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Governing Nutrition, Performing State: Workers of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Programme, India

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**GOVERNING NUTRITION, PERFORMING STATE:
WORKERS OF THE INTEGRATED CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
(ICDS) PROGRAMME, INDIA**

SUMMARY

The failures of state implemented development programmes have been largely attributed to governance issues. I study one of the largest child development programmes in the world, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme of India to understand how its governance is determined and gaps between design and practice produced. Building on a non-normative concept of governance, my research ethnographically examines the everyday processes and practices of the ICDS, through ten months of fieldwork in a community development block of Aurangabad District, Maharashtra.

State practices have been studied but the role of state functionaries has not been adequately addressed. I research everyday state practices as performative - negotiated and constructed by ICDS functionaries in interaction with the local politics of caste, vertical systems of 'corruption' and initiatives of bureaucratic reform. I find that ICDS functionaries use state practices to: (a) perform caste, exercising dominance but also contesting caste-based subordination, (b) develop and manage informal systems of financial practices, and (c) stage performance to make it appear as if targets have been met and rules followed.

The improvisation of programme practices by ICDS functionaries generates gaps and variations from programme design including the dominant caste capture of field level ICDS positions, exclusion of Scheduled Caste beneficiaries and localities from programme benefits and manipulation of programme records and performance audits. But such improvisation is also facilitative providing sites for challenging the dominant political and social order and enabling the delivery of ICDS services despite resource poor contexts and unsuitable programme rules. These findings suggest that ICDS governance at the sub-district or implementation level is determined in interaction with the politics of caste and the un-implementability of bureaucratic rules. Additionally, I highlight that implementation gaps do not always reflect the incapacity of state functionaries but may also represent their ingenuity in constrained circumstances.

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature…………………………………..

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Contents

Acronyms

ACDPO	Assistant Child Development Project Officer
AWC	Anganwadi Centre
AWH	Anganwadi Helper
AWW	Anganwadi Worker
BPL	Below Poverty Line
CAG	Comptroller and Auditor General of India
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CDPO	Child Development Project Officer
Dy. CEO	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MIS	Management Information System
NCP	Nationalist Congress Party
NIPCCD	National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPM	New Public Management
NRHM	National Rural Health Mission
OBCs	Other Backward Castes
PUCL	People's Union for Civil Liberties
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Education Fund

Glossary

Ahmednagar	District in western Maharashtra
Anganwadi	Community based centre of the ICDS programme
Anganwadi Helper	Community based woman volunteer tasked with supporting the activities of the anganwadi worker
Anganwadi Worker	Community based woman volunteer tasked with delivering ICDS services at the anganwadi
Asli zindagi	Real life
Aurangabad	District in Maharashtra where the study was located
Brahmin	Hindu priestly caste
Bhil	Tribal group classified as a Scheduled Tribe in the Indian Constitution
Chambhar	Third most numerous ex-untouchable caste group in Maharashtra
Chivda	A crispy savoury snack made with puffed rice and nuts
Dalit	Identity taken by ex-untouchable castes under the leadership of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar
Dal	A thick soup made of dried split pulses
Dhangar	Group whose caste occupation was raising sheep (shepherd) classified as Nomadic Tribe – C in Maharashtra but counted with the Other Backward Castes category in the ICDS MIS
Dhobi	Caste group that traditionally provides laundry services classified as Other Backward Castes in Maharashtra
Durrie	Cloth mat
Gram Sevak	Village level functionary who functions as secretary to the Sarpanch
Godavari	One of the major rivers of India
Gurav	Caste group that traditionally provides religious services classified as Other Backward Castes in Maharashtra
Gur	Jaggery
Halagi	A type of drum
Hindi	A major Indian language
Jain	Community that follows Jainism religion
Jalna	District that adjoins Aurangabad District
Jajman	Patron

Jajmani	System of traditional occupational obligations
Jat	A traditionally agricultural landowning caste
Jati	Endogamous social grouping
Jugaad	Improvisation
Kahar	Caste group classified as Other Backward Caste in Maharashtra
Karma	Spiritual principle of cause and effect
Kammas	An agrarian and trading caste from coastal Andhra Pradesh
Kayastha	Caste group that has traditionally worked as scribes and recordkeepers
Khichdi	A mix of rice and split lentils/pulses cooked with some vegetables
Kharch	Expenditure
Kolhati	Nomadic tribe counted as Other Backward Caste in ICDS MIS
Kshatriya	One of the four varnas in which Hindu society is divided
Ladoo	A sweet ball made either with roasted peanuts and jaggery or a mix of wheatflour and gramflour, clarified butter and sugar
Laldera	Name given to one of two ICDS supervisory beats that I studied
Lapshi	Sweet broken wheat porridge
Lingayat	A socio-religious, landowning, dominant group
Loksatta	Local Marathi newspaper
Madhli	Middle
Mahar	The most numerous ex-untouchable caste in Maharashtra
Maharwada	Village locality where Mahars traditionally live
Mali	Caste group that traditionally worked as garderners, classified as Other Backward Castes in Maharashtra
Maliwada	Village locality where Malis traditionally live
Mandal	short for Mandal Commission or the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Commission headed by B.P Mandal
Mang	Second most numerous ex-untouchable caste group in Maharashtra
Mangaon	Name given to a village where I studied anganwadi centre functioning
Mangwada	Village locality where Mangs traditionally live
Maratha	A landowning politically powerful caste of Maharashtra
Marathi	Language of Maharashtra
Marathwada	One of 6 revenue divisions of Maharashtra state of which Aurangabad district was a part

Marwari	a trading community from Northern India
Namantar	Name change
Nasik	District in western Maharashtra
Navi	Caste group that traditionally worked as barbers, classified as Other Backward Castes in Maharashtra
Nivad Mandal	Regional selection board
Palak Parathe	Shallow fried flat, thick unleavened bread made of wheatflour and spinach leaves
Dhapate	a mix of whole wheat flour, sorghum flour and gramflour with spinach leaves
Pakit	Envelope
Panchayat /gram panchayat	Elected village governance committee
Panchayat Samiti	Elected governance committee at the block level
Patidar	A politically influential and traditionally peasant caste of Gujarat
Patil	Village leader
Prashaskiya Badali	Administrative transfer
Rajegaon	Name given to one of two ICDS supervisory beats that I studied
Rangoli	Patterns created on the floor using flour/coloured sand/petals
Reddy	Landowning, dominant caste from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana
Sakaal	Local Marathi newspaper
Sarkari zindagi	Official life
Sarpanch	Elected chair of the village panchayat
Shanwadi	name given to a village where I studied anganwadi centre functioning
Sheera	A sweet preparation of semolina
Shudra	One of the four varnas in which Hindu society is divided
Sundar	Beautiful
Sutar	Caste group that traditionally worked as carpenters, classified as Other Backward Castes in Maharashtra
Takkewari	Percentage
Thakur	A dominant landowning caste of Northern India
Vaidu	A nomadic tribe that traditionally sold herbal medicines
Varan bhat	Steamed rice and split lentil/pulse soup
Varan chakule/ varan phal	Wheat flour dumplings in a lentil soup

Varna	Four large traditional divisions of Hindu society
Vasti	Habitation
Vinanti Badali	transfer by request
Vokkaliga	Landowning, formerly peasant caste from Karnataka
Wadari	a denotified tribe that traditionally worked as stone carvers from Maharashtra
Zamindar	Landlord
Zilla Kaksha	District Office
Zilla Parishad	Elected district council
Washila	Political Influence

Chapter 1

Introduction

It was a wintry Monday morning and I was sitting on a narrow wooden bench in the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)[1] Project Office of Sundar* Block[2] waiting for the weekly Supervisors' meeting to begin. The ICDS Project Office was located on the edge of a compound, which held a motley collection of government offices responsible for the economic and social development of the block. It was next to a busy road and the sounds of traffic were a regular part of office conversations. The office peon had brought in more chairs from the Block Development Office meeting hall as the Supervisors of an adjacent project were also expected to join the meeting. This joint meeting was to be presided over by the Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) in-charge of the ICDS Project I was studying but who was the Assistant CDPO of the adjacent ICDS project, sent on deputation to this project to fill the vacancy here. The meeting had been called because a new Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Dy. CEO) had taken charge of the ICDS programme at the District level. The CDPO had recently attended a meeting with her new boss and had some important information and orders to pass on to the Supervisors.

Once all the Supervisors had settled in, the CDPO began the meeting by saying that the new Dy. CEO was not like the previous one. He was not interested in innovative ideas and projects. Rather, his focus was on regular ICDS programme services, infrastructure and records. He had visited several ICDS centres known as anganwadi centres around the district and asked ICDS field workers called anganwadi workers to list the six services that the ICDS was expected to provide. He had been disappointed to find that not all were able to do so. He was yet to visit Sundar Block but in preparation all Supervisors should ensure that the anganwadi workers they supervised were able to list the six ICDS services. The Dy. CEO was particularly interested in one of the six services – pre-school education, which he felt should be the focus of the programme. The CDPO directed all Supervisors to ensure that each anganwadi centre under their supervision, puts up a board outside the anganwadi centre detailing the daily schedule of pre-school activities from 9 in the morning to 12 noon. She added that

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[1] The ICDS is a national programme designed to provide health and nutrition services to pregnant women,

[2] A block is a designated geographical area and the smallest administrative unit of rural government in several states of India.

★ Name anonymised to protect identity of informants.

as the new Dy. CEO was also interested in anganwadi infrastructure, each Supervisor should take note of the anganwadi centres under construction in their area, identify those that were past their expected completion date as well as the reasons for the same. The CDPO asked all Supervisors to maintain appropriate records regarding anganwadi centre construction adding that the Dy. CEO believed that only recorded work could be considered as actual work done. Finally, she asked all Supervisors to make regular visits to anganwadi centres as the Dy. CEO had been shocked to find that some anganwadi centres had not been visited for nearly four months. She also asked Supervisors to ensure that they reached their first anganwadi centre at 8 in the morning when they were expected to open.

This supervisory meeting was the first among many meetings that I attended during ten months of ethnographic fieldwork with an ICDS project in Sundar Block of Aurangabad District, Maharashtra, India. My objective was to understand the governance of the ICDS as a state implemented development programme. Governance in the context of the developmental state has been largely understood in terms of 'good governance' (Bevir, 2009). Given the normative and ideological aspects of this conception (de Sardan, 2011), my approach builds on a non-normative understanding of governance as an ensemble of everyday state practices, to study the ICDS. I focus on the processes and practices through which the ICDS is implemented in the everyday. State practices have been studied to understand how citizens imagine and engage with the state (Gupta, 1995) and how states see populations (Scott, 1998) but the role of state functionaries has not been adequately addressed (de Sardan, 2009). This research addresses this gap. I study the practices of state functionaries and understand how they negotiate the politics of caste, vertical systems of 'corruption' and bureaucratic reform to implement the ICDS. I find that the improvisations and negotiations of ICDS functionaries produce differences from programme design. Dominant castes colonise field level ICDS positions, capture benefits and produce the Scheduled Castes or Dalits as 'untouchable' subjects who are then excluded from programme services. ICDS functionaries manage and negotiate, local and dynamic systems of informal financial practices that affect the quality of programme services as well as worker motivation. In addition, they manipulate financial receipts, MIS records and performance audits to make it appear as if targets have been met and programme rules followed. However, I also find that the intersection of local caste politics with state practices opens up avenues for confronting the dominant political order and reconstituting this politics. Further, the improvisations of ICDS functionaries emerge from a context of limited resources and un-implementable programme rules and often

enable service delivery. In sum, this research suggests that the disjuncture between development programme design and implementation can also be facilitative and instead of reflecting the incapacity of state functionaries, may highlight their ingenuity in constrained circumstances.

In this chapter, I provide the background to my research. I begin by outlining the significance of studying ICDS governance and my approach to governance. The next section then details key aspects of my multi-sited ethnography including the setting, the fieldsite and the process of fieldwork. The last section provides sketches of the chapters in which the thesis is organised.

The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Programme

The Integrated Child Development Services Programme (ICDS) of India is one of the largest child development programmes in the world (Planning Commission, 2011). It was started in 1975 to ensure the development of the nation-state through the development of its human resources. Children were regarded as a 'supremely important asset', who needed to be nurtured to enable their growth into skilled, motivated, physically fit and mentally alert citizens (National Policy for Children, 1974). The ICDS, thus, is emblematic of the developmental ideology that was part of the self-definition of the postcolonial Indian state (Chatterjee, 1997). At the same time, it is also representative of transnational influences on the nation-state through the involvement of multilateral agencies such as UNICEF and the World Bank as well as international NGOS such as CARE in its design, funding and overall resourcing (Gupta, 2001; Gupta and Sharma, 2006).

The ICDS programme was inaugurated by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in a context of high rates of infant and maternal mortality (Planning Commission, 2011). It is designed to offer a comprehensive package of health and nutrition services to women and children during critical periods of the lifecycle. Implemented by 2 community based women volunteers, the Anganwadi Worker (AWW) and the Anganwadi Helper (AWH), at a centre known as the Anganwadi (AWC), the ICDS is expected to provide 6 services - supplementary nutrition, immunisation, health check-ups, referral, pre-school education and nutrition and health education services - to 3 beneficiary categories - pregnant and nursing mothers, adolescent girls and children in the 0-6 year age group. The health services, viz. immunisation, check-ups and referral, are to be provided by

the public health system in coordination with the ICDS at the community level (NIPCCD, 2006).

Administratively, the ICDS is a 'centrally sponsored scheme' which implies that it is largely designed by the central government, implemented by the state government and funded by the central and state governments jointly (Sreerekha, 2017). At the central level, the ICDS is administered through the Ministry of Women and Child Development, at the state level through the Department of Women and Child Development/ Department of Social Welfare/Department of Social Justice, at the district level through the office of the District Programme Officer and at the project level by the Child Development Project Officer (CDPO). The ICDS project is the basic administrative unit of the ICDS as it is the smallest entity of the programme that receives and manages funds. It is often considered to be co-terminus with the community development block, the smallest unit in the administrative structure of India, comprising of approximately 115 villages. However many blocks have more than 1 ICDS project. A typical ICDS project serves a population of approximately 100,000 persons in rural and urban areas and 35,000 in tribal areas. As per current norms, 1 anganwadi centre is set up for a population of 400-800 persons and a mini anganwadi centre provided for a population of 150-400 persons in rural and urban projects. In tribal projects, 1 anganwadi centre is set up for a population of 300-800 persons whereas for a smaller population of 150-300 persons a mini anganwadi centre is provided. An average rural and urban ICDS project thus includes 125-150 anganwadi centres, whereas in a tribal project there maybe 50-75 anganwadi centres. Anganwadi centres are organised into beats/circles/sectors of 20-25 for the purposes of supervision with each beat monitored by a Supervisor. A rural and urban ICDS project usually has 5-8 Supervisors reporting to the CDPO. The CDPO is supported in her management of the ICDS project by office staff including clerks, an accountant, an extension officer (responsible for MIS), peon and driver. Larger projects in some states also have an Assistant Child Development Project Officer (ACDPO) to support the CDPO (Planning Commission, 2011).

The ICDS is a national programme and according to data released by the Government of India currently operates 1.34 million AWCs (as on March 31, 2015) covering 82.9 million 6 month-6 year olds for supplementary nutrition and 36.5 million 3-6 year olds for pre-school education (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2015) out of a total population of 164.5 million 0-6 year olds (Office of Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 2011).

The ICDS was started as a pilot project in 33 community development blocks across 22 States and 1 Union Territory and scaled up subsequently. However, despite its national importance and 39-year-old history, more than 50 percent of its growth has occurred after 2005, in the last decade (Planning Commission, 2013). For nearly 26 years of its existence, until 2001, the ICDS was implemented as a targeted programme by policy and until 2005, by practice. ICDS services were targeted to poor areas and poor households with national guidelines specifying a coverage norm (often interpreted as the upper limit by states) of 80 under 6s, 20 pregnant and nursing mothers and 2 adolescent girls per AWC. Beneficiaries, especially for supplementary nutrition, were to be selected from amongst households at the highest risk for malnutrition - those of landless labourers, marginal farmers, scheduled castes and tribes (Measham and Chatterjee, 1998; NIPCCD, 2006; Saxena and Mander, 2004). In 1997, with the introduction of targeting in the Public Distribution System and development of the 'Below Poverty Line (BPL)' criterion and methodology for the identification of poor households, several states switched to using BPL as the criterion for targeting in the ICDS as well (Saxena and Mander, 2005).

The Supreme Court of India universalised the ICDS in November 2001 in response to a public interest litigation seeking enforcement of the right to food as part of the right to life, enshrined in Article 21 of the Indian constitution (Chhibbar, 2001). Filed in a context of severe and persistent drought in several parts of India, large scale starvation and governmental apathy despite burgeoning food stocks (Srinivasan and Narayanan, 2007), Writ Petition (Civil) 196 of 2001 recast the ICDS through a child rights perspective converting ICDS services into legal entitlements and rendering the Central and State Governments legally accountable for the provision of these services (Dreze, 2006; Mander, 2012).

The court's orders directed the Indian state to provide an ICDS centre in every settlement of the country and ensure that every 0-6 year old child, adolescent girl and pregnant and nursing mother receives supplementary food from the programme (Supreme Court of India, 2001). Additionally the court ordered that BPL could not be used as an eligibility criterion for ICDS services (Supreme Court of India, 2004). India's highest judicial authority not only gave orders for the universalization of the ICDS, it also defined universalization operationally (in terms of coverage norms, beneficiary eligibility and the total number of AWCs required) and set up its own independent monitoring mechanism to ensure the compliance of these orders (Mander, 2012). Such in-depth judicial intervention was facilitated by the advocacy and civic action of the

petitioners – the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) and the Right to Food Campaign, an informal alliance of grass roots and national NGOs (non-governmental organisations), activists, professionals, media persons and conscientious public servants who produced a wealth of material – field reports, surveys and articles[3] –on the performance of the ICDS programme and the interventions needed to strengthen its working. After protracted arguments, the Government of India in 2004 initiated the process of universalization (Saxena and Mander, 2005) and by 2008 had sanctioned the 1.4 million AWCs that the Supreme Court deemed essential for universalization (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2007).

Despite universalization, evaluations of the ICDS have found several gaps in the coverage and quality of services (Citizens' Initiative for the Rights of Children Under Six, 2006; Das Gupta et al., 2005; Gragnolati et al., 2006; Gupta and Gumber, 2001; Kandpal, 2011; National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development, 1992; NIPCCD, 2006). A comprehensive national evaluation (Planning Commission, 2011) found that only 31 percent of eligible children received supplementary nutrition from the programme for an average 16 of 25 days per month. However, there were striking state level differences – in states such as Assam, Orissa, Karnataka and West Bengal supplementary nutrition coverage estimates ranged from a high 51-49 percent of eligible children whereas in others such as Bihar, Haryana and Rajasthan they were a low 17- 18 percent. On aspects of quality as well states varied significantly, for instance while the national average for the percentage of 0-72 month olds weighed every month was 43 percent, it ranged from a high of 93-94 percent in Maharashtra and Orissa to a low of 2-8 percent in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Bihar. A composite performance index across various parameters classified Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh as the top 3 high performing and Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Bihar as the bottom 3 low performing states. The ICDS is centrally sponsored scheme, which implies that the same programme design is implemented through the same system with the same cost structure and funding pattern across the country. Why does programme performance then vary so widely across states? Several scholars attribute these differences to differences in the way the states are governed (Biswas and Verma, 2009; Haddad, 2009; Menon et al., 2009).

In this understanding, the poor performance of the ICDS in Bihar, for instance, is a function of poor governance reflected in the state's inability to implement the ICDS -

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[3] Please see < www.righttofoodindia.org> or < www.righttofoodcampaign.in >

build approved ICDS infrastructure, recruit, pay and train workers, collect data accurately, deliver services and ultimately, utilise sanctioned funds. During 2006-11, Bihar failed to operationalize 13 percent of sanctioned AWCs and construct 70 percent of sanctioned AWC buildings even five years after approval. Disbursement of honorarium to AWWs and AWHs was irregular, with money being released even on a quarterly and half yearly basis due to shortage of block level administration staff. Less than 10 percent of Supervisors received any training (Comptroller and Auditor General of India, 2012). Nearly 53 percent of all 0-6 year olds, as per the census, eligible for ICDS services were not included in the annual survey conducted by AWWs, a third of those surveyed did not receive any supplementary nutrition and nearly half – 47 percent – of those reported as having received supplementary nutrition by the AWW did not actually do so (Planning Commission, 2011).

In contrast, the state of Karnataka, one of the high performing ICDS states as per the Planning Commission evaluation, during the same period of 2006-11, had utilised the entire sum of Rs.9308.0 million released as the ICDS General Grant from the central government, spending an additional Rs.969.0 million from its own coffers. According to the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, 2012), it is one of the few states with limited or no shortfall in expenditure on supplementary nutrition, 90 percent of checked AWCs with drinking water facilities, near 100 percent availability of baby weighing machines and all AWWs trained to analyse growth charts. Moreover, in Karnataka, 92 percent of all eligible 0-6 year olds, as per the census, were included in the annual AWW survey and 80 percent of 7-72 month olds reported as having received supplementary nutrition by the AWW, actually did so (Planning Commission, 2011).

A significant body of literature, over many years, has located reasons for the limited performance of the ICDS in its cumbersome design[4], insufficient infrastructural, human and financial resources[5] and diffused focus - neglecting the critical group of 0-2 year old children, crucial services such as growth monitoring and nutrition counselling and serving neither as a crèche, day care or early childhood education centre. In terms of processes, frontline workers were found to suffer poor working conditions, were overburdened and poorly supported, with inadequate and decontextualized training.

[4] The programme design of the ICDS is cumbersome because it combines services from the three sectors of health, nutrition and education and expects these services to be delivered through a single worker with a helper (and some support from the health system) to five beneficiary types – pregnant women, nursing mother, 0-3 year old, 3-6 year olds and adolescents, through both centre and field based work.

[5] Scholars and activists have long argued for a need for 2 AWWs in every AWC, appropriate honorarium and benefits for AWWs, increase in allocations for infrastructure, equipment as well as universalisation of services. See Working Group for Children Under Six, 2012

The programme had limited community participation, centralised planning, an unwieldy and unreliable MIS with no feedback loops, poor monitoring and unsupportive supervision (Citizens' Initiative for the Rights of Children Under Six, 2006; Ghosh, 2006; Gragnolati et al., 2006; Gupta, 2001; Measham and Chatterjee, 1998; Saxena and Srivastava, 2009; Working Group for Children Under Six, 2007).

Consistent advocacy to reform the ICDS and address these design, allocative and operational concerns culminated in 2012, with the Government of India rolling out an ambitious scheme to strengthen and restructure the ICDS as part of the Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17). A key aspect of the proposed strengthening and restructuring involves implementing the ICDS in a mission mode, as the 'ICDS Mission'. The Mission includes several programmatic, managerial and institutional reforms (see Box 1), and has increased total financial allocations to the programme.

Box 1: Key Features of the ICDS Mission

The Mission will be rolled out in 3 phases, starting with 200 high burden districts in the 1st year of the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17), followed by an additional 200 districts in the 2nd year and the remaining 240 districts in the 3rd year. It has the following key components:

Programmatic reforms:
• Repositioning the AWC as a vibrant Early Childhood Development Centre (increasing working hours from 4 to 6, introducing *Anganwadi* cum crèche in 5% of AWCs, introducing an additional worker in 200 high burden districts etc); Focusing on under 3s and Early Childhood Care and Education; Improving AWC infrastructure, Raising supplementary nutrition allocations

Managerial reforms:
• Decentralised planning, Improved Training Systems, Technical assistance at all levels, Flexi funds at the AWC level, Civil Society & Institutional Partnerships for 10% ICDS projects, Strengthening MIS, Using ICT.
• Strengthening human resource policy - separate ICDS cadres, using outsourced workers, raising honoraria, increasing avenues for promotion of AWW etc

Institutional reforms:
• Setting up National, State and District level Mission offices for implementation of the ICDS Mission with financial, human resource, logistical, operational and monitoring, systems and powers.

However, a significant question that remains is: whether states with poor governance records which were unable to implement the previous design of the ICDS programme effectively, will be able to implement the new restructured and strengthened programme any better? Will they be able to hire the new 'Mission' staff and utilise sanctioned funds? Experience from the National Rural Health Mission, launched in 2005, on which the ICDS Mission is modelled, suggests otherwise. The latest CAG audit report of NRHM implementation in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh reveals shortages of 68 percent in the appointment of contractual Auxiliary Nurse Midwives, an important provision in the NRHM, even 6 years after the launch of the Mission.

Underutilisation of training funds ranged from 19 to 87 percent annually across 2006-11 (Comptroller and Auditor General of India, 2011).

There is little doubt that the ICDS programme needs to be reformed, although there is much debate about the nature of reform required, but is reform enough to improve programme performance in all states? Or does reform need to be accompanied by improved governance? How can we improve governance? What determines programme governance?

My research addresses this last question. I study how the everyday governance of one of the largest child development programmes in the world, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), is determined at the sub-district level. I examine the processes and practices through which the ICDS is implemented and variations from programme design and policy produced. My approach is ethnographic and I contribute to the understanding of *how* state implemented development programmes work rather than *whether* they work.

Governance, government and governmentality

Governance is an old and much used concept. Traditionally, the term has been associated with or used synonymously with government, with the exercise of power by political leaders (Kjaer, 2004; Weiss, 2000). However Bevir (2012) distinguishes governance from government both empirically and theoretically. For Bevir, while government refers to political institutions, governance refers to processes of decision making and ruling throughout society. Governance is what governments do but it is also what corporations and other organisations do with respect to their employees and members. The concept of governance focuses attention on the complex processes and interactions that produce the policies, practices and effects of governing.

Empirically, Bevir (2007) and Kjaer (2004) associate governance with the public sector reforms of the 1980s and the 1990s. These reforms led to the increased involvement of markets, quasi-markets and networks in the delivery of public services. In his Encyclopaedia of Governance, Bevir (2007) identifies two main phases of reform: New Public Management (NPM) and joined-up governance. The former implies marketization of public services and the application of corporate management principles to the public sector. However, such changes led to the fragmentation of services and raised accountability concerns. In response, 'joined up governance' or

'new governance' focused on horizontal and vertical coordination, through networks and partnerships, between the many organisations involved in public policy making and implementation. It also led to the development of accountability mechanisms such as citizen awareness and participation. Governance, in this context thus, refers to a pattern of rule in which the state depends on complex sets of public, private and voluntary organisations to secure its intentions and deliver its policies and strategizes to create, regulate and make accountable these sets/networks/partnerships (Bevir, 2007). Such an understanding of governance is conceptually similar to the notion of governmentality (Bevir, 2011; Blundo and Le Meur, 2009) which refers to the conduct of conduct not just through the laws and institutions of the state but also social organisations, discourses, norms, identities as well as self-regulation – techniques for the disciplining and care of the self (Gupta, 2001). The similarities between the two concepts lie in their decentred approach to state, focus on social processes rather than structures and institutions and acknowledgement of porous borders between state and society.

However, Kjaer (2004) highlights that the meanings of 'governance' vary across disciplines and fields with de Sardan (2011) calling it a plurivalent term. Blundo and Le Meur (2009) emphasise its emergence in the field of business in the 1930s as corporate governance and then trace its transfer to public affairs as urban governance in the 1960s/70s, developmental 'good governance' in the 1980s and subsequently as global governance. Governance in the context of development is often associated with 'good governance', a normative agenda promulgated by the World Bank that prescribes a democratic state, efficient and transparent administration and competitive markets as essential for economic development (Bevir, 2009). However de Sardan (2011) argues that developmental governance may also be conceived without normative or ideological judgements based on the managerial and political dimensions of collective or public actions. He focuses on the routine functioning of public services and interprets everyday governance in terms of the '…entire processes of the production and supply of public goods and services' (de Sardan, 2009, p. 41) including '…the operating modes of the public service, the professional culture of civil servants, the forms of administrative management and the relations between government officials and service users or citizens' (de Sardan, 2009, p. 41). I build on this understanding of everyday governance to study the entire process of the production and supply of ICDS services at the sub-district level and like de Sardan, I employ an ethnographic approach. I focus on the sub-district or block level since it is at this level that people's everyday experience of the programme is largely shaped.

Ethnography of ICDS governance

I use multi-sited ethnography to understand ICDS governance as a composite of service delivery by anganwadi workers and helpers at the anganwadi centre as well as the administration of these workers and centres by supervisors and programme officials at the level of the ICDS project. My observations of anganwadi centre functioning at the village level had three nested foci: at the centre was the everyday delivery of services at the anganwadis – preschool sessions, distribution of supplementary nutrition, weighing of children, immunisation sessions and so on; the next was anganwadi worker and helper interactions with the village community and the ICDS programme administration; while the third focus was the village social and political context within which anganwadi centres operated. At the ICDS project level, I observed the practices of anganwadi worker recruitment, training and supervision, management of supplementary nutrition contractors, assimilation and reporting of MIS data, monitoring of anganwadi centre construction and so on. These processes were implemented by office based as well as field level staff called Supervisors who supervised a beat of 20-25 anganwadi centres each. There were thus three main sites across which ICDS programme practices were implemented– the anganwadi centre, the supervisor's beat and the ICDS project office and these formed the focus of my ethnography.

Multi-sited ethnography essentially involves following people, connections, associations and relationships across space because they are substantially continuous but not spatially so (Falzon, 2012). The field site thus comprises of multiple sites that are interconnected in such a way that the interconnections between sites are as important as the relationships within them (Hannerz, 2003). Coleman and von Hellermann (2011) worry that such following of interconnections, themes and topics across space implies that ethnographers are simply submitting to a laid out track rather than actively choosing and constituting their ethnographic path. However Fairhead (2011) argues that the 'field' can only be considered 'agentive' if there is only one possible pathway to be taken but given that there are usually a variety of possibilities, the 'field' does not shape ethnography outside of researcher engagement. For Coleman and von Hellermann (2011) fields are always made and never given. Multi-sited ethnography has also been critiqued for lacking depth in comparison to more traditional approaches since studying multiple sites usually involves spending less time in each site. But Hovland (2011) argues that if spatially differentiated sites and routes form an important part of the research subject then such multi-sitedness adds

interpretive depth while for Riccio, (2011) following people strengthens relationships. For Falzon (2012) all study, whether single or multi-sited is likely to be partial in its understanding. And as Gupta (2012) argues, the state is translocal, multileveled and pluricentred and can only be partially understood. In this research, I therefore used multi-sited ethnography to study the three-levelled sub-district ICDS programme hierarchy as a series of interconnected field sites that determined the everyday functioning of the programme.

The setting: Sundar Block, Maharashtra

I located my ethnography of ICDS governance in Sundar Block, Aurangabad district, Maharashtra. My choice of state and district was deliberate and was based on my familiarity with the ICDS programme in Maharashtra, given my earlier work in a grant making organisation, and the *Marathi* language. My Supervisor had also been involved in a research project on the ICDS programme in Maharashtra and was able to put me in touch with senior bureaucrats in the state. I was thus easily able to obtain the state and district level consent required for my research. However, the process of selecting the ICDS project where I would be based to observe the everyday functioning of the programme was more involved. I used both methodological and pragmatic considerations. The methodological parameters were that the block should (a) be largely rural as the ICDS has more rural than urban projects, and (b) be at some distance from the district headquarters as projects near the district headquarters tend to be showcased for the many official visitors of the programme. My pragmatic considerations included the presence of a co-operative and, ideally, female CDPO in the block as it would be easier and more socially acceptable for me to interact frequently with her. Moreover, I looked for a block headquarters that was large enough to allow me as a single woman to rent a room with some independence and privacy. Aurangabad district had 9 blocks and 14 ICDS projects. I visited 4 blocks and 4 ICDS projects and based on discussions with district officials and my criteria, selected an ICDS project located in a rural, border block with urban block headquarters and an approachable woman CDPO, Deepa Pardeshi,★ for my fieldwork. To maintain confidentiality and protect the anonymity of my participants, I refer to the block as 'Sundar Block' and the ICDS project as the Sundar Block ICDS project.

, ★ Name anonymised to protect identity of informants

Figure 1: Aurangabad district in the state of Maharashtra
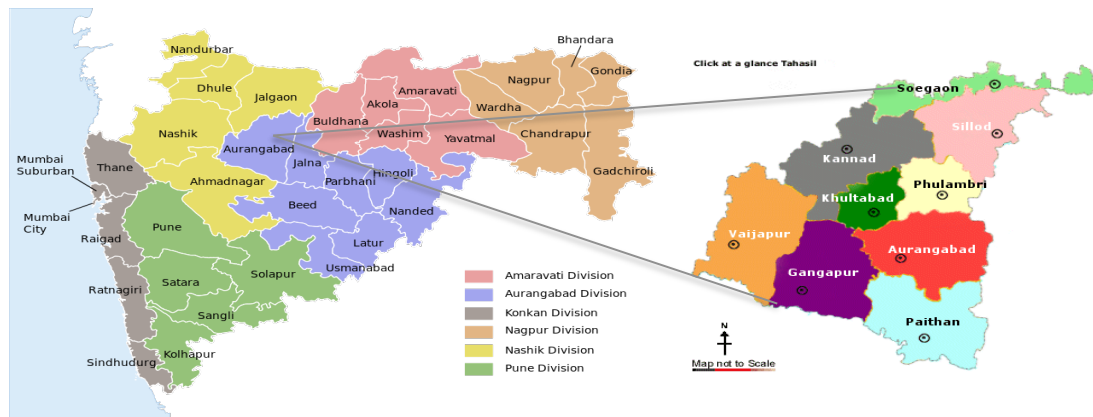
Sundar block is predominantly rural (96 percent of the block population) (Census of India, 2011a) but villages located near major highways and Aurangabad city are experiencing increasing urbanisation. Sundar block adjoins Aurangabad city, which is not only the headquarters of Aurangabad district and the Aurangabad revenue division but also one of the 53 million plus cities or urban agglomerations (Census of India, 2011b) in the country and a major IT and manufacturing hub of the state of Maharashtra. In 2010, Aurangabad city made national headlines when a group of wealthy residents including doctors, builders, industrialists and professionals placed a bulk order for 150 luxury cars of a popular international brand (Kulkarni, 2010). Aurangabad's urbanisation and industrialisation, if not its affluence, spills over into Sundar Block along its edges and along the highways which lead from it and pass through the block to other cities and districts. One such highway connects Aurangabad city with Sundar town, the block headquarters located 50 kilometres deep into the block. All along the highway are pharmaceutical, machine tool, electronic appliance, fertiliser and automative system manufacturing factories. Some of the more new age industries include biotech, meat packaging and frozen foods. This growth of industries has been facilitated by the setting up of a designated industrial area by the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation near Sundar town.

Industrialisation in Sundar block over the past decade has led to the emergence of a second urban centre near Aurangabad city (Census of India, 2011a) as well as the peri-urbanisation of villages around Sundar block town. Agricultural land has been converted to commercial and residential use with a lot of new apartment buildings and houses coming up on the outskirts. Sundar town itself is an old historic city, a pilgrimage centre with temples, narrow lanes and congested homes so all change has

registered on the periphery including slums for industrial labourers, homes for those displaced by a dam project, homes for the development bureaucracy, professionals and those newly enriched by these changes. I rented a room from one such family. They were Marathas, from a nearby village, who had sold about 10 acres of their agricultural land to an upcoming food park and used the money to buy a residential plot in a peripheral locality, build a 'posh' three storey house with all modern amenities and open a ready made garment and saree shop. Many members of the development bureaucracy, ICDS supervisors, schoolteachers and health workers, outsiders who had come from other villages, blocks and districts and made Sundar town their home, lived in the same locality.

While highways and peripheries of both the town and the block were zones of change, their centre was dominated by agriculture and related industries. Sundar town as the block headquarters was a major agricultural market and home to Marwari traders and Maratha landlords. In the block interiors farmers grew sugarcane, cotton, sweet lime, vegetables and millets depending on their access to irrigation. As part of the drought prone Marathwada region, water was of crucial importance in Sundar block and shaped much of social life and politics. The block was drained by the Godavari river, one of the 10 major perennial river systems of the country and had one of the largest irrigation projects of the Marathwada region, built near Sundar town in the 1970s. However droughts were a regular phenomenon and had occurred consecutively during 2013-2015 (Gadgil, 2018). My Maratha landlord family, who gave up agriculture entirely because of irrigation difficulties, blamed regional politics. They pointed out that although the dam was built to irrigate fields in Sundar block and other downstream areas, much of the water was blocked by upstream dams constructed by powerful politicians from western Maharashtra to irrigate grape and sugarcane fields in their constituencies in Nasik and Ahmednagar districts – an analysis corroborated by journalists (Ghoge, 2016; Purohit, 2012) and researchers (Dandekar and Naravade, 2013; Purandare, 2013). However, my landlords also highlighted that a significant percentage of the remaining water was transferred downstream to Jalna District via a pipeline as Sundar Block was part of the Jalna parliamentary constituency and hence represented by a Member of Parliament from Jalna. Moreover, despite the dam being commissioned in 1976, the channel network from the main canal required to irrigate the fields was never built with only the fields near the canal receiving its water. In the 2009 Maharashtra state election, when a powerful leader of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), held a massive rally in Sundar block and promised to sanction Rs.2000 million for an irrigation project if elected, an NCP MLA was voted in for the first time. However,

the MLA failed to deliver on his promise, building only a few channels of inferior quality and was voted out in the subsequent election in 2014. According to Ganesh, my landlord's adult son, usually when a politician won an election his supporters benefitted. But the NCP MLA hoarded all benefits and didn't let his supporters gain, so they abandoned him in the next election. In the absence of a suitable distribution network, villages had to implement specific schemes to access the canal water through pipelines and as per the anganwadi worker of Shanwadi village, the measure of a Sarpach lay in his/her ability to access and implement such schemes. She maintained that only a person of means should be elected to the Sarpanch position as only a wealthy and well-connected Sarpanch could work the development bureaucracy to get benefits for the village. The politics of water in Sundar Block was not only limited to the dam's distribution network but also extended to the communities displaced by the dam. Sundar town had a specific locality where they had been resettled but many were resettled in different villages as spatially distinct communities with a different name. The Rajegaon beat of the Sundar block ICDS project which included villages settled on the banks of the river had many such communities. Given their small numbers, the communities were included for political and administrative purposes in the panchayat of the larger village where they struggled to be adequately represented. In Mangaon village, the re-settled community had to protest on the streets for adequate drinking water supply.

Besides water, politics in Sundar block was based on caste. The Marathas constituted nearly 44-49 percent of the population and were the most numerically significant caste group. The OBCs or other backward castes such as Malis, Sutars, Navis, Dhobis, Kahars, Guravs and Kolhatis constituted approximately 20 percent of the population, Scheduled Castes including Mahars, Mangs and Chambhars were 14 percent and Scheduled Tribes such as Wadaris and Bhils were 3 percent while Muslims accounted for 12-14 percent of the population[6]. Higher castes such as Brahmins, Jains and Marwaris were also present in the block but in very small numbers. Caste in the villages of Sundar block had a distinct spatial character. Marathas along with the higher caste Brahmins occupied the village centre while the OBCs lived on the periphery and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes on the outskirts. All of the peripheral localities had caste specific names such as Maliwada, Mangwada, Maharwada and separate entrances – separate roads along the periphery of the village connecting these localities to the village entrance. This physical segregation was designed to

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[6] Based on Sundar Block ICDS Project MIS data. Figures are indicative.

maintain the ritual purity of the so-called higher caste Marathas and Brahmins. Besides their superior caste status and numerical preponderance, Marathas also owned a majority of the land and were the biggest landowners with landholdings of upto 100 acres, they resultantly were the economically and politically dominant caste in Sundar Block. Marathas controlled a majority of elected political positions at the village and block level as well as co-operative institutions in agriculture-allied sectors such as banking and agro-industries that facilitated the agricultural economy. However, the agricultural economy had also changed in the recent past – a significant change was in caste based labour practices, agricultural labour particularly Dalits were increasingly mobile opting for seasonal migration as brick kiln workers or sugarcane cutters which enabled them to earn Rs.40-50,000.0 per season, decreasing their dependence on the landowning Marathas and the village economy. Dalit mobility affected Maratha agriculture both socially and economically but this change though substantial was not permanent and was based on the availability of labour outside the village. In the village Dalits remained under the socio-political dominance of the Marathas (see Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of Maratha domination). Against this backdrop of change and continuity, I studied the practices through which the ICDS programme was implemented.

Constructing the field site

Sundar block had two ICDS projects. I studied the functioning of one project, which I refer to as the 'Sundar block ICDS project'. This project served a population of 162,374 persons out of a total population of 306,437 (Census 2011) through 209 anganwadi and 26 mini anganwadi centres operated by 162 anganwadi workers, 164 anganwadi helpers and 15 mini-anganwadi workers. The 235 anganwadi centres in the project were organised into 8 beats of 24-35 anganwadis each, with each beat managed by a Supervisor. Of these, I closely observed the functioning of 2 supervisors and a total of 5 anganwadi centres from 2 villages across their beats. My choice of participants was entirely pragmatic. The foremost consideration was place of residence – only 4 of the 8 Supervisors lived in the block headquarters and hence could be considered for the study. Of these 4, I approached one Supervisor, Lata Shinde.★, because she and her family had been very friendly from the beginning, helping me to find a place to stay and settle in. Shinde madam belonged to the Vaidu caste, which falls in the Nomadic Tribes-B category of the state. She had worked in the ICDS for 15 years and easily
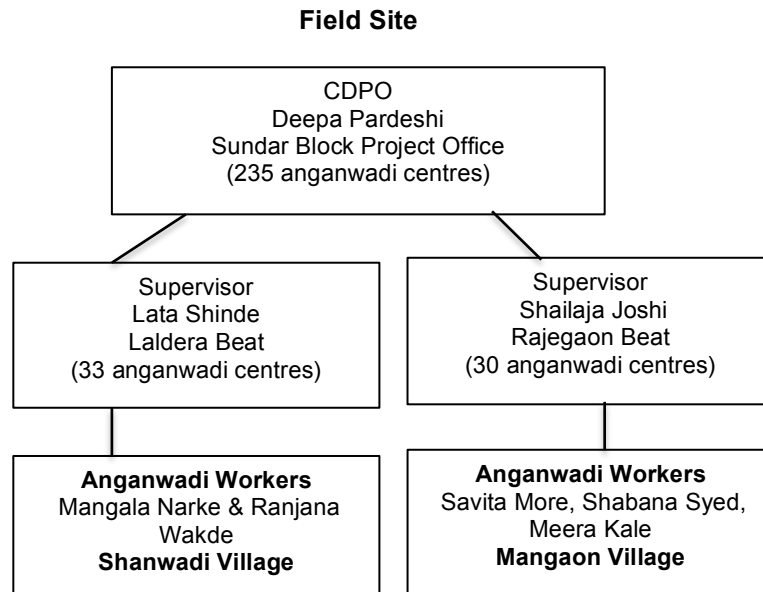

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agreed to my observation of her work including supervisory visits to the villages and anganwadi centres in her beat, beat meetings, office meetings and office work. However, the involvement of the second Supervisor, Shailaja Joshi·*, a Brahmin, was due to some pressure from block officials and other Supervisors. Joshi madam was a close confidante of the CDPO, assisting her in sending requested reports to the District office, conveying her daily instructions by mobile phone to all other Supervisors (who were required to report to the Project Office only once a week) and having updated information about her schedule. She had been promoted to the Supervisor position after more than two decades of work as an anganwadi worker, had received several awards for the quality of her work and was considered very knowledgeable about the ICDS programme. Almost the entire project felt very strongly that if I was serious about understanding the working of the ICDS then I should be observing her work. As the lauded resident expert Joshi madam also expected her involvement in my research as her due. So I conceded to everyone's pressure and requested Joshi madam's participation to which she graciously agreed.

Shinde madam's beat Laldera* had 33 anganwadi centres across 11 villages while Joshi madam's beat Rajegaon* had 30 anganwadi centres across 14 villages. To study the functioning of anganwadi workers, I selected Shanwadi* village from Laldera beat and Mangaon* village from Rajegaon beat. The choice of Shanwadi was entirely pragmatic – it was the only village in the beat, amongst those approached, where the senior anganwadi worker, Mangala Narke*, a Maratha, was agreeable to my observing her work and interviewing her. She also helped me find a place to stay in the village. In Rajegaon beat, I chose Mangaon village based on the diverse caste identities of its three anganwadi workers – Maratha, Muslim and Scheduled Caste (Chambhar). However Joshi madam objected to my selection. She had chosen a village and anganwadi worker for me, whose work she believed reflected her superiority as a Supervisor and she was quite insistent that I select it, taking the matter to the CDPO when I did not agree. She based her case on the argument that Mangaon village had unruly politicians and was not a safe place for women. I assured the CDPO that selecting Mangaon village was important for my research and I would promptly quit the village if I felt myself to be at risk at any time. The CDPO agreed, however Joshi madam refused to help me find a place to stay in the village. Fortunately, my landlords in Sundar block town had relatives in Mangaon village and I was able to make arrangements for my stay there

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· ★ Name anonymised to protect identity of informants

The field site is depicted in Figure 2 below:

Field Site

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                    │           CDPO              │
                    │      Deepa Pardeshi         │
                    │  Sundar Block Project Office│
                    │   (235 anganwadi centres)   │
                    └─────────────────────────────┘
                     ╱                           ╲
        ┌──────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐
        │      Supervisor      │      │      Supervisor      │
        │     Lata Shinde      │      │    Shailaja Joshi    │
        │     Laldera Beat     │      │     Rajegaon Beat    │
        │ (33 anganwadi centres)│     │ (30 anganwadi centres)│
        └──────────────────────┘      └──────────────────────┘
                   │                              │
        ┌──────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐
        │  Anganwadi Workers   │      │  Anganwadi Workers   │
        │ Mangala Narke & Ranjana│    │ Savita More, Shabana Syed,│
        │        Wakde         │      │      Meera Kale      │
        │   Shanwadi Village   │      │   Mangaon Village    │
        └──────────────────────┘      └──────────────────────┘
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Producing data, ethics and positionality

I undertook fieldwork for 10 months from October 2014 to July 2015 during which I conducted participant observation of the two Supervisors for 6 weeks each, of anganwadi centres in Shanwadi and Mangaon village for 6 and 4 weeks respectively and of the Sundar block project office for 4 weeks. My plan was to be more of a 'participant' than 'observer' (Holy, 1984) and I had identified, in consultation with District Officials some innovative initiatives that I could document for them. However, once I started fieldwork at the sub-district level, I quickly realised that focusing on the documentation of initiatives would cause me to miss out on the everyday working of the project functionaries. I therefore changed my plan and had to be content with being more of an 'observer' than 'participant'.

I began fieldwork in the Sundar Block Project office with the participant observation of Supervisor Lata Shinde followed by anganwadi centres of Shanwadi village within her beat, after which I moved on to observing the working of Supervisor Shailaja Joshi, then to anganwadi centres from Mangaon village of her beat and then finally to the Project Office. As Supervisors connect anganwadi centres to the Project Office undertaking both field level and Project Office based work, this sequence allowed me to iterate between the three ethnographic sites of the anganwadi centre, the

supervisory beat and the ICDS Project Office and study the interlinkages between them.

The participant observation of Supervisors involved accompanying them as they visited anganwadi centres in their beat for supervision, organised and conducted beat level meetings of anganwadi workers, attended weekly meetings at the Project Office in Sundar town, training and other programmes in Aurangabad city and prepared beat and block level Monthly Progress Reports. With Shinde Madam, I visited 26 of the 33 anganwadi centres in her beat and attended 4 beat level meetings whereas with Joshi Madam I visited 28 of her 30 anganwadi centres and attended 3 beat meetings. For each beat, I also built a social profile of anganwadi workers collecting information on their caste, work experience, educational qualification and kinship networks within the ICDS. Anganwadi workers were also surveyed on the ISO certification initiative. I assisted Shinde Madam to prepare the block and beat level Monthly Progress Reports, collate the beat level supplementary nutrition bills and provide feedback to anganwadi workers and Supervisors on their errors. In-depth interviews of both Supervisors were also conducted.

At the village level I observed the functioning of anganwadi centres in the mornings – 2 in Shanwadi village managed by anganwadi workers Mangala Narke and Ranjana Wakde.* respectively and 2 of 3 anganwadi centres in Mangaon village run by anganwadi workers Shabana Syed* and Meera Kale* respectively. The third anganwadi centre held by anganwadi worker Savita More* was not regularly operated. As part of my observation of anganwadi centres, I noted the attendance of pre-school children, delivery of supplementary nutrition, assessment of nutritional status, conduct of pre-school activities, organisation of Village Health and Nutrition Days, Pulse Polio immunisation, deworming, home visits, interpersonal counselling and women and adolescent group meetings. In the afternoon as the anganwadi workers updated their records, we discussed their experiences of working in the ICDS, in the village and the activities of their trade union. In the evening, I visited community members including families whose children were enrolled in the programme but did not attend regularly and/or were undernourished. I also studied anganwadi centre records including the annual survey, attendance register and weight register. Besides this, to understand the social and political context of the village I met with the current and previous Sarpanchs and other political leaders and visited the different caste based localities. For Shanwadi

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.* ★ Name anonymised to protect identity of informants

village I also helped prepare a village social map. My main informants in the village, besides the anganwadi workers, were retired angawadi helpers and ASHA workers who were community based volunteers affiliated with the public health system. I also had the opportunity to attend anganwadi worker union demonstrations along with the anganwadi workers. Additionally, in-depth interviews of all 5 anganwadi workers were conducted.

I spent the last month of fieldwork observing the working of the ICDS Project Office particularly the CDPO as she discharged her various responsibilities. Notable amongst these were supervision of staff, organisation of anganwadi worker recruitment and training programmes, consolidation of the programme MIS and reports, management of the budget, contractors such as self help groups, political leaders, block and district officials and coordination with other departments such as the public health department and the works department. I conducted indepth interviews with the CDPO as well as other office members including 4 of the remaining 6 Supervisors and the office staff – the clerk, retired accountant, peon and driver. I also studied the office records including those relating to finance and human resources.

My access to ICDS functionaries, processes and records was largely facilitated by the permission letter I had received from ICDS Aurangabad District Officials. However the need to cooperate with my research sparked a variety of reactions amongst functionaries. Gupta, (2001) and Sharma (2010) highlight the practice of 'staging development visits' by programme functionaries for senior officials, politicians and international and other external visitors – enacting idealised programme realities to assure development programme performance and gain acclaim. Many of my initial interactions with ICDS functionaries involved such staging with the CDPO warning staff to refrain from discussing informal financial practices in my presence; Superviors informing anganwadi centres in advance regarding my visits, and anganwadi workers ensuring higher pre-school attendance and serving supplementary nutrition in programme issued utensils during initial visits. However, as I stayed in the background during meetings and visits, maintained the assured confidentiality and interactions with me produced no repercussions, negative or positive, many functionaries became more relaxed in my presence. For instance, anganwadi worker Savita More continued to be irregular in her running of her anganwadi centre despite my stay in Mangaon village. However, others such as Supervisor Shailaja Joshi came to resent the time spent answering my questions, as she perceived little advantage for herself in doing so. Whereas still others such as anganwadi worker Shabana Syed became frustrated with

my neutrality and demanded that I report programme rule violations such as the absenteeism of Savita More to higher officials, accusing me of being complicit if I failed to do so. In response I contacted my Supervisors and was advised to maintain confidentiality as my one time involvement was unlikely to address the problem and may even result in untoward complications for Shabana Syed.

While an official letter provided access to programme functionaries, in the village community, my access was ensured by my caste. I was able to find a place to stay, a family to have my meals with as well as enter Maratha homes because of my Brahmin caste identity. However, this caste-based acceptance meant that I was conscious of violating caste norms when I visited Scheduled Caste localities and homes. At the same time such 'transgressions' increased my acceptability amongst the so-called lower caste communities. While caste identity provided access, my status as an older, urban, childless, married woman travelling alone aroused suspicion regarding my morals and motives. In Shanwadi village the Sarpanch did not really accept my introduction as a PhD student researching the ICDS, suspected that I was really a journalist and avoided me for much of my 6 week stay. I finally had to seek the help of the senior anganwadi worker to secure an appointment with him and even then caught him only by chance as he was leaving the village just before the agreed upon meeting time. In Mangaon, some women standing on the main village street loudly questioned my presence in the village raising doubts about my morals for travelling alone. I had to show them my family photographs to convince them of my identity and purpose. Additionally, the threat of gender based violence was an underlying constant throughout my fieldwork and I was regularly advised by ICDS functionaries regarding safety. Mangala Narke, the anganwadi worker from Shanwadi village even spread a rumour that I was connected to powerful politicians and was under police protection to shield me from any harassment during my stay in her village. On my part, I made sure to conform to gendered social norms regarding appearance, social interactions and mobility – not going out at night and keeping my landlords apprised of my movements. I was able to complete my field work, in large part, because I interacted mostly with women.

Analysis

One of my central ethical concerns was maintaining the anonymity of my informants, given the sensitive and confidential information about ICDS sub-district level programme processes that I had from them. Since project functionaries could easily be

identified from official records based on location and time period, I decided to anonymise the name of the ICDS project that I studied as well as the name of the community development block where it was located. Additionally I anonymised the names of all informants and places. As analysis and data collection are iterative in ethnographic research (O'Reilly, 2005) I began analysis during field work writing 2-3 page notes on emerging themes such as 'Recruitment, patronage and caste', 'Supervsion, caste and class' and 'Performing ICDS'. On completing fieldwork, I wrote up a detailed 10,000 word document on fieldwork reflections based on what I had observed and understood. These two exercises helped me identify the key themes such as caste, gender, politics, informal payments, supplementary nutrition, entrepreneurship, ISO certification, MIS and performance under which data from field notes and interview transcriptions was then organised. The data sorted by themes was then colour coded to detail important sub-themes and identify concepts.

Chapter Sketches

In Chapter 2, I locate my study of the everyday governance of the ICDS in literature on development programme implementation and the developmental Indian state. I outline the problem of the 'vexedness of implementation' – the gaps and variations produced in the translation of development programme policy into practice – which, in the Indian context has been largely attributed to the social embeddedness of the state. I identify three prominent explanations for the blurred boundaries between state and society in India: (a) that the state is dominated by a coalition of classes, (b) that the modern state can only be accessed by a majority of the population through political brokers and mediators and finally, (c) that the state-society boundary is created as an effect of everyday bureaucratic practices reflective of social relations of power and control. I build on the third frame to understand the bureaucratic practices that determine ICDS implementation. Although state practices have been studied anthropologically, the role of state functionaries has not been adequately addressed and this is where I locate my contribution. In the remaining chapters, I study how state functionaries, working at the implementation level of the ICDS programme, construct, negotiate and perform state practices in the everyday to determine ICDS governance. Lower level state functionaries have been found to work in a context of political mediation with politicians using government programmes for patronage as well as generating funds for electoral expenses. Parallely, reforms to the Indian developmental state have also been undertaken. I therefore identify three main factors influencing the construction, negotiation and performance of ICDS practices by state functionaries - local political

relations, informal incomes and payments and reform initiatives. I explore these factors to define a broad framework for the study of the state practices implemented by ICDS functionaries.

In Chapter 3, I examine the engagement of ICDS functionaries with the local political order. Exploring the links between the politicisation of caste and the political mediation of the ICDS in Sundar block, I ethnographically detail the strategies by which the dominant Maratha caste colonises field level ICDS positions to capture programme benefits and resources and influence the uptake and delivery of ICDS services. In particular I highlight how Maratha ICDS functionaries use state practices to perform caste and produce Dalit beneficiaries and workers as polluting and untouchable subjects. However in a departure from much existing literature I also present two case studies of Dalit ICDS functionaries' resistance of Maratha attempts to reproduce caste power as state power. Dalit ICDS workers confront Maratha dominance within the ICDS by invoking the rules of Weberian bureaucracy. I conclude by highlighting that interactions of caste and state do not only produce gaps in development programme implementation but can also serve to challenge social inequalities and reconstitute politics.

In Chapter 4, I explore the informal financial practices of ICDS functionaries and their links to the political mediation of the ICDS. I study the informality associated with two components of the ICDS – the Supplementary Nutrition Programme, one of the 6 ICDS services and the administrative processes of promotions, transfers and postings. In the first component, I find that anganwadi workers confronted with the un-implementability of formal bureaucratic rules devise informal practices to facilitate programme implementation paying percentages or *takkewari* to block officials for their involvement. I elaborate the dynamics of the *takkewari* system and its sub-systems. In the context of promotions and transfers, I trace anganwadi worker attempts to traverse a confusing arena of bureaucratic agents and political brokers. I conclude by examining the links between percentages and promotions and the formal and informal.

In Chapter 5, I examine the engagement of ICDS functionaries with an initiative of local level state reform – ISO certification. Scholarship on international standards and standardisation initiatives emphasises that these technologies generate new relations of governance and power. However, I build on the insight that the relationship between technologies and rationalities is mediated through the problematics of implementation to study ISO certification in the Sundar block ICS project. Under this initiative ICDS

functionaries were expected to resource and refurbish anganwadi centres to resemble private pre-schools by entrepreneurially raising funds from local businesses and communities. However unable to implement this design in a resource poor context, I found that anganwadi workers resorted to routine implementation practices of staging, patronage and personal investment to standardise their anganwadi centres and gain ISO certification.

In Chapter 6, I conclude by highlighting that the negotiations and improvisations of ICDS workers serve to facilitate rather than impede programme implementation.

Chapter 2

The vexedness of implementation[7]

My study of the everyday governance of the ICDS at the sub-district level in India is ultimately a thesis about the 'vexedness of implementation' (Mathur, 2016) – the translation of policies and programmes designed at higher levels of the developmental state into practice at the sub-district or block level. A prominent understanding of such translation is in terms of a gap between policy and practice – programmes are not always implemented as designed and/or planned (Mosse, 2004).

In this chapter, I review political and anthropological literature on development programme implementation and the production of disjuncture between design and practice in the Indian context. Much academic work attributes such differences to the social embeddedness of the Indian state in society. I locate three broad explanations for the porous boundaries between state and society in India, which I categorise, as the 'dominated', 'modern' and 'imagined' state. I build on the third frame to study ICDS governance in terms of everyday state practices and argue for a focus on the understudied role of state functionaries in state practices. Existing research highlights that state functionaries work in a context of political mediation of everyday public services. State and local politicians use state programmes to extend patronage to their voters and supporters and generate campaign finance. At the same time, reforms to the developmental Indian state have also been initiated in a transnational context of neoliberalism and 'good governance'. I therefore identify the three factors of local political relations, informal financial systems and bureaucratic reform to study how ICDS functionaries construct, negotiate and perform everyday programme practices. I review existing literature on each of these themes to devise the frame and approach for understanding the negotiations and improvisations of ICDS functionaries. The political mediation of the Indian state has been linked to the politicisation of caste. I review the links between caste and state in terms of the three perspectives of 'hierarchical', 'political' and 'performative' caste and build on the latter two for my study of state functionaries. The informal financial practices of bureaucracies have been studied as 'corruption' in political and economic literature. However, I take an anthropological approach, which avoids moral framings and instead builds on legal pluralism to

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[7] This phrase has been used by Mathur (2016)

understand informal practices. Finally, I trace a range of state reform initiatives in the Indian context that began with economic liberalisation and were informed by transnational discourses of neoliberalism and 'good governance'. I build on the contention that such measures do not simply produce the economisation of the political and seek to study the conflicts and contestations that result from bureaucratic and state reform.

The chapter begins by outlining the problem of the vexedness of implementation and subsequently comprises of three main sections. The first reviews literature on the socially embedded Indian state, the second on state functionaries and the third on the three factors that emerge as significant in the determination of everyday state practices- local political relations, informal financial practices and reform initiatives. I conclude by summarising the frame through which I study ICDS functionaries, their practices and ICDS programme implementation in the subsequent chapters.

Development Programme Implementation

Mosse (2004) highlights that although there is extensive scholarship on policy models, '..little attention (has been) paid to the relationship between these models and the practices and events that they are expected to generate and legitimize in particular contexts…At best, the relationship between policy and practice is understood in terms of an unintended gap between theory and practice, to be reduced by better policy more effectively implemented' (Mosse, 2004, p. 640) Prominent scholarship on such implementation gaps has focused on issues of design as well as the process of designing developmental programmes. Scott (1998) in his seminal critique highlights that states need to make the messy complexity of societies legible for development planning and employ standardised systems of measurement and recording for the administrative ordering of nature and society. Such ordering, in turn, produces simplifications- generalised, abstract, 'thin' mappings of complex local realities. Development plans and programmes based on such misrepresentation inevitably lead to failure and may cause terrible human suffering, especially in nondemocratic political contexts. Ferguson (1994) focuses on the role of the development sector - international and bilateral aid agencies and other transnational organisations - in the design and implementation of development programmes. He highlights that such agencies usually work on time bound budgets and are oriented to provide technical and apolitical interventions. They largely define problems in technical terms, undermining the role of historical and political processes and viewing the state as a neutral partner rather than

as a political force, thereby depoliticising development. Ferguson's critique of the 'development industry' has been associated with 'post-development', a school that rejects mainstream development thought and practice as external, based on western models of industrialisation and capitalism, culturally homogenising and ecologically destructive (Pieterse, 2010). While Ferguson is sympathetic to the critique of mainstream development, he does not uphold its complete rejection given that it forms a part of the aspirations of the poor in many contexts (Matthews, 2017). Post development, in turn, has been critiqued for essentialising the differences between the West and the Rest, condemning science and technology out of hand and promoting cultural relativism (Corbridge, 1998). Mosse (2004) dismisses the critical turn in the anthropology of development as an ethnographic blind alley that destroys its object and subsequently is left with little to say. He argues for studying 'how' development works by researching institutional practice and the social life of development projects, organisations and professionals. I build on this focus to study the local state in India and its implementation of the ICDS programme.

The socially embedded Indian state

In the Indian context, disjunctions between development programme designs and their outcomes have been largely attributed to the embeddedness of the state in society. While the ideal-typical Weberian state is expected to be impersonal, autonomous and distinct from society governing populations without fear or favour, much scholarship has revealed the Indian state to be '… profoundly penetrated and influenced by social forces…' (Fuller and Harriss, 2001, p. 10). Analytical work on the blurred boundaries between state and society in India and its impact on state functioning comprises of three distinct strands. In the following section, I examine these frames of the 'dominated', 'modern' and 'imagined' state and present my approach to studying the local state.

1. The Dominated State

The first frame builds off a Marxist perspective and characterises the Indian state as permeated by the dominant classes - the industrial capitalists, rich farmers and the professionals and bureaucrats. According to this analysis, the pre-liberalised, developmental state was hampered in its realisation of Nehruvian expert led planned development by the interests of the big capitalists and rich agrarian class. Bardhan, (1984) explains that as neither class was able to exercise hegemony on its own, there

was a compromise of power, which in turn enabled the state office-holders, the professionals and bureaucrats, to exercise relative autonomy. Vanaik (1990) and Varshney (1995) on the other hand emphasise the relative political strength of the agrarian bourgeoisie in this dominant coalition. For Kaviraj (1984) and Chatterjee (1999), there was a 'passive revolution' with the progressive modernising elite building alliances with the rich peasantry '…so that it could no longer dictate to them and instead began to reflect their interests' (Fuller and Harriss, 2001, p. 8). With liberalisation in the 1990s, Chatterjee (2008) identifies a change in the framework of class dominance, namely a distinct rise in the relative power of corporate capital vis-à-vis the landed elite and the bureaucratic-managerial class. The ascendance of the corporate capitalist class, Chatterjee elaborates, negatively impacted state autonomy such that increasingly it was the capitalist requirement of maintaining high rates of national economic growth that set state policy. However, the state parallely also continued to invest in welfare programmes because as Chatterjee, building on Sanyal (2007), explains, capitalist growth in the context of electoral democracy required a reversal of the effects of the primitive accumulation it produced – the dis-possession of primary producers from their means of production. Reversing the effects of primitive accumulation thus, became a political condition for the continued growth of corporate capital.

At the local level, Harriss-White (2003) finds that the state is dominated by an intermediate class comprising small businessmen, traders, rich peasants and petty officials operating through a 'shadow state' of contractors, fixers and brokers who govern an unofficial market of government licenses and subsidies. The 'shadow state', according to Harriss-While, surrounds and hollows out the official state for private benefit. Such de facto privatisation along with the informal nature of a majority of the Indian economy challenges the very legitimacy of the formal state.

A significant critique of such Marxist analysis is that it tends to apply universal political economic frames to understand specific contexts. In contrast, the subaltern school historicises and contextualises the Indian state highlighting the centrality of spatial and temporal location in understandings of modernity, citizenship and liberal democracy. I examine this post-colonial scholarship in the following section.

2. The Modern State

The second strand of academic work on why the Indian state is not more Weberian in its functioning builds on the writings of Chatterjee (2004), Kaviraj (2010), Madan (1997) and Saberwal (1996) and offers a more culturalist explanation. According to these authors the idea of the Indian state in the Constitution was based on the principles of a secular, liberal modernity, which were not shared by a majority of the population. For Madan (1997), constitutional secularism was incompatible with the way of life for most Indians. Similarly Saberwal (1996) maintained that there were large gaps between the social logics underlying Indian and Western traditions such that Indians found it difficult to operate institutions of Western inspiration such as courts and bureaucracies set up in post colonial India. For Chatterjee, it was a matter of capacity. Notable in this strand of work, Chatterjee, (2004, 2001) contends that while constitutionally all Indians are citizens with equal rights and freedoms; practically, the majority lack the cultural capital and resources to exercise the same[8]. They, thus engage with the state not through the liberal ideal of universal citizenship but as communities and through mediators and brokers, creating conditions for rent seeking and patronage. Reciprocally, the postcolonial Indian state also does not regard the majority of the Indian people in terms of the universal of citizenship, but rather as subjects or population groups who need to be modernised into citizens through governmentality. This process paradoxically creates multiple, shifting classifications of population, reaffirming particular cultural identities and reinforcing a democratic politics that is predominantly based on socio-cultural identity rather than universal, undifferentiated citizenship. With the state dominated by the modernised, liberal elite (urban middle classes) but dependent for popular legitimacy on the religious, communitarian subaltern (poor and rural populations), Chatterjee postulates a deep split in India between the politics of the elite and that of the subaltern. He classifies the subaltern and their politics of informality, patronage and brokerage as 'political society'. For him, although civil society as an ideal energises an interventionist political project, it is in political society – an arena of intense competition between different social groups demanding welfare and entitlements from the state – that India's political modernity is being defined.

Kaviraj (2010) extends the postulated split between the elite and the subaltern to the developmental state conceiving of a corresponding split between the modernist

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[8] This includes aspects such as literacy, language, skills to deal with complicated bureaucratic procedures including legal matters and the gap between the socio-cultural ethos and the politico-administrative culture of the system (Ram Reddy and Haragopal (1985) in Gudavarthy, 2012a)

'bureaucratic elite' who design programmes and the 'vernacular' lower level functionaries who implement them, often reinterpreting them beyond recognition.

Amongst the proponents of this culturalist explanation Chatterjee's concept of political society, has been quite influential[9] but it has also raised much debate. A key debate focuses on political society's potential for transformative politics with Gudavarthy and Vijay (2007) and Sarkar (2012) arguing that the concept only describes emerging conditions in a post colonial democracy and is not normative whereas for Corbridge et al., (2005) political society is also a potential site for the development of civil society. But the central focus of the debate has been on the dichotomy set up between civil and political society. Scholars argue that this binary is too overdrawn. Baviskar and Sundar (2008), Corbridge et al. (2005), Gudavarthy (2012b), Menon (2010) and Sundar and Sundar (2012) draw attention to the rights based political struggles of the so called inhabitants of political society as well as the 'uncivil' actions and illegality of those classified as civil society.

3. The Imagined State

The third strand of academic work on the socially embedded Indian state regards the elusive and yet salient boundary differentiating the state from society as an effect of everyday routinized bureaucratic practices. In this Foucauldian approach, the problem of social embeddedness is redefined from that of the state's inability to deal impartially with social groups to one in which the state is constituted as a bureaucratic effect in the exercise of social relations and power. In this understanding then, the boundary separating the state and society is a line drawn internally within a network of institutions to maintain a certain political and social order.

Scholars of the state have written frequently about the difficulty of studying the state (Abrams, 1988; Fuller and Harriss, 2001; Hansen and Stepputat, 2001; Mitchell, 1999, 1991) referring to it as 'illusory', 'ghostly' and 'a myth'.   A key difficulty identified by many is that of distinguishing the state from society in practice. All definitions of the state depend on determining such a separation but empirically, the 'edges of the state are uncertain; societal elements seem to penetrate it on all sides, and the resulting boundary between state and society is difficult to determine' (Mitchell, 1991, p. 88). Yet

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[9] Besides India, scholars in Africa, Latin America (Gudavarthy, 2012b) and Taiwan (Chen, 2003) have used Chatterjee's concept of 'Political Society' to frame issues of power and politics in post colonial contexts.

the state remains 'pivotal in our very imagination of what a society is. . . . central to all that is not state' (Hansen and Stepputat, 2001, p. 2).

Mitchell (1999, 1991) identifies two key responses by American political science to the elusiveness and salience of the state – the systems approach and the statist approach. The systems approach sought to replace the concept of the state with the political system, thereby officially including other aspects of the political process such as the activities of various political groupings and social collectives (Easton, 1953; Almond 1960 in Mitchell, 1991). However, this only served to complicate the problem as the political system was found to be even more difficult to distinguish from society and contrarily tended to incorporate almost all of society. While the systems theorists discarded the concept of 'state' because of its elusiveness, the state-centred theorists sought 'to bring the state back in' because of its salience. They conceived of the state as a unified, coherent and autonomous entity, distinct from society and not influenced in any way by its forces (Evans et al., 1985; Krasner, 1978; Skocpol, 1979) and were critiqued for the resurrection of the state as an a priori, discrete social fact.

In response, Abrams (1988) and Mitchell advocate an approach that takes on both the elusiveness and salience of the state, not as a fundamental incompatibility but rather as essential features of the same phenomenon. Abrams builds on Miliband's (1969) concept of the 'state-system' – a cluster of institutions of political and executive control and their key personnel – and proposes the complementary concept of the 'state-idea'. While the state-system includes institutions of economic and political domination, these do not encompass the ideological aspect of the state, which legitimates subjection, a gap addressed by the 'state-idea'. For Abrams, the state-system generates the state-idea as an autonomous, unified and integrated expression of common interest to mask the actualities of class power and domination. Taking a similar approach, Mitchell claims that the boundary separating the state and society appears both real and illusory because it is a construction, an effect of everyday routinized social practices reflective of relations of power and social control. Once the state society boundary itself is understood as an effect of power, the state is then conceptualised within the other institutional forms -family, economy, civil society- through which social relations are lived (Sharma and Gupta, 2006). The state is then no longer seen at the apex of society and as the central locus of power rather the focus shifts to understanding how the state assumes a position of authority over all the other institutional forms that social relations take (Sharma and Gupta, 2006).

Gupta (2012, 1995; Sharma and Gupta, 2006) taking an anthropological approach elaborates the role of everyday, routinized and banal bureaucratic practices and representations in producing the primacy, superiority and authority of the state. These include common procedures such as applying for a license and/or identity card/passport, paying taxes, registering a birth/death or marriage as well as representations such as seals, letterheads, organizational charts, designations and uniforms. For Gupta, these mundane bureaucratic procedures enable the political tasks of state formation, and governance while at the same time revealing how the state is imagined and encountered by its citizens – how power is exercised and inequalities instituted. Such exercise of power is however not always unchallenged, it is also resisted and subverted through the same everyday practices that constitute it - bureaucratic proceduralism is also performative (Butler, 1990). The repetitive re-enactments of everyday bureaucratic practices not only reflect the coherence and unity of the state but they are constitutive of it and can consequently also destabilise it. Moreover, such constructions of a unitary state may also take numerous forms based on the group asserting hegemony/making claims and the audience/constituency to which the performance is targeted. Further, even within hegemonic blocs there might be contestation on what constitutes the imaginary of the state. Consequently, all such imaginary/representation/understanding of the state is likely to be multiple and partial. Gupta questions whether the state is at all knowable in all its fullness, with its contours clear and materiality beyond doubt given that it is translocal and pluricentred, ubiquitous and yet reified. Trouillot (2001) argues that as the state has no institutional fixity, state effects maybe studied in any location where governmental practices are enacted and not just in government or national institutions.

Much literature on the state as effect has focused on the diverse ways in which citizens engage with state practices and evoke state imaginaries to reaffirm or challenge political relations and power. Gupta (1995) in a seminal contribution highlights that the ubiquity of talk about state corruption in the daily conversations of villagers in North India enables them to construct the state symbolically and to define themselves as rights bearing citizens. According to Gupta, as corruption refers to violations of norms and standards, outrage over it conversely symbolises the acceptance of those norms and standards which in this case includes the demarcation of public office and private interest, notions of citizenship and public accountability. In an industrial town in central India, Parry (2000) also finds that, pervasive talk about corruption signals the increasing acceptance of universalistic bureaucratic norms.

At the level of practice however, Anjaria (2011) and Anand (2011) discover that 'corrupt' transactions instead of representing a violation of citizenship rights, enable the making of citizenship claims on the state. In his ethnography Anjaria found that Mumbai street hawkers made regular but unofficial payments to lower level municipal authorities and the police for illegally using public space, a steady arrangement that opened up avenues for the negotiation and legitimation of their spatial claims. The power inherent in state practices was not only experienced by the hawkers but dynamically inhabited by them to forward their own claims. Similarly, Anand (2011) in his ethnography in Mumbai found that settlors acquired incremental and differentiated citizenship by making personal, political and material claims on the city infrastructure, in particular water supply. He defines such 'hydraulic citizenship' as being entitled to a reliable supply of water pressure from municipal pipes for which settlors pressured the water system through their votes as political citizens, their relations of patronage and their money. In related research, Shah (2009) demonstrates how in tribal Jharkhand the non-tribal elite used the imaginary of a 'corrupt' state as well as localised state practices to prevent tribals from accessing the state and thus maintained the socio-political status quo. The moral economy of corrupt practices interacted with the local political economy such that non-tribals reinforced tribal wariness of the state, born of a colonial and post-colonial history of exclusion and exploitation, to corner state resources for themselves. These ethnographies highlight that the state-society boundary is not transgressed or violated rather than it is established and re-established through negotiations of state practices based on socio-political relations and power.

Besides citizen imaginaries and engagements, state practices have been studied to understand how the state 'sees' populations (Scott, 1998), how it performs its 'stateness' (Hansen and Stepputat, 2001) and how the state is spatialized. But in much of this work, state practices are taken to be 'authorless strategies', not directed or devised by anyone and yet a means of reproducing state, exercising power and instituting inequality (Sharma and Gupta, 2006). The role of state functionaries in the everyday enactment of bureaucratic procedures has not been adequately addressed. Blundo (2014) calls for making the state itself legible by studying the concrete practices of its workers while Bernstein and Mertz (2011) call for recognising bureaucratic administration as yet another site for social life and political action rather than just mechanistic functioning that obviates human agency. In this thesis, I address this gap. I study the role of ICDS functionaries in the performance of everyday state practices.

I open up the 'black box' of bureaucracy to examine the practices through which ICDS functionaries implement the everyday programme. I study how daily services are delivered at the anganwadi centre, how children are weighed and provided supplementary nutrition, pre-school sessions conducted and records prepared; who attends the anganwadi centre and which localities are visited by the anganwadi worker. While I consider what happens at the anganwadi centre, I focus much more on the programmatic processes that determine what happens in the anganwadi centre. I look at how anganwadi workers are recruited and Supervisors selected, transferred and posted, how beat meetings and supervisory visits are conducted and how records are assimilated at various levels of the programme administration and reported upwards in the programme hierarchy. I observe the practices of recruitment, supervision, reporting and administration and understand how these are contingently and relationally negotiated, constructed and performed by ICDS functionaries in the everyday.

The socially embedded state functionary

Lower level state functionaries or frontline public service workers have been studied in-depth, especially in high income, Western country contexts as street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1980). These studies emphasise the agency of these bureaucrats in shaping public policy (Kosar, 2011; Rowe, 2012). They describe, how these officials working in conditions of financial constraint, with conflicting and ambiguous goals and uncertain performance measures, use their discretion to implement policies in ways that don't always conform to the policy intent (Kosar, 2011, p. 300). Street level bureaucrats are torn between acting as agents of the state and of citizens and through their coping mechanisms and value judgements, shape policy as it is finally experienced by people (Rowe, 2012, p. 12). Some studies have examined how bureaucratic ideology can shape implementation, providing evidence that both political ideology and local political constituencies influence welfare policy outcomes. Kaufman (1959) in his famous study of the US Forest Service argued that to achieve uniform implementation of national policy, it is necessary to disrupt any links between community and bureaucratic values. Finally, much literature focuses on how informal factors such as organisational norms and employee attitudes have a strong effect on the work of street level bureaucrats (Stensota, 2011).

However, most of this work is based on a Weberian ideal of the state – as a unitary institution discrete from society, with complete sovereignty over its spheres of jurisdiction. In this conceptualisation, politicians are involved in determining policy but

not in its implementation. In the Indian context, however, as Berenschot (2010) put it based on ethnographic work in Gujarat, '…the implementation of state laws and policies . . . . is often mediated by 'street-level politicians' not bureaucrats.'

Lower level state functionaries in India work in a context in which political mediation is entrenched in the everyday delivery of public services (Berenschot, 2010) and social groups compete with each other for government benefits and resources (Corbridge et al., 2005),. State and local politicians and their brokers extend patronage to profit supporters, trading government benefits for votes (Corbridge et al., 2005) and campaign finance (Witsoe, 2012a). State functionaries either remain indifferent to such mediation or are actively complicit. Baviskar (2004) finds that the administrative imperatives of meeting programme deadlines and demonstrating results preclude any attempts by state officials to challenge the local political order whereas Corbridge et al. (2005) find that state officials are simply not inclined to do the same. Berenschot (2010) argues that when states do not have independent means to verify the credentials of the many applicants for scare resources, they rely on elected representatives, which in turn provides such representatives an incentive to limit state capacity. Harriss-White (2003), Jeffrey, (2000) and Robbins (2000) elaborate that state officials are often a part of the local political order and invested in maintaining and enhancing their social position. They highlight the mechanisms through which the dominant and elite form alliances with local state officials to gain privileged access to state resources. These include colonising the local state with kin and establishing connections with state officials based on caste, class and gender solidarity. Whether indifferent or complicit, Gupta (2012) and Mathur (2016) conclude that lower level state functionaries tend to get blamed for the gaps between development programme design and implementation. This criticism '…ubiquitous in the discourse of many middle-class, urban Indians, reproduces both a colonial complaint of the incompetence of the natives and a class bias towards subalterns in the bureaucracy (Gupta, 2012, p. 25).' And although Corbridge et al., (2005) describe state functionaries as facing competing pressures from local social groups as well as the departments or agencies they work for, there is little research on how such pressures are managed and negotiated through state practices. I examine how ICDS workers engage with structures of local power. I ask how the local political order influences the practices of ICDS functionaries and the ways in which they shape it, in turn.

The everyday enactment of bureaucratic procedures by state workers is being increasingly studied in the expanding sub-field of anthropology of bureaucracy. This

emerging scholarship underscores not only the constructed nature of much bureaucratic practice but also that such improvisation by state functionaries working in conditions of constraint and pressure, often traverses the boundaries of formality/informality and legality/illegality. Jauregui (2014) details how structurally disempowered police in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, working with meagre salaries and inadequate resources, improvise practices that while technically illegal are collectively legitimised for enabling them to perform their roles. In the context of refugee resettlement in Kampala, Sandvik (2011) finds that informal and illegal bureaucratic practices are co-constituted along with the regularisation of transnational humanitarian soft-law. Conversely, Mathur, (2016) finds that when the transparency clauses of a newly introduced employment guarantee programme impeded longstanding informal practices of the local developmental state, the programme failed to take off. Building on this analysis, I examine the informal practices devised by functionaries within an ICDS project to perform their roles. I ask why ICDS workers make these improvisations and what are the inherent logics that sustain them.

Bear and Mathur (2015) call for a new anthropology of bureaucracy that studies the effects of the 'new public goods' of 'fiscal austerity, marketization, consensus, transparency and decentralization' underlying bureaucratic reform, often externally imposed, in different parts of the world. They argue that such measures do not simply result in an economization of the political, their effects vary widely across, sector, level and branch of state and produce conflicts and contestations within specific bureaucracies that are not adequately captured by existing literature, such as that on audit or governmentality. As an example, Mathur highlights the fragmented governance that emerged as a result of the introduction of new contractual arrangements in the local developmental state in a remote Himalayan region. 'Young professionals' were recruited on short-term contracts for fiscal prudence as part of the implementation of an ambitious employment generation programme instead of being added to the 'bloated' permanent bureaucracy. The new recruits were expected to work in tandem with permanent staff but the difference in contract also engendered differences in attitudes and aspirations leading to the emergence of new fault lines over state labour and practices and a break down of working relations in several instances. New arrangements informed by 'new public goods' for greater efficiency resulted in the production of new inefficiencies. Similarly, Qureshi (2015) finds that 'flexible bureaucracy' created for the efficient and entrepreneurial governance of an HIV/AIDS prevention programme for 'high-risk' groups in Pakistan generated new networks of collusion and accumulation between state bureaucrats and private sector contractors.

In the interests of efficiency, service delivery was outsourced to NGOs and private sector organisations through contracts that emphasised outputs and outcomes rather than traditional bureaucratic proceduralism. The ambiguity of the new bureaucratic field, enabled newer forms of accumulation by private and state actors, ultimately dispossessing the purported beneficiaries. I contribute to this growing literature on bureaucratic engagement with reform initiatives based on the new orienting values of New Public Management. I ask how ICDS functionaries working at the implementation level experience these initiatives and whether they engender new subjectivities and rationalities.

In sum, state functionaries in India are known to work in a context of the political mediation of everyday public services. State and local politicians use state programmes to extend patronage and generate campaign finance. However, the engagement of state functionaries with such local politics has not been adequately studied. Similarly the growing field of the anthropology of bureaucracy highlights that state workers often improvise to perform their roles traversing legal/illegal boundaries, as well as contest bureaucratic reform initiatives. I build on and contribute to this expanding literature by studying how ICDS functionaries at the sub-district level engage with local politics, improvise informal practices and negotiate with bureaucratic reform to implement the ICDS and produce gaps and variations from ICDS policy.

Shaping everyday state practices

In this section, I review existing literature on the themes of 'local political relations', 'informal financial practices' and 'bureaucratic reform', in the Indian context to detail and explicate a frame for the study of ICDS functionaries and their practices. The political mediation of the Indian state has been linked to the politicisation of caste. Accordingly, in the sub-section on 'local political relations', I examine literature on the links between caste and state in terms of 'hierarchical', 'political' and 'performative' caste and build on the political and performative nature of caste to study the practices of ICDS functionaries. The sub-section on 'informal financial practices' reviews different approaches to the study of informality. I argue for an anthropological approach that eschews moral framings and uses legal pluralism to understand informal practices. The third sub-section traces initiatives of state reform in the Indian context that started with economic liberalisation and were informed by transnational discourses of neoliberalism and 'good governance'. I build on the argument that such initiatives do not easily

produce the economisation of the political and seek to study the conflicts and contestations that result from bureaucratic and state reform.

1. Local Political relations

In the Weberian ideal of the state, politicians are involved in making policy but not in its implementation. But much research in the Indian context has established that the everyday functioning of the government machinery is determined, not as much by impartial bureaucrats as the compulsions of local politics. Witsoe (2012a) links the political mediation of the state, especially the local everyday state to the politicisation of caste in India.

Caste remains a significant political, social and cultural identity in the Indian context with much scholarship devoted to understanding the relations between castes, caste politics and caste-based mobilisation. This scholarship largely emphasises three main perspