not exclusive of the rural political participation, it does reflect comparisons in political participation and awareness in the population between the two states and can be used for the purposes of this study.

Table 9: Political Participation in Kerala and Uttar Pradesh

	Kerala	Uttar Pradesh
Proportion (%) of respondents who actively participate in at least one association	50	4
Proportion (%) of respondents who took part in the following political activities during the preceding five year:		
- Voting in state elections	87	87
- Participating in campaign	39	12
- Contacting elected representatives	55	3
- Joining protest march	45	10
- Using force of violent methods	8	23
Proportion (%) of respondents who agree that:		
- 'the state government is interested in the needs of people like yourself'	52	23
- 'democracy is always best'	76	41
Proportion(%) of respondents who feel that they:		
- 'understand issues'	79	28
- 'have enough information about politics'	64	22
- 'are well-prepared to participate'	42	26

Source: Blomkvist (2000a, 2000b)³⁴

The data in table 9 shows that Kerala has a much greater percentage of its population that participates in associational life as opposed to Uttar Pradesh. Nearly all unions in Kerala are tied to political parties, creating a greater atmosphere of political participation. The inclusion of parties in such groups was introduced in the 1950s when the communist tapped into "Kerala's vibrant associational life by operating for the most part in public spaces, building a dense network of unions, farmers associations, schools, libraries, cultural organizations, and press organs" (Sandbrook et al. 2007, pp. 72, 78). Hence, currently, political parties sponsor Kerala's vast associations of women, students, and youth, increasing the activism of these groups in state politics. On the other hand, in

³⁴ Retrieved from Dreze and Sen 2002, pp. 93

Uttar Pradesh, a lack of associational life for citizens reveals the low levels of engagement with the community and acts also as an indicator of citizen participation in politics.

Table 9 also shows that although in both states the percentage of voters during election was equivalent, political participation apart from voting was low in Uttar Pradesh as compared to Kerala. Furthermore, in terms of respondents who felt they understood the issues of the campaign or received information about politics was especially low for Uttar Pradesh as compared to Kerala. This can reflect the rise in political competition in Uttar Pradesh on the basis of religious or caste identity, such as with the BJP, BSP and Samajwadi party, rather than disseminating information with a platform which appeals to the masses.

The following quotation best summarizes the phenomenon of the importance of party competition and mass mobilization in Kerala in producing social services: A stable but highly competitive balance of left-and-right-wing parties that have rotated in power, combined with continuous pressure from social movements, and most notably a labor movement that has [penetrated] into the countryside and into informal sectors, have [adamantly targeted] the state to pursue reforms and provide social services” (Sandbrook et al. 2007, pp.68). Such a movement from the masses has not occurred in the history of Uttar Pradesh and can explain for the low party competition when compared to Kerala.

b. Intervening variables of training and resources

Variations in rural political participation between Kerala and Uttar Pradesh can possibly be explained by the initiative taken by the government of Kerala to provide

training and resources at the grass-roots level. For the purpose of understanding the changes implemented by the 73rd amendment and the Panchayat Acts in Kerala, during the first year of the campaign, the government provided extensive training to all sectors of the PRIs. This element of training has been absent in Uttar Pradesh, and two variables can explain the lack of mass mobilization as well as the lack of real party competition. It is necessary to mention that the statistics above were on a state-level, it provides an overall indication of the levels of competition and participation in each state. Nevertheless, this macro vision can be applied to the rural levels and therefore to the panchayat since it is reflective of the state as an aggregate.

Edralin (1996) emphasizes the importance of elected leaders to have organizational and technical capacity. This is “determined in terms of the availability of managerial, planning, and technical skills, knowledge, and experience for program planning and implementation” (Edralin 1996, pp.11). This will be termed as training for elected leaders and citizen since it prepares the people with the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to strong institution building and it provides them with an understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Training influences facility, involvement and equity, all factors important in determining the strength of the panchayat.

The Campaign for Decentralized Planning in 1996 in Kerala developed a methodology for engineering public action. The campaign was based on the process of (a) needs identification, (b) situational analysis, (c) strategy setting, (d) project preparation, (e) plan finalization, (f) viability of plan, and (g) plan approval. It involved

informing citizens from the villages, elected panchayat officials from all three levels of governance, and administration at the local levels such as block officers.

The training was conducted with a work force of about 600 Key Resource Person (KRPs) at the state level, appointed by the government and representative of various disciplines. These included institutions such as Medical Colleges, Agricultural University, Center for Water Resources Development and Management, which provided high quality technical training. At the district level, 10,000 District Resource Persons (DRPs) and at the local level, 100,000 Local Resource Persons (LRPs) were selected. DRPs and LRPs were government officials, professionals, and activists (Matthew 2000, pp. 159). The scope of the training was such that at each gram panchayat level, there would be nearly 100 persons who were aware of the objectives and methods of the decentralized planning through the training sessions.

Following this extensive training at the beginning of the campaign, the government has continued with annual training sessions. Here, a one-day seminar is held with experts, elected panchayat members, representatives by the gram sabhas and practitioners from the public to help decide the general priorities and trends regarding development projects for the upcoming year in that specific area. These trainings are based on gram sabha reports (from their meetings) and development reports (from the gram panchayat based on the gram sabha reports and other primary and secondary data regarding development in the region) (Mathew 2000, pp. 158). Such training campaigns have been successful in Kerala but both literature and my field experience reveals a lesser extent of training in Uttar Pradesh.

In Uttar Pradesh, “the scholars (from PRIA) observe that most of the [representatives] of the panchayats lack skills in conducting meetings in a manner that could promote wider participation and discussion of the issues affecting the village. Concerns regarding social justice and internal dynamics of the village have rarely been [part of the] agenda in the gram sabha meetings” (Datta and Sen 2000, pp. 46). As stated by Mathew, in Uttar Pradesh, “the emphasis so far has been on rights and trapping of power and not on duties and obligations of the elected representatives” (2000, pp. 298). This has caused a delay in the allocation of funds to the panchayat for development work since the representatives are more attuned to gaining power than fulfilling their elected duties. Furthermore, it also helps explain why there has been a general lack of training provided to the panchayat officials, members and villagers in Uttar Pradesh.

The ability of the democratic institution to have access to and allocate monetary resources to the population is indicative of the degree of the panchayat’s power and strength as an institution. Without such resources, it would not be possible to implement the development projects and execute the duties of the panchayat. As of 1999, in Uttar Pradesh, powers of village panchayats to sanction expenditures are capped at Rs. 20,000. By contrast, in Kerala, these expenditures are uncapped regardless of the source (Chaudhuri 2006, pp.180). The constraints on the monetary expenditure allocated to the panchayats affect the facility. A list of the major sources for the panchayats of Kerala and Uttar Pradesh is listed in Table 10.

Table 10: Source of finances for the Panchayat

	Kerala	Uttar Pradesh
Major sources of finances for the panchayat	Levy tax on property, profession, entertainment and advertisement; land revenue; 35- 40 percent of net revenue of the state; grant in aids (private and from govt.)	Levy tax on land between 25- 50 paise on the among of land revenue; sales proceeds of dirt, dusts and produce; rent; penalty; loans; gifts; water and irrigation rate

Source: Rai et al. (2001)

In Kerala, each gram panchayat receives a large sum in grant-in aid³⁵ that is, by in large, not restricted by the state government. The panchayat has freedom to use it to its advantage. The only constraints on the spending are that at least 40 percent must be spent on the productive sector- such as agriculture and allied activities, industries, employment, etc. and no more than 30 percent can be spent on infrastructure. An estimated 10 percent of the funds must be used specifically for women's development projects (Mathew 2000, pp. 159).

On the other hand, in Uttar Pradesh, most of the revenue for gram panchayat activity is expected from taxes imposed on land and building; up to one percent of their annual value. Other sources include fees for registering vehicles, for providing conservancy services, and for providing licenses for trade³⁶. However, these sources are insufficient since most panchayat are incapable of raising enough financial resources independently and thus are highly dependent on state allocated funds. Since 1997, the state allocated four percent of its revenue from state taxes to the panchayats. From this, 20 percent is distributed to the zilla panchayat, 10 percent to the block panchayat, and the

³⁵ Grant in aid refers to money from the central government intended for a particular project or scheme.

³⁶ Conservancy services having jurisdiction to preserve natural resources such as trees, water, soil, etc.

remaining 70 percent to the gram panchayats. It should be noted that four percent of the state's revenue is minuscule, especially when compared to the 35- 40 percent allocated by the Kerala state government. Furthermore, even of the funds allocated by the Uttar Pradesh state government, their utilization by the panchayats has been unsatisfactory (Mathew 2000, pp. 298). The state government of Uttar Pradesh is recalcitrant in allocating funds as recommended by the State Finance Commission, and the elected panchayat representatives are reluctant or unable to raise their own funds.

Furthermore, resources provided by the government are not only confined to access to monetary sources by the panchayat. They also refers to sources of mass communication because only when a large population is exposed to the same information can coordinated voter action demand a response if the incumbent government is underperforming (Keefer and Khemani 2004, pp. 12). According to Keeler and Khemani "broad sections of the poor population might be particularly disadvantaged in accessing information, because of illiteracy, limited mobility, and under developing media for mass communication, creating space for organized and informed special interests to purchase narrowly targeted policies at the expense of broad services" (2004, pp. 8). Therefore, the information base for the rural population and its sources between Kerala versus Uttar Pradesh shows the extent of information reaching the villages. Communication can act as an intervening variable between political competition and mass mobilization, by facilitating the creation of a strong panchayat.

Table 11 provides a list of facilities in existence that allow for such communication. It shows that when measured per 1000 villages in the state, Kerala has 416 community TV centers, 853 cable TV connections, 858 cooperative societies, and

800 self-help groups. Conversely, Uttar Pradesh has 1, 21, 209, and 207 respectively. This signifies that the rural populations in Kerala have greater access to mass media and other forms of communication. Source of media can affect the ability to inform the citizens regarding programs implemented by the government. Moreover, the presence of unionized groups in village through the formation of cooperative societies and self-help groups is crucial. These groups not only provide for greater forms of associational ties between the villages, but, also give an outlet to express discontent and promote mass mobilization in case there is a dissatisfaction among the population.

Table 11: Number of villages (per 1000) with the facilities/existence of community TV centers, Cable TV connection, Co-operative Society and Self-help groups as of 2002.

State	Community TV center	Cable TV connection	Co-operative Society	Self-help group
Kerala	416	853	858	800
UP	1	21	209	207
India Average	65	164	302	240

Source: Compiled from statistics released by: Report on Village Facilities, NSS Report No. 487, 58th Round (Surveyed July- December 2002)³⁷

In conclusion, as shown, the panchayats of Kerala are stronger as institutions of governance than the panchayats of Uttar Pradesh. High levels of political participation and mass mobilization mark the history of Kerala that has been virtually nonexistent in Uttar Pradesh. Both variables have contributed to greater training and resources provided

³⁷ Retrieved from indiastat.com. Date Accessed 24 March 2010.

to government institutions, such as the panchayat. Again, comparatively, these aspects have largely been lacking in Uttar Pradesh.

2. Strength within Uttar Pradesh

As indicated earlier, the fieldwork conducted for this study is in western Uttar Pradesh was in the Mathura Zilla. According to the 2001 Census, 71.7 percent of Mathura's population lives in rural areas while 28.3 percent occupies cities. The literacy rate is 61.46 percent of the population – 76.5 percent for males and 43.4 percent for females. 19.6 percent of the population is Scheduled Castes with the largest groups being Chamar, Balmiki and Kori. The Scheduled Tribe population consists of 0.01 percent.

Within the Mathura district, I focused on the Maat tehsil, which consists of thirty-nine panchayats. In order to obtain the most accurate accounts of information, cross-referencing and triangulation among tehsil officials, panchayat leaders and villagers was conducive to my research.

It is important be familiar with basic statistics regarding panchayats in this tehsil as a means of understanding the context of the area studied. Figure 5 shows the education level of the pradhans and as seen, the majority have complete primary education.

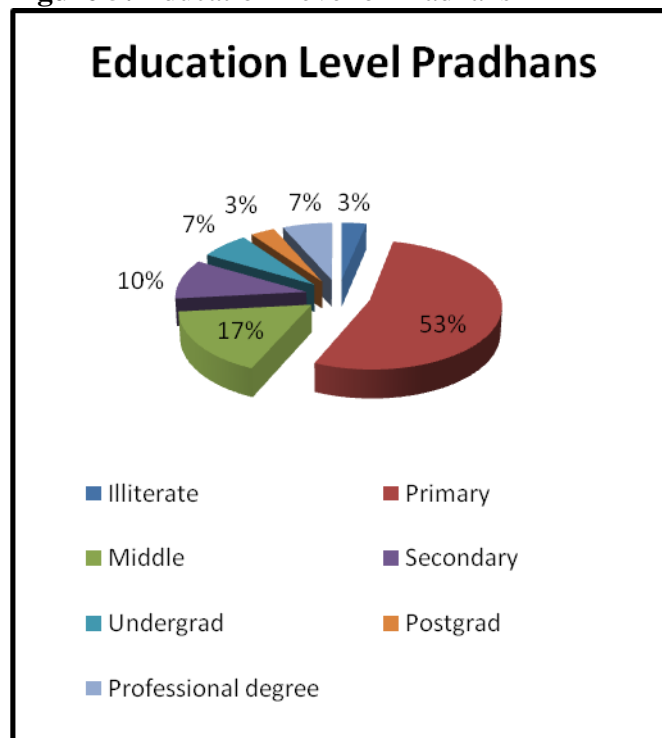
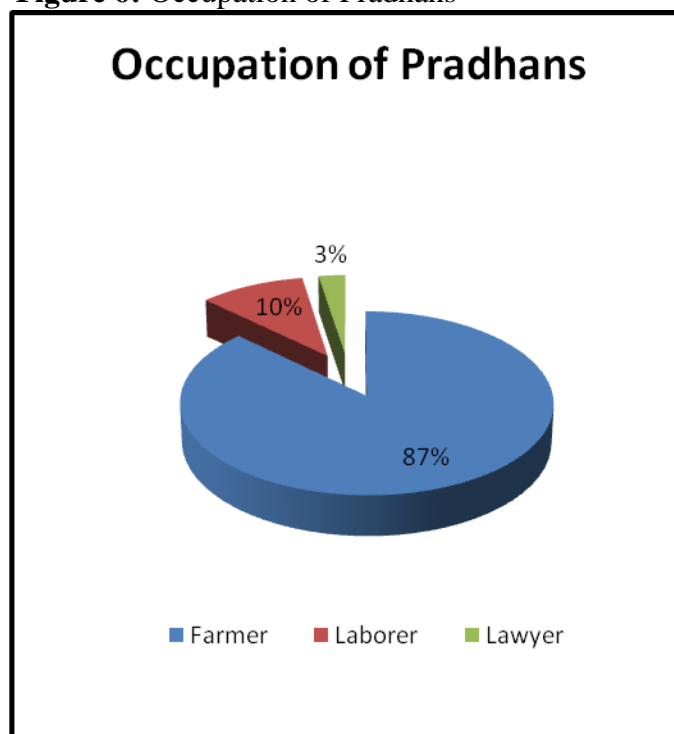
Figure 5: Education Level of Pradhans³⁸

Figure 6 displays the occupation of the pradhans and shows that most of the pradhans are farmers and landowners.

³⁸ Source: Maat block office records

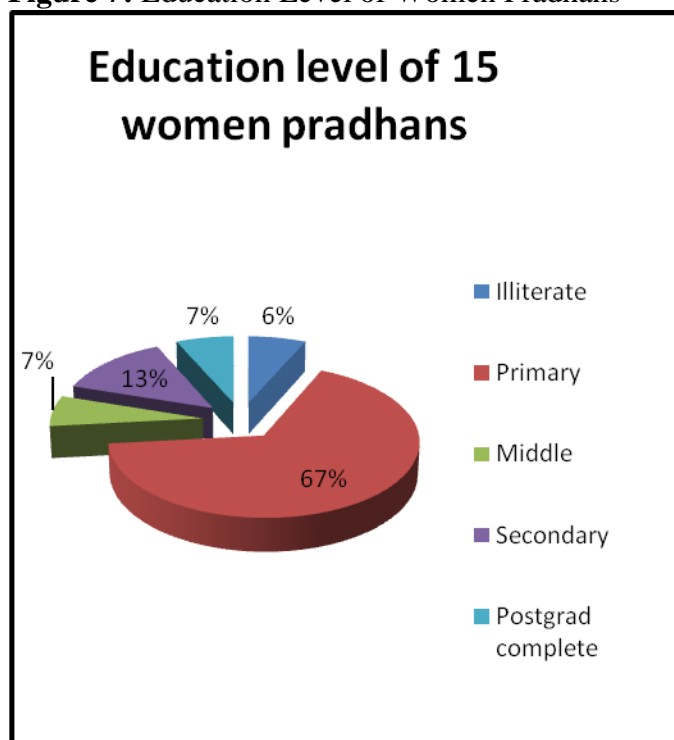
Figure 6: Occupation of Pradhans³⁹

In addition of the 39 pradhans, 11 had a criminal background.⁴⁰

Regarding **equity**, Figure 7 indicates the education level of the 15 women pradhans from the 39 panchayats. It shows that when compared with males from chart 1, almost three-fourths of the women are either illiterate or with a primary level of education. This reveals that there is still a considerable disadvantage to women, even in positions of leadership, since equality in terms of education is not present.

³⁹ Source: Maat block office records

⁴⁰ Source: Maat block officer

Figure 7: Education Level of Women Pradhans⁴¹

From the thirty-nine panchayats in the Maat tehsil, nine panchayats were chosen through random sampling from a list of all panchayats provided by the block officer. The strengths of each panchayat were assessed by their corresponding categories of facility, involvement and equity. A summary of the finding can be found in Table 20. This table indicates that from the nine panchayats that were chosen for the sample, one of them can be considered as high in its measure of strength, followed by four that are medium-strong while four proved low when using these strength indications. It is to be noted that these measures of strength are defined relative to the other panchayats in the sample. As a result, measure of strength can change depending on the pool with which that panchayat is being compared. However, the definitions used to assess facility, involvement, and equity use exact measures to calculate these factors.

⁴¹ Source: Maat block office records

Table 12: Assessing the strength of the panchayat through mechanisms of facility, involvement, and equity as measured through field interviews⁴²

Panchayat No. →	One ⁴³	Two ⁴⁴	Three ⁴⁵	Four ⁴⁶	Five ⁴⁷	Six ⁴⁸	Seven ⁴⁹	Eight ⁵⁰	Nine ⁵¹
Facility									
1. Regular gram sabha meetings	Low	Low	0	Med	Med	Low	Low	Low	Low
2. Regular gram panchayat meetings	Med	Low	0	Med	Med	Low	Med	Low	Low
3. Panchayat house has been established	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
4. Pradhan has a criminal record	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Involvement									
1. Gram Sabha meetings attended by villagers	Low	Low	0	Med	High	Med	Med	Low	Low
2. Gram Panchayat meetings attended by members	Med	Low	0	Med	High	Med	Low	Low	Low
Equity									
1. Woman pradhan with actual power	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	N/A
2. Women representation in gram sabha meetings	Low	Low	0	Low	Med	Low	Low	Low	Low
Strength	Med	Low	Low	Med	High	Med	Med	Low	Low

⁴² Source: Interviews. Please note a list demographic information regarding all interviews is listed in Appendix 2

⁴³ Source: based on interviews 1, 2. Date interviewed 21 January 2010

⁴⁴ Source: based on interviews 3, 4. Date interviewed 27 January 2010

⁴⁵ Source: based on interviews 5, 6. Date interviewed 28 January 2010

⁴⁶ Source: based on interviews 7, 8. Date interviewed 28 January 2010

⁴⁷ Source: based on interviews 9- 17. Dates interviewed 29 January 2010, 4- 5 February 2010

⁴⁸ Source: based on interviews 18, 19. Date interviewed 25 January 2010

⁴⁹ Source: based on interviews 20, 21. Date interviewed 25 January 2010

⁵⁰ Source: based on interviews 22, 23. Date interviewed 27 January 2010

⁵¹ Source: based on interviews 24- 39. Dates interviewed 21- 23, 25 January 2010

Key for Table 4⁵²:

Facility

1. High (H) indicates 4 of 4; Medium (M) indicate 2 to 3 of 4; Low (L) indicates 1 of 4; 0 indicates where there have been no meetings
2. High (H) indicates 12 to 8 of 12; Medium (M) indicate 8 to 4 of 12; Low (L) indicates 4 to 1 of 12; 0 is when there have been no meetings
3. Yes indicates a panchayat house constructed as of 2005 and No indicates that the lack of
4. Yes indicates the pradhan has had atleast one First Information Report (FIR) filed against him/her

Involvement

1. High indicates 10 percent or more of the population; Medium indicate 10 to 5 percent of population; Low indicates less than 5 percent of the population; 0 indicates no meeting
2. High indicates a majority of the members present; Medium indicate at least half of the members present; Low indicates less than half of the members present

Equity

1. Yes indicates that she has power; No indicates she does not have power; N/A indicates the panchayat does not have a woman chairperson
2. High indicates 10 percent or more present; Medium indicates 10 to 5 percent present; Low indicates less than 5 percent present

Table 12 indicates that of the nine panchayats, one can be considered high, four medium, and four low in regards to strength of the institution. For measuring **facility**, it shows that six of the nine panchayat had low levels of gram sabha meetings, two had medium, while one did not have any in the past year. Participation of citizens in the gram sabha is an important indicator of deliberation and can increase the accountability of panchayats due to the responsive citizen body (Besley, Pande and Rao 2005). Also, the gram panchayat meetings were equally divided between medium and low for four

⁵² Please note that in the key for Table 4, the measures that have been used to determine the variations in the proxies for the independent variables are not very demanding (for example a high indicator for involvement is only 10 percent of the population attending gram sabha meetings). Thus, as compared with other states, such as Kerala, these would be considered low performing institutions. However, in order to measure variation within state, these proxies were used and thus, the final strength is applicable to the group of panchayats in this study. However, the measures determined as proxies for facility, involvement, and equity can be used for other studies across states.

panchayats each. One did not have any. Of the nine panchayats, six had established a panchayat house. In cases where there was not a panchayat house, when asked when and where the meetings were conducted, the response was usually on a Saturday or Sunday at the local elementary school. Surprisingly, from the nine panchayats selected, four of the pradhans had a criminal record as indicated by interviews with the block officer.

For the next sections, information regarding **involvement** will be noted without the panchayat that does not have any meetings since it is irrelevant to this dataset. Of the eight panchayats, four had low levels of participation, three had medium levels, and one had high level in gram sabha meetings. For gram panchayat meetings, the statistics were the same although not corresponding with the same panchayat.

For **equity**, three of the nine panchayat had women pradhan, two of which exerted real power but one where the women selected were only a proxy for their husbands. Female participation in the gram sabha meetings was low for seven panchayats and only medium for one panchayat. This indicates that the status of women representatives in panchayats, even if the panchayat has a woman pradhan, is still relatively low.

After an assessment of these nine panchayats was conducted, I decided to focus on the reason for these variations through a comparative analysis between two of the panchayats. For my in-depth analysis, I selected panchayat number five and nine since they exhibited variation within the strength of the panchayat. Panchayat number five, Jahangirpur, was selected because from the sample it was the only panchayat that can be considered relatively strong. In contrast, panchayat number nine, Arruwa, was chosen because it was relatively low in strength. Arruwa was randomly selected from the other panchayats that exhibited “low” strengths.

With these two case-studies, my aim was to understand the causes for the variations in strength and to test my hypothesis regarding the correlation between the leadership style of the pradhan and the strength of the institution. Rural leadership is defined as the democratically elected members of representative institutions (Bhatt 1994, pp. 27).

The Jahangirpur panchayat has two villages under its jurisdiction with a total population of 2,266, according to the 2001 census data. Scheduled Castes (SC) are 39 percent, Other Backward Classes (OBC) are 28 percent, and Unreserved (UR) which is the general category are 33 percent of the population. The Arruwa panchayat has fifteen villages under its jurisdiction with a total population of 11,302, according to the 2001 census data. SCs are 27 percent, OBCs are 51 percent, and URs are 22 percent of the population.

Within my comparative in-depth study, I was not able to control for the village population and distribution of castes within the village. The stronger panchayat (Jahangirpur) had a small population but no majority while Arruwa (the weaker panchayat) had a larger population with the OBCs as the majority.

a. Explaining institutional strength

As indicated in the literature review, the leadership ethos of the pradhan significantly impacts the strength of the panchayat that he or she governs. Table 21 below represents the leadership pattern of the pradhans in the two panchayats selected for the comparative case study.

Table 13: Leadership characteristics of the pradhans in case-study⁵³

	Jahangirpur (High in Strength)	Arruwa (Low in Strength)
Authority structure	Collective	Individual
Family background	Elective-hereditary	Elective
Age	Middle-age	Middle-age
Caste	Brahmin	Jat- OBC
Reservation of pradhan seat	Unreserved	OBC
Economic status	High class	Low-Middle class
Education	Law degree	Elementary school
Criminal Record	No	Yes
Incumbent	No	No
Strength of Pradhan	Medium-High	Low

Table 13 indicates that neither of the pradhans were incumbents and both were from the same age group. They both varied in all other aspects. The pradhan of Jahangirpur had a much more collective style of governance since he was able to delineate responsibility to other panchayat members and made decisions in consultation with them through gram panchayat meetings and with the villagers through gram sabha meetings. The villagers were also aware of his presence in the village as a figure of authority and he was respected by many. This could have been influenced by the fact that although he was an elected member, his forefathers (including his grandfather and father) had ruled this panchayat area for over twenty years. Hence, he had a strong family name in the area and was much respected, especially among the elders of the community. He

⁵³ Based on interviews 9- 17. Dates interviewed 29 January 2010, 4- 5 February 2010; on interviews 24- 39. Dates interviewed 21- 23, 25 January 2010; and on data from the Maat Block Office

was also of the Brahmin caste, the most respected caste in the Indian varna system. He was a wealthy man and had a reputation in the village for going to a foreign country, especially America, once a year⁵⁴. Furthermore, he had no criminal record and possessed a professional law degree, the highest form of education attained by any of the pradhans in that area.

In stark contrast, the pradhan of Arruwa had an individualistic style of governance because when interviewing some of the panchayat members, they were unaware of issues such as the budget and the programs that were supposed to be facilitated by the panchayat. On a whole, they stated that the pradhan consulted with only one or two of the panchayat members that he is close with and made decisions accordingly. Also, he was an elected representative with no family history of governance in the panchayat and won due to reservation in the OBC category. He was from the low-middle class and had obtained up to an elementary school education. He also had an interesting criminal history that the villagers were aware of before he was elected. However, due to the rivalries in the village and complexities surrounding his criminal background, he nevertheless won sympathy votes and succeeded in winning the election.

Compiling all these variables, the strength of the pradhan was measured by the villagers' perspectives regarding the trust they placed in the pradhan and the awareness of the pradhan regarding the panchayat system and concerns of the village.

“Jitne ke bad pradhan bas sochta hai ki dan ikhata ho gaye. Yeh halat hai des mein. Panchayat mein to bahut bade chor hai. Pradhan bas dhan canchna chahiye.”⁵⁵

⁵⁴ When interviewed, he stated that his sister and some uncles and cousins lived in America and he would go to visit them often (generally once a year).

⁵⁵ Source: Interview Number 26

“After winning, the pradhan only thinks about collecting [gaining] money. This is the condition in this country. The panchayat is basically huge thieves. The pradhan only want to pull as much money as he can.”

The interview indicates that the person believes that pradhan tries to keep as much money as he can from the panchayat funds for his own personal use. This shows that the villagers do not trust the pradhan. Also, the pradhan does not have concerns regarding the needs of the village since he is taking money intended for their use.

In contrast, when asked the villagers in Jahangirpur regarding their pradhan, they had a better impression of him.

*“Pradhan badiya hai. Zyada bev bav nahin mata hai. Sahi banda hai. Inki babba pradhan the... par-babba pradhan the.”*⁵⁶

“The pradhan is good. He does not believe in discrimination according to caste. He is a good man. His father was pradhan... his grandfather was pradhan.”

B. Explaining effects of strong institutions to outcomes

1. Between Kerala and Uttar Pradesh

Since the variations in the strength of the panchayat institutions between Kerala and Uttar Pradesh has been assessed, it is next important to evaluate the third hypothesis assessing the relationship between strong institutions and outcome.

Outcomes of the panchayat will be measured according to (1) economic development, (2) social justice, and (3) ability to monitor disputes.

The economic development indicators are listed in Tables 14 and 15. In terms of per capital SDP from agriculture, Kerala progressed 11.2 percent more than Uttar Pradesh did. This value indicates that the total value of agricultural products grew much more in Kerala than in Uttar Pradesh. Since agriculture is drawn from rural sector of the state, this

⁵⁶ Source: Interview Number 12

implies the possibility that there is greater employment in this sector, availability of fertilizers, and so forth. Thus, there is more development happening in Kerala than in Uttar Pradesh in the agriculture sector. Furthermore, the rural per capita expenditure in Kerala increased 19.6 percent from 1993 to 1999 as compared to only 8.3 percent in Uttar Pradesh over the same time. This may indicate the purchasing power of the people in Kerala has increased since they have more to spend than in Uttar Pradesh. It may also signify that the government is spending more in rural areas of Kerala than in Uttar Pradesh. Additionally, in Kerala, the rural headcount index of poverty declined by 48.7 percent in the same seven years as compared to Uttar Pradesh where it was only a decline of 24.8 percent. This shows Kerala has improved the conditions in the state so that there are less people that fall under the poverty index.

Table 14: Economic development indicators compared of Kerala and UP

	Per Capita SDP from agriculture			Rural per Capita expenditure			Rural Headcount Index of Poverty		
	1991-1993	1995-1997	Index of Progress	1993	1999	Index of Progress	1993	1999	Index of Progress
Kerala	901	1007	11.8	73	88	19.6	19.5	10.0	48.7
UP	927	933	0.6	64	69	8.3	28.6	21.5	24.8

Source: Chaudhuri 2006, 2006, pp. 165

Furthermore, in terms of the percent of households with electricity, Kerala progressed by 42.3 percent from 1991 to 2001 while Uttar Pradesh progressed only 14.9 percent during the same time. In terms of percent of households with permanent homes,

Kerala and Uttar Pradesh has similar percents, with 27.6 and 24.2 respectively. It should be noted that although these two indicators do not necessarily indicate that they are from the rural sector of society, electricity and permanent homes are more needed in the rural areas than in cities. These two variables provide important insight into changes made at the household level.

Table 15: Economic development indicators in Kerala and UP

	Percent of households with electricity			Percent of households with permanent homes		
	1991	2001	Index of Progress	1991	2001	Index of Progress
Kerala	48.4	70.2	42.3	56.0	68.1	27.6
UP	21.9	33.5	14.9	41.0	55.3	24.2

Source: Chaudhuri, 2006, pp. 165

The data for development of social justice has been compiled in Tables 16 and 17. Changes over time between the first three indicators help show the changes since the establishment of a strong panchayat in Kerala. Although this is aggregate data at the state level, it is still important to the discussion since it includes the rural sectors as well (which account for around three-fourths of the population in both states). In addition, because these years mark a time concerning institution building in Kerala, especially for panchayats, they can be used for the purposes of this study.

As indicated in Table 16, Kerala progressed from 1992 to 1998 in terms of school attendance rate at an index value of 74.6 while this number was only 40.6. During this same period, the under-five mortality rate was at index value of 35.8 for Kerala as

compared to 18.3 for Uttar Pradesh. Furthermore, the percentage of children fully vaccinated increased in Kerala from 1992 to 1998 at an index of 38.2 while this reached only 0.4 in Uttar Pradesh. These indicators show that there is a stark contrast in child development in Kerala as contrasted in Uttar Pradesh. In terms of social justice and development, Dreze and Gazdar (1996) capture the remarkable variation in life chances by observing, “a newborn girl can expect to live *20 years longer* if she was born in Kerala than Uttar Pradesh” (Sandbrook et al 2007, pp.70).

Table 16: Social human development indicators of Kerala and UP

	School Attendance Rate			Under Five-Mortality Rate			Percent of Children Fully Vaccinated		
	1992	1998	Index of Progress	1992	1998	Index of Progress	1992	1998	Index of Progress
Kerala	85.8	96.4	74.6	41	26	35.8	54.4	71.8	38.2
UP	56.2	74.0	40.6	162	132	18.3	19.8	20.1	0.4

Source: Chaudhuri, pp. 165

Table 17 measures the number of health center in rural areas of the two states. The health center to population ratio is calculated by dividing the rural populations of each state with the number of centers. Hence, it shows that in terms of health sub-centers, there is one facility for every 5,094 people in Kerala while one facility serves almost four times as many people in Uttar Pradesh. In terms of the primary health center, Kerala has one center serving a population of 909 while in Uttar Pradesh, one center serves a population that is four times as much. Similarly, in terms of the number of community

centers, one center serves 107 people in Kerala while it serves 515 people in Uttar Pradesh. This indicates that as of 2008, Kerala has progressed almost four times as much in terms of providing its population with health centers as compared to Uttar Pradesh. Because this is within the domain of the panchayat, a correlation can be drawn between the institution and the output of health centers.

Table 17: Average rural population provided with health centers (as of March 2008)

	Health Sub Center		Primary Health Center		Community Health Center	
	Number of center	Population ratio to one center	Number of center	Population ratio to one center	Number of centers	Population ratio to one center
Kerala	4628	5,094	25934	909	220322	107
Uttar Pradesh	6416	20,520	35680	3690	255647	515

Source: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India⁵⁷

Social justice as related to women will be measured by rural female literacy. As shown in Table 18, the index of progress for Kerala from 1991 to 2001 was 11.3 while it was 24.2. This shows that Uttar Pradesh has made significantly greater progress in terms of female literacy than Kerala. Nevertheless, Kerala largely surpasses in the percentage of rural literate females with 86.8 percent while it is only 38.6 percent in Uttar Pradesh. Furthermore, as indicated earlier, of the 40 percent in funds received by the panchayats of Kerala, 10 percent must be spent towards the welfare of women. Such a provision regarding the allocation of resources is absent in Uttar Pradesh. This signifies that the state government of Kerala has also introduced important legislation to improve the

⁵⁷ Retrieved from indiastat.com. Date Accessed 5 December 2009.

condition of women in rural Kerala, leading to greater chances in improving equity for women.

Table 18: Social human development indicators for women in Kerala and UP

	Rural Female Literacy Rate		
	1991	2001	Index of Progress
Kerala	85.1	86.8	11.3
Uttar Pradesh	19.0	38.6	24.2

Source: Chaudhuri, 2006, pp. 165

Social justice for SC groups will be measured by changes the literacy rate as indicated in Table 19. The literacy rate of SCs in Kerala has increased from 79.9 percent at the 1991 census to 82.7 percent at the 2001 census. This is significantly greater than the national average of 54.7 percent. The literacy rate for SC groups has increased from 26.2 percent during the 1991 census to 46.3 percent at the 2001 census in Uttar Pradesh. However, this is much lower than the national average⁵⁸.

Table 19: Literacy rate for scheduled castes

	Scheduled Castes Literacy Rate		
	1991	2001	Percentage Change
Kerala	79.9	82.7	2.8
Uttar Pradesh	26.2	46.3	20.0

Source: 2001 Census of India

⁵⁸ 2001 Census of India. Retrieved from <http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_sc_kerala.pdf>, and http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_sc_up.pdf. Dace Accessed 28 February 2010

Data regarding social justice in an aggregate state level is listed in is in Tables 18 and 19. According to Table 20, from 1973 to 1974, both Kerala and Uttar Pradesh have similar amounts of their population below poverty level (BPL groups). However, after analyzing the trend over time, it can be seen that from 2004-2005, Kerala has 12.72 percent of the population BPL and Uttar Pradesh had 31.15 percent of its population. This statistics are important to note because the two states in the 1970s had similar levels of families in poverty present but that number reduced for Kerala by around 46 percent while it was only about 26 percent for Uttar Pradesh. Thus, by 1999-2000, Kerala's BPL population was 12.72 percent while Uttar Pradesh's BPL population was 31.15 percent. Although this information is on the aggregate state-level, it also reflects on the BPL population in rural areas.

Table 20: State's Percentage of Population Below Poverty Level (BPL)

State's Percentage of Population Below Poverty Level						
States	1973- 74	1977- 78	1983- 84	1987- 88	1993- 94	1999- 2000
Kerala	58.79	52.22	40.42	31.79	25.43	12. 72
Uttar Pradesh	57.07	49.05	47.0	41.46	40.85	31.15
India	54.88	51.32	44.48	38.86	35.97	26.30

Source: Economy Survey of Delhi 2001- 02, Department of Planning⁵⁹

This information is important to understand when analyzing Table 21 regarding the government policies to BPL groups. Table 7 shows the data for the number of health

⁵⁹ Retrieved from indiastat.com. Date Accessed 5 December 2009.

insurance schemes issued to families BPL in each state for more recent years. Kerala's issued this policy for 23, 648 families in 2004-2005 and to 36, 829 families in 2005-2006. In contrast, Uttar Pradesh issued this policy for 1,1161 families in 2004-2005 and 714 families in 2005-2006. When considering that the population of Uttar Pradesh is five times that of Kerala and during this time period Uttar Pradesh had almost 20 percent more families Below Poverty Line than Kerala, it is clearly evident that Uttar Pradesh did not affect anywhere close to the population size affected in Kerala by these policies.

Table 21: State performance of universal health insurance scheme for Below Poverty Level (BPL) Families

	No. of policies issued by the state/ No. of families covered		No. of persons covered		Total Premium (Rs in Lakh)	
	2004- 05	2005- 06	2004- 05	2005- 06	2004- 05	2005- 06
Kerala	23648	36829	83761	138424	113.40	201.54
UP	1161	714	1615	971	4.77	2.8

Source: Lok Sabha, 2006⁶⁰

The data above indicates that in terms of social development and justice, Kerala supersedes Uttar Pradesh.

In Kerala, the citizens have shifted their trust from asymmetrical interpersonal networks to formal public institutions, such as the panchayat. (Sandbrook et al. 2007, pp.71). This is crucial when evaluating the capacity of the panchayat to resolve disputes in the villages. However, I was not able to find concrete data at the state level regarding disputers in Uttar Pradesh and Kerala and this will be discussed later in my conclusion.

⁶⁰ Retrieved from indiastat.com. Date Accessed 5 December 2009.

2. Within Uttar Pradesh

After establishing the variations in the strengths of the institutions, my next hypothesis attempts to assess the second question: Does a strong institution lead to greater levels of economic development, social justice, and the facility of dispute resolution? After establishing that the panchayat of Jahangirpur was strong as compared to the panchayat of Arruwa, the outputs regarding these two panchayats were measured. This was examined through interviews conducted with local villagers, panchayat members, panchayat pradhan, and the block officer.

First, when studying the panchayat of Jahangirpur, walking in one of its village allowed me to actually see that development work was in progress. This included the building of roads and houses for BPL groups. Therefore, on a whole, economic development was evident. Examples can also be seen from the following interviews when asked questions about how much development working was being done by the panchayat.

“Yahan par to vikar kam ho raha hai, Aap khud hi dekh sakte hai. Hamari gaon Ambedkar goa hai to kam chal raha hai”⁶¹

“There are development projects occurring in this village. You can see for yourself. Our village is an Ambedkar village so work is happening.”

This quotation is from the village of Begumpur, within the Jahangirpur panchayat. It refers to Ambedkar village, a term used to identify villages within Uttar Pradesh that have a large population of scheduled castes by the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mayawati. Mayawati is an illiterate scheduled caste female and thus her victory into such position of power was hailed as a victory by the scheduled castes. Ambedkar villages receive extra funding from the state government to implement projects for development

⁶¹ Source: Interview Number 9

in the village. The fact that this village was an Ambekhar village affects the fact that development was evident, and this does not directly reflect on the panchayat. Nevertheless, the panchayat does facilitate the process and having a strong panchayat helps when implementing the projects listed for Ambedkar villages. Additionally, there were small development projects, such as the building of roads happening the neighborhood village as well, which falls under the Jahangirpur panchayat.

On the contrary, economic development were not prominent both while exploring the villages of Aruwwa and while communicating with the villagers. The following excerpts provide information from interviews regarding development projects in the Arruwa panchayat:

*“Panchayat kucha na kare. Indra AWAZ koi milti nahin hai. Pradhan hai to woh apna hi apna karta hai. Panchayat kuch na karti.”*⁶²

“The Panchayat does not do anything. Indra AWAZ [the housing project scheme by the government for BPL groups] is not being provided to us. The Pradhan does what he wants to and the panchayat is not able to do anything about it.”

The following interview refers to a scheme promoted by the government for panchayats to install bathrooms in the homes for BPL groups.

*“Mein bich mein bimar ho gaya tha to meine operation karvaya. Operation ke baad latrine ki bahut zaroorat thi. To meine kaha pradhan se ki aap gao mein latrine bana rahe ho to ek hamare liye bi bano. Mujhe khaet mein jana hota tha. To usne thoda idhar udhar kaha aur phir akhri mein kaha ki ek gaddha khod. To meine ek gaddha-vadha bhi kodha lakin usne phir kuch nahin kiya. To phir meine poochna hi chod diya. Meri aadat hai ki hum kisi kai piche nahin padte.”*⁶³

“I became ill some time ago and I had to get an operation. After the operation, I needed to go to the toilet often. So I asked the pradhan that since he was making toilets in other parts of the village, to make one for me as well. I had been using the fields. He did not act on the request for some time. After my persistence, he finally told me to dig a hole [for the toilet to be installed]. I did dig a hole but then

⁶² Source: Interview Number 25

⁶³ Source: Interview Number 24

he did not pursue it further. Then even I stopped asking because I don't have the habit of nagging someone [I have my self-respect].”

Concerning social justice, as shown in Table 4, the panchayat of Jahangirpur was the only panchayat in which the participation of women in gram sabha meetings was of medium strength. This measure was low for all other panchayats, including Arruwa. Furthermore, when interviewing the women in Arruwa, individually and in groups, I could not find a single woman who was aware of the projects, purpose and budget of the panchayat. Conversely, this factor could have been influenced by the fact that Arruwa is a weak panchayat overall and thus many of the villagers are not aware of the panchayat efforts or its role as an institution in their community.

“Is pradhan ke babba ne humko teen acres zamin dilvaiti. Yeh pradhan Brahmin hai lakin vaise bev bhao nahin karta hai. Usse pure gao mein fark padta hai.”⁶⁴

“The current pradhan's father gave all of us [scheduled castes] three acres of land for cultivation. The pradhan is Brahmin but he does not act differently with us. This [type of behavior] makes a difference to our community in the whole village.”

“Is panch varsi mein, kamzor, beech ka, aur high power ke liye sab badhiya chal raha hai.”⁶⁵

“In the history of the current panchayat [since 2005], the weak, in the middle and high power persons all have it good.”

Moreover, when I interviewed the citizens from the Arruwa panchayat, I perceived that members from the lower caste do not have the same status and social justice leading to equality is still necessary. For example, one man from the SC group quoted:

“...[woh] school mein padne na de. School se bahar nikal daete ki tum sudra ho. Yaha sudra ko padne ka adhikar nahin hai. Paani pine na dete hai. Talab se

⁶⁴ Source: Interview Number 16

⁶⁵ Source: Interview Number 12

*paani to nahin pi sakte. Yaha gadde mein paani bhar jaye to wahan se pilo. Agar ek kutta ek ghade-phade ko pakad le toh koi baat nahin hai. Magar insaan koi sudra ho, jaise mein hoin, to choone se hi boleinge ki meine ghada ganda kar diya.*⁶⁶

“...They [upper caste] do not let us learn in school. They kick us out of the school saying that you are a sudra. Sudras have no right to learn here. They don’t let us drink water from the pond nearby. They tell us to drink from the potholes if we want water. If a dog touches one of their drinking vessels, then it does not matter. But if a man, a sudra, such as myself touch the drinking vessel, then they will say that I am polluting it.”⁶⁷

When asked if the election of scheduled castes in the panchayats has brought about any change in the status of scheduled castes, he states:

*“Ticket milne se kya hota hai. Hain humare ek do admni hai. Lakin pradhan sab karta rahata hai- jo bhi hai. Mayawati ne thoda ahasas dilaya hai. Thodi jagrup dilayi hai. Sudhar to apne aap hi hoga. Sudhar hai kyoki hum hat pao se mahanat karte hai. Kise aur se nahin*⁶⁸”

“What do you get just from gaining a ticket [seat in the panchayat]? Yes we have one or two of our men there [from the scheduled castes]. But the pradhan always does everything, whatever it is. Yes, with Mayawati [the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh from the scheduled caste] has brought about a new feeling, a slow movement of awakening. We have to make change ourselves. The change happens because we are hardworking – not due to someone else.”

This shows that the interviewee did not view obtaining a seat in the *panchayat* as a great accomplishment for the scheduled caste because he knew that they did not play an important role in the panchayat anyways. Also, he was not even aware of how many members there are in the panchayat from his caste, indicating that the panchayat leaders do not necessarily act as liaisons. This could be partially due to the fact that the members are not as important in the village. He indicated that the current Chief Minister of Uttar

⁶⁶ Source: Interview Number 26

⁶⁷ A dog is considered a dirty animal which is not respected much in India. Thus, for a person to be considered even less than a dog is a significant statement.

⁶⁸ Source: Interview Number 26

Pradesh, an uneducated scheduled caste woman, has helped create a feeling of victory – but any changes that are occurring are not due to others, like the panchayat.

I interviewed another scheduled caste male in the village regarding his view about changes in status to their group and he stated:

*“Agar yeh upper caste ke log hume puri mazdori nahin dete hai, to yeh hume raja kaise bana dinge”*⁶⁹

“If the upper caste persons do not even give us our rightful capacity as laborers, then
[do you think] they are going to make us kings.”

The analogy he used represents that they [scheduled castes] are not even achieving their rights as laborers, then how can they expect to achieve an equal status.

Another analogy used by another member of scheduled caste is:

*“...jaise batis daant hote hai na... ek jib or batis dant, vaise hum banjar log rahate hain. Batis daant mein jab ek jib ho, to daant jane kidhar se jaake usko kaat sakte hai.”*⁷⁰

“... like thirty-two teeth exist in our mouth...one tongue and thirty-two teeth, that is how us banjar [scheduled castes] live. When there are thirty-two teeth and one tongue, then the teeth can come bite the tongue from whichever direction.”

In this analogy, the banjar caste is the tongue while the teeth are the upper castes which surround them in greater numbers. This reflects a sense of oppression for scheduled castes.

Finally, the capacity of the panchayat to fulfill its traditional role of moderating dispute resolution was determined. As a whole, the region studied does not encounter major disputes and neither has it historically been prone to conflicts. Nevertheless, when cases of dispute did occur, the most topics disputed are listed in Table 22.

⁶⁹ Source: Interview Number 32

⁷⁰ Source: Interview Number 35

Table 22⁷¹: Measure of the types of disputes most common in the village (High, Medium Low)⁷²

	Jahangirpur	Aruwwa
Land issues (stealing of agriculture land/crops)	High	High
Family disputes, neighbor disputes	Med	Med
Caste disputes	High	Med-Low

Through interviews, it was determined that in both villages when issues of conflict did arise, they were either resolved at the small-scale level with the parties involved and perhaps their neighbors acted as moderators. However, if the issues were unsolvable at this scale, then traditionally, the panchayat would be asked to intervene since elders formed the panchayat. The elders are considered the wisdom of the community due to their age and thus their decisions, especially regarding disputes that are critical to the functioning of the villages.

The role of the panchayat as a body to resolve disputes was measured by interviewing the villagers and assessing the extent to which they presented conflicts to the panchayat. As a whole, in both villages, it was seen that disputes were not that commonly presented to the panchayat. This change in trend could be reflected by the fact that the elected panchayat members and pradhan are usually middle age, as was the case in both of the villages. However, the villagers in the Jahangirpur panchayat were more likely to present issues of conflict to the panchayat for two reasons. One, because they

⁷¹ Based on interviews 9- 17. Dates interviewed 29 January 2010, 4- 5 February 2010; on interviews 24- 39. Dates interviewed 21- 23, 25 January 2010

⁷² To note: The categories regarding the types of dispute are measured by high, medium, and low. This is not to denote that these issues occur in these respective quantities. It is to indicate that from the disputes that are brought to the panchayat, the specific issue is more common (high) than others then other. High, medium, low represent the gradation in the types of disputes heard by that panchayat.

stated that the pradhan had received a law degree, he was educated in “law” and, thus, could make adequate decisions regarding disputes. Secondly, it was easier to approach the pradhan and the panchayat with issues than to go to the police station since the latter consisted of bureaucracy in their opinion. They stated that going to the police station would require the payment of some fees, even to report a case. Thus they believed approaching the panchayat was the more convenient approach to solving any disputes. The following interview reveals how the panchayat is perceived in terms of dispute resolution in Jahangirpur:

*“Panchayat hogi pahale. Usko kisi tara se santosh kiya jaeega. Agar baat nahin manega to phir uski hisab karawayi honi chahiye. Lakin uski nobat aaj tak nahin aaye hai.”*⁷³

“[In cases of disputes] first the panchayat is gathered. It will try to manage and resolve the conflict. If it is not able to reach a decision sufficient to both sides, then it will be taking to the police station. But it has never reached that level.”

However, in the Arruwa panchayat, the villagers stated that they did not approach the panchayat to assist with dispute resolution because they did not have great trust in the system. The pradhan was known to be a criminal and as one stated:

“Mein pradhan ki paas kyoin jaoin. Woh kya kar sakta hai. Usne to gao ke logo se bhi zyaada hera-pheri kari hai. Woh mere liye kya kareinga.”

“Why would I go to the pradhan to solve my problem- he has committed more crimes than most in the village. How will he be able to provide me justice?”⁷⁴

Additionally, as quoted below by another in Arruwa regarding what happens if there is an issue over land disputes he stated:

“Woh to mar pitayi hoti hai jab kuch hai - police hi samahalti hai. Pradhan ka koi matlab nahin hai ya panchayat [ka]. Woh to unke [upper caste] paksh mein jate hain. Gareeb janta ke liye koi kuch nahin hai matlab. Jaise khaati - wadi to

⁷³ Source: Interview Number 15

⁷⁴ Source: Interview Number 30

hamare paas hai nahin- bhanjaro mein do-char ke paas hain. Jiske kheth mein chali gayi to mar pit hoti hai. Hum gareeb ek taraf ho jatein hain aur pradhan bhi unhi ke saath ho jata hain. Gareeb ki koi sunvai nahin hai."⁷⁵

- "[In cases of dispute] fighting occurs and the police are the one who monitors it. The pradhan has no say, neither does the panchayat. Anyways, the panchayat only listens to the upper caste. They never listen to us poor folks. For example, we [scheduled castes] do not have many fields anyways. Bhanjar [one caste in the group] has two to four fields. If someone [from the upper caste] comes into our fields (in terms of cropping/cutting land) then a fight breaks out. Our poor people go one side and the pradhan joins the others. No one listens to us poor folks."

The panchayat was not very active in the village regarding gram panchayat and gram sabha meetings. Therefore, the villagers were not always aware of all the panchayat members and whom to approach other than the pradhan, who was not greatly trusted. When issues of disputes did arise, it was more common to solve it either (1) among the villagers, (2) by some of the elders presented at the moment or in the area, or (3) by taking it to the police station. As indicated by the second factor, age is still one of the most crucial factors regarding dispute resolution. Therefore, if the panchayat members or pradhan cannot possess this trait, then the panchayat will be more likely to lose their traditional role of dispute resolution, unless there is another factor that can compensate for it to some extent, such as the law degree presented by the pradhan in Jahangirpur.

Finally, through my research, another variable that I discovered which could account for variations in the outcomes of the panchayat is political competition. As indicated by Keefer and Khemani, lack of credibility of political competitors establishes a divide between citizens and the government institution (2004). Hence, as established by the comparative study of Kerala and Uttar Pradesh, political competition is important for the establishment of strong institutions. However, as noted early political competition is

⁷⁵ Source: Interview Number 36

historically similar in the area studied in Uttar Pradesh and this can explain the lack of variation in panchayat strength.

Part of the reason for a lack of accountability in the panchayats within Uttar Pradesh is because the rotation in reservations requires for women, SC/ST and OBCs limits political competition. For example, as seen in the panchayats within the Maat block, if the seat for chairperson has been “unreserved” for the past two terms, then there is almost a 100 percent chance that the next term will be reserved for either a woman or for ST/SC. Thus, the motivation for reelection would not be present for the candidate and thus it decreases the incentive to respond to the needs of the citizens through programs such as economic development, etc. Of the 39 panchayats studied in Uttar Pradesh, there was no incumbent pradhan for the 2005-2010 election cycle⁷⁶. In the 2000-2005 elections cycle, 5 of the 39 panchayats had incumbent pradhans. It should be noted that the statistics do not distinguish if a low incumbency rate is because (1) the current pradhan had rerun for elections and lost or (2) he or she had decided not to run for elections again or (3) he or she could not run for elections because the seat was reserved for another caste.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, due to one of these three factors, there is a low participation of incumbents in positions of pradhan. To some extent, reservations also lead to a reduction in political participation since it limits the people who can run. This point will be discussed in the conclusions.

⁷⁶ Source: Maat block office records

⁷⁷ However, during the field-work, when asked from current pradhans if they would re-run for election again, almost all declined because they were not sure if the seat would be reserved for another group preventing them from running or because they did not think their chance of winning would be very high, This can be because most of the panchayats interviewed were considered relatively low in strength and the development works conducted were minimal. Hence, perhaps even the pradhan knew after 5 years the receptiveness of the villagers to his or her leadership.

V. Conclusions and Implications

a. Findings

This paper has examined the topic of decentralization in India within the framework of a new form of local governance which has emerged since the passage of the 73rd amendment in 1992. It has identified the indicators which are important for strong institutions by drawing from the literature and demonstrated ways to incorporate facility, involvement, and equity in the context of panchayats. This study responded to questions regarding the variations in the efficacy of the local panchayat institutions, despite similar constitutional forms and institutional structures across states. It cited some evidence that local governments are successful in promoting economic development and social justice and has used the comparison between Uttar Pradesh and Kerala and within Uttar Pradesh analysis as examples. In addition, the judiciary role of the panchayats, which has traditionally moderated disputes in the villages, has declined in the weak panchayat in Uttar Pradesh.

The paper highlights the components necessary to improve the strength of panchayat institutions and the effects this can have on the provisions of public goods through economic development, social justice, and the ability to monitor disputes. Further research is required to develop a set of proxies for these measures that can be used for comparative state analysis.

Although this study provides important findings regarding institutional strength and the impact of decentralization on the distribution of public goods, it has also presented some limitations and weaknesses.

b. Weaknesses

First, the political cultures and histories regarding colonization of Kerala and Uttar Pradesh are highly different. Although highlighted to an extent in the study, the historical dimension play a great role in understanding the strength provided to local institutions. The history is largely tied to the differences in the mass mobilization efforts in the two states. Thus, the process of strengthening the local institutions in other states may take more time in order for the change to be incited by the masses.

Moreover, there were variables that I could not control and they may have potentially affected my results. For example, there were variations in the Scheduled Caste population in Uttar Pradesh versus Kerala. According to Betancourt and Gleason (2000), districts with a higher proportion of traditionally disadvantaged groups with respect to caste and religion – the scheduled castes and Muslims – have lower public inputs in health and education. Therefore, a larger population of SCs in Uttar Pradesh can help explain why it has had low improvements in development factors and continues to do so. When comparing equity between these two states, this is an important variable because one can argue that Uttar Pradesh seems like it has greater degrees of inequality regarding its SC population because it has a larger population in the state.

Similarly, within Uttar Pradesh, I was also unable to control the population composition of the two villages in my study. Arruwa had a dominant group of OBCs, constituting 51 percent of the population. However, the villages under the Jahangirpur panchayat did not have a majority population and the scheduled castes were the largest group with 39 percent of the population. In this study, I was also unable to control total population of the two panchayats. The total population of villages in the Jahangirpur

panchayat is 2266 with two villages while it is 11302 for Arruwa with fifteen villages. Thus, one can argue that the Jahangirpur panchayat was able to respond better to the needs of the villagers because it communicated with a smaller community. Variations in the population composition can potentially impact the outcomes of the panchayat, affecting my second question.

Also, although I have attributed variations in the strength of the institution between Kerala and Uttar Pradesh to mass mobilization and political competition, there are other factors which can also attempt to explain this variation. For example, literacy affects mass mobilization. The more literate the population is, the more likely they are to be educated and aware of politics and to mobilize when necessary. Kerala's population was highly literate even before the 73rd amendment was passed and the decentralization campaign was undertaken by the government. Therefore, this variable could have an effect on the campaign's success in Kerala, which in turn influenced the building of strong panchayat institutions. Literacy levels before the decentralization process could not be controlled between the two states and this variable presents a problem of endogeneity.

In addition, for the within Uttar Pradesh analysis, the measures defining the strength of the panchayats were relative to the each other (the nine panchayats). Thus it is a weakness as to the viability of these studies in the larger context. However, a key has been established it can be altered to reflect a more uniform approach in further studies.

Also, some of the comparative data between Kerala and Uttar Pradesh was compiled from aggregate state statistics and was not specific to the rural areas. Although it was used in the study because over three-fourths of the population in both states lives in

rural areas, it would be most accurate to compile specific rural data for future research. Furthermore, I was unable to find sufficient data measuring the changes in the judiciary function of the panchayats between Kerala and Uttar Pradesh and assess its role in dispute resolution. For further research, obtaining such data would be important to pursue.

c. Implications

The research contributes to current policy efforts in India. In August 2009, the central Indian government passed a bill amending the Article 243D from the 73rd amendment in the constitution⁷⁸. The amendment changed the reservation of women in panchayats from 33 percent to 50 percent at all three levels of governance. The measure taken by the national government in order to increase equality for women and provide them with greater opportunities. Bihar, Uttarkhand, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh already had this quota in place for women. Following this amendment, Rajasthan and Kerala have already declared that they will implement this policy in the upcoming 2010 Panchayati Raj elections. Other states are deciding if they can implement such policy in time for the upcoming elections. Therefore, reservations in the panchayats are an issue important in current Indian politics. However, as shown in the research, in some areas, such as parts of Uttar Pradesh, women are more ‘namesake’ members and the real power lies in the male head of their family. In Kerala, with more education provided to women, this was less applicable. Hence, although the Indian government is attempting to

⁷⁸ <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Quota-for-women-in-panchayats-to-be-raised-to-50/articleshow/4942136.cms>; http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/india-news/cabinet-approves-50-percent-reservation-for-women-in-panchayats_100238830.html

increase the equality of women in leadership positions, the actual impact of such an amendment on the actual power of the women without an improvement in women's literacy rates is debatable.

As seen in the Kerala and Uttar Pradesh comparative study, training, provided by the groundbreaking campaign, was one of the most crucial intervening variables in developing a strong functioning panchayat system in Kerala. During fieldwork in Uttar Pradesh, I found that the panchayat leaders and members had not received *any* training prior to or since the time they were elected. Moreover, most the members were either uneducated or maintained low levels of literacy (such as elementary or middle school graduates). The lack of training and low levels of education can help explain why many of them were inactive concerning their duties in the panchayat, unaware of their roles, and unable to actively contribute to their communities from their position. Within the sample in Uttar Pradesh, there were no variations in the amount of training formally received by panchayat members. However, in future studies, it would be interesting to study another area within Uttar Pradesh where training was provided to the panchayat leaders and assess any changes in the strength of the panchayats and the knowledge regarding the system of the leaders. Nevertheless, as proved by the Kerala comparative study, the state governments should initiate training programs for the panchayat in order to improve their institutional strength.

During my study in Uttar Pradesh, I also learned from my interviews that some panchayats experience an increase in violence during elections time as party politics divide the village into groups. Moreover, bribes are more common during election time and exorbitant amounts of money are spent by the candidates during this time as well.

Thus, the state government should have a policy limiting and monitoring the amount of fund used during elections. This will also help change the basis for party competition from bribes to issues of real concern for the villages.

In shaping policy within states, it is important to incorporate components that are currently working in other states into an applicable model for that particular state. For example, from this study, some of the strengths in the Kerala panchayat-model can be used for other states. These include (1) providing greater autonomy to local government structures, (2) devolving finances to decrease the bureaucracy in obtaining resources by the panchayats, (3) allowing the citizens to best assess the needs of the village through organized gram sabha meetings, (4) integrating the 29 subjects within the panchayats' jurisdiction and *clearly* defining the roles, and (5) allowing the gram sabha to scrutinize the panchayat funds in order to increase accountability

In the panchayats studied within Uttar Pradesh, party competition within the village was generally high; however, it did not always lead to accountability in terms of responding to the electorate such as with the outcomes mentioned in the study. This is partially due to the provision of rotation, which allow marginalized groups such as women, ST/SC and OBCs to gain a position of leadership in the panchayat. Because some panchayats can predict the reservation of the chairperson seat for the next term due to the rotation schedule and know the current chairperson cannot be an incumbent, it reduces the incentives for the chairperson to implement policies. Although reservations are highly important in promoting social development and justice in the areas, it must be noted that they do lead to a reduction in competition and in turn accountability. The

dilemma of reducing accountability because of reservations is a problem that the Indian government must address.

Also, states do not always implement the policies stated by the federal government. For example, some of the changes made by the 73rd amendment include direct elections for all members in the panchayat, a reservation for SC seats in proportion to the population in the area, and a 33 percent reservation for women. However, Kerala did not follow the first two policies since the president (chairperson) of the panchayat is indirectly elected by the elected panchayat members and it did not reserve seats for SC. Furthermore, Uttar Pradesh opposed the third recommendation until the last elections in 2005 by only implementing a 25 percent reservation for women in leadership position in the three-tier system of panchayati raj. In all cases, the federal government was not able to act on these discrepancies and have consequences for these states to make them more accountable. This implies that one of the ways the national government has managed to maintain the balance between national and local governance is through great autonomy. Thus, the national government can make policy changes based on what it views as the most appropriate change needed; however, it can only trust the state government to follow its recommendations. Further research on central-state relations in India is warranted to best assess how to maintain balance.

d. Future Research

This study has mostly examined the period post the 1993 amendment. I would like to examine this topic by studying the changes before the 1993 amendment and afterwards. Through my field-work in Uttar Pradesh, I have gained a general sense from

most villagers that there was greater trust in the panchayat institution during the period before 1993. As briefly mentioned in the article, the panchayats that existed before they were institutionalized with an elections process, were mostly governed by the respected elders of the community. However, future research can assess whether the age of the elected leader – as it has generally moved towards a more middle-aged population after the amendment – has changed the trust citizens place in the panchayats. Moreover, within Uttar Pradesh, it was largely felt by the citizens that an increase in monetary resources without proper monitoring had increased corruption in the panchayats. Therefore, the amount of trust placed in the panchayats had decreased. Contrarily, there were also states, such as Kerala, where the increase in funds led to an increase in development programs rather than corruption because of high citizen participation in the gram sabha, increasing accountability of the funds. For future research, it would be important to assess the trust placed in panchayats in Kerala. It would also be interesting to research whether the trust in panchayats has grown where there are stronger institutions and declined in areas with weaker institutions.

Also, as indicated in the gram sabha meetings for the villagers are organized on the basis of competition rather than consensus. This presents an important point regarding the types of deliberation that can occur in the democracy and which is most sufficient in obtaining the results that are best for the population. Deliberation methods, the associations they foster, and their effects on outcomes can be topics studied in relation to panchayat meetings in the future.

e. Conclusion

Before the institutionalization of panchayats, it was argued by some that panchayats were not required for India to function as a democracy. After all, other “successful” liberal democracies have long existed without such institutions of local governance. On the contrary, this paper argues that the panchayats and decentralization are an integral part of Indian democracy, without which a representation of its diverse population would be impossible. As the largest democracy in the world, the population of India presents unique circumstances that must be considered when assessing its democratic institutions. The panchayats provide a structure connecting the policies of the national government with the people it serves at the local level. Hence, it promotes central-local dialogue, which is crucial in maintaining the cohesiveness of the country. Panchayats are necessary institutions for the functioning of Indian democracy, and future research regarding their capacities is significant in legitimizing these local governing bodies.

Appendix 1: Information regarding the interviews conducted

Interview No.	Panchayat No.	Panchayat Name	Gender	Caste	Special Position
1	One	Jarara	Male	Upper Caste	--
2	One	Jarara	Male	OBC	--
3	Two	Akberpur	Male	Scheduled Caste	--
4	Two	Akberpur	Male	Upper Caste	--
5	Three	Karahari	Female	OBC	--
6	Three	Karahari	Male	Scheduled Caste	--
7	Four	Mat Raja	Male	Muslim	Panchayat member
8	Four	Mat Raja	Male	OBC	--
9	Five	Jahangirpur	Male	Scheduled Caste	--
10	Five	Jahangirpur	Male	OBC	Panchayat member
11	Five	Jahangirpur	Male	Upper Caste	-
12	Five	Jahangirpur	Male	Scheduled Caste	--
13	Five	Jahangirpur	Male	OBC	Panchayat member
14	Five	Jahangirpur	Male	Brahmin	Previous Pradhan
15	Five	Jahangirpur	Male	Scheduled Caste	Panchayat member
16	Five	Jahangirpur	Female	Upper Caste	--
17	Five	Jahangirpur	Male	Brahmin	Current Pradhan
18	Six	Naseeti	Male	Brahmin	--
19	Six	Naseeti	Female	OBC	--
20	Seven	Irolizunnardar	Male	Brahmin	Panchayat member
21	Seven	Irolizunnardar	Male	Scheduled Caste	--
22	Eight	Nagla Himaun	Male	Scheduled Caste	--
23	Eight	Nagla Himaun	Male	Scheduled Caste	--
24	Nine	Arruwa	Male	Muslim	--
25	Nine	Arruwa	Female	Muslim	--
26	Nine	Arruwa	Male	Scheduled Caste	--
27	Nine	Arruwa	Male	Upper Caste	--

28	Nine	Arruwa	Female	Scheduled Caste	--
29	Nine	Arruwa	Male	Upper Caste	Panchayat member
30	Nine	Arruwa	Male	OBC	--
31	Nine	Arruwa	Male	Scheduled Caste	Panchayat member
32	Nine	Arruwa	Male	Scheduled Caste	--
33	Nine	Arruwa	Female	Upper Caste	--
34	Nine	Arruwa	Female	Scheduled Caste	--
35	Nine	Arruwa	Female	Scheduled Caste	--
36	Nine	Arruwa	Male	Scheduled Caste	--
37	Nine	Arruwa	Male	OBC	Panchayat member
38	Nine	Arruwa	Female	OBC	--
39	Nine	Arruwa	Female	OBC	Previous Pradhan

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

A. Elected panchayat members (both past and present) in the village.

I conducted a semi-structured interview based on the following questions:

(a) Panchayat as an organizational component → what constitutes a panchayat- in terms of rules/ institutions and scope of economic, social, political decision making process and the roles of the members

Get histories of previous panchayats.

1. How often do you have public gram panchayat meetings?
2. How many members come to these meetings?
3. How do you communicate with other members of the panchayat? (only through the panchayat meetings or through other forms of engagement as well)
4. What is the elections process? Who counts the votes? About how many people/percentage of villagers vote? How many days is the campaign? How long after votes have been cast are the results announced?
5. How many people ran for elections in the past panchayat election? (Are the ballots still available?)
6. How is the panchayat leader (pradhan) selected?
7. Are there planning committee meetings/leadership training to help the panchayat leaders that are sponsored by the district/state?
8. What types of activities does the panchayat conduct for citizen engagement? (ex: function in the nearby school?)
9. Who speaks in panchayat meeting? (asking people in interviews or through observation)
10. Whether in low-income neighborhoods, people who didn't talk/ weren't used to participating- are they participating now?
11. Are there groups or subcommittees within the panchayat that deal with other issues?
12. How do you measure the strength of your panchayat as compared to other villages?
13. Do you think the panchayat has changed since the 1995 election? If so, how?

Economic Aspects

14. Who makes the decision about allocating budget for economic activities (ex: maintaining public resources such as common well, road, public school)?
15. What economic programs has the panchayat implemented in the past? (outcome)
16. What economic development projects are taking place in the village currently?
17. If economic development projects are in place, then are they intended for a specific population?
18. How much is the allocated budget for this year? To what purpose will it be used? Is there budget allocated for SC/ST? Women? Children? In what ways is money allocated for them- stipend? Loans? Grants for program?
19. Do you get the amount of money that you ask for from the district panchayat?

Judicial Component

20. Does the panchayat have public hearings for disputes? Are there other institutions that handle disputes?
21. What types of disputes are brought before the panchayat (provide specific cases from the last year or since the current panchayat session has been in power)?
22. Are conflicts resolved at the panchayat level?
23. Were some conflicts not able to be resolved by the panchayat and went to the district court?
24. What types of conflicts are most common in the village?

(b) Panchayat member's component/ their roles specifically

Describe your life, your interests, your challenges, education, etc

1. How did you decide you wanted to be a leader of the panchayat?
2. What do you think are the biggest issues/ challenges facing the village?
3. Were any of your family members ever part of the panchayat leadership?
4. How long have you been serving in the panchayat?
5. Do you attend all the meetings?
6. Do you feel that your opinions/ suggestions are counted in decision made in the panchayat?
7. Do you feel as a representative for your particular group (ex: Scheduled Caste or Tribe) or a representative for the whole village?
8. How do you communicate with members from your groups? (in panchayat meetings only or outside the panchayat)
9. Have you been able to talk about the rights and concerning dealing with your specific population?
10. Do you feel like you have real power in the panchayat? (or is it more for show?)
11. What do you hope to achieve as a panchayat leader?

(c) How it ties to communal violence/tension resolution

1. Do you think your village has more conflict than other villages?
2. Do you think the villagers turn to the panchayat in times of conflict?
3. If yes, and conflict has emerged in the village, then why has conflict arisen? If not, then why not?
4. (In the case where communal violence has occurred in the village)- Why do you think this event happened? What led up to this event?
5. Do you think the panchayat has changed since the 1995 election?/ If so, how?
6. What role do you think the panchayat has in relation to communal conflicts?

B. For villagers- informants

I conducted a semi-structured interview based on the following questions:

1. What do you think are the biggest issues/ challenges facing the village?
2. Is communal conflict common in village?

3. Has communal conflict happened in the village? Was it against a particular group?
4. What events lead up to the outbreak of that event?
5. Who/Where do the villagers go to report, seek help at times of communal conflict?
6. Did you go to the panchayat to report the conflict? If yes, why? If not, where did you go, what did you do and why?
7. Are there any government institutions that help stop the conflict or promote it?
8. Are there places in the village for people from different groups to come together? (This could be a religious place, a common resource area where people gather, etc)

Concerning the panchayat (if these answers have not already been brought up) → Get histories of previous panchayats.

9. What happened when the current panchayat came into power?
10. Do you attend gram panchayat meetings? If so why? If not, why not?
11. About how many people do you estimate attend the gram panchayat meetings?
12. What are the economic programs implemented by the panchayat? Has it helped you? Has it helped others in the community?
13. Do you feel any things that can be improved in the village by the panchayat that are not being improved? Do you think past programs have improved the strength of the panchayat?
14. Do they think the panchayat leaders make decisions beneficial to the whole village or more to certain communities or groups?
15. Is the panchayat able to understand the communal tensions or respond during times of communal conflict in the village?
16. If there is a panchayat leader representing your group in the current elected body, then to what extent does he/she communicate the needs of the community to the panchayat?

C. For public officials in the block level panchayat

I conducted a semi-structured interview based on the following questions:

1. How many villages are under your jurisdiction?
2. Who goes to monitor the panchayat in the village?
3. How do you decide how much funds to provide to the village? How much did they ask for? Why did you agree on this amount
4. Were some programs more important than others, etc. → are you focusing on any specific development programs or is it different according to the village?
5. Do you conduct field work in the villages to ensure they are allocating their funds accordingly? If not, how do you keep that element in check?
6. What is the role of the pradhan in the village?
7. What are the roles of the other elected members? If they do not have a say, then do they complain about it → if not, what interest do they have in getting elected?

8. How many villages under your jurisdiction have pradhans that are;
 - a. From ST/SC groups
 - b. Women
 - c. Muslim
 - d. Etc (specific caste division)
9. What are the roles of the panchayat?
10. Other than implementation, does it also act like a justice body for any conflict in the village?
11. What types of conflicts arise in the villages?
12. If conflict does occurs in a village, do you travel to the village to see the cause or do you let the village panchayat handle it?
13. Which villages are more prone to conflict/ tension? Why do you think that is?
14. What do you think accounts for this difference in villages with tension and without?
15. Do you think some panchayats in your jurisdiction are stronger/better than others? How do you measure which panchayat is stronger?
16. Do you think there is a difference in the tensions in the village if a member from the ST/SC/ OBC group is chosen or a woman as pradhan?
17. How are some panchayats more effective than others in resolving conflicts/tension?
18. When will the next panchayat elections be held? When will you know the candidates that are running? Who selects the candidates? How long is the selection process? Who counts the votes?
19. How is the panchayat pradhan selected?
20. Is there any training given to the pradhans or the panchayat members?

Glossary

Dalit	Member of the lower class (also known as harijans or untouchables)
Gaon/Gram(a)	Village
Gram Panchayat	Indicates both smallest unit of governance and an assembly of all panchayat members
Gram Sabha	Assembly of all voters within a gram panchayat area
Panch	A ward member of the panchayat. Literally translated as five to represent the five ward members.
Panchayat	The word is now used to refer to rural local governing bodies
Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI)	A three-tier system of local governance
Panchayati Samiti	the intermediate level panchayat at the block level
Pradhan	Name of the chairperson of the gram panchayat in some areas
Sabha	Self-governing village body
Sarpanch	Name of the chairperson of the gram panchayat in some areas
Swaraj	Self-rule
Taluk/Tehsil	Sub-district unit (block level of three-tier panchayat system)
Upa-pradhan	Vice chairperson of gram panchayat
Varna	Caste
Zamindar	Landowner or landlord usually in the northern and eastern parts of India
Zilla Parishad	District level panchayat (third tier of panchayat system)

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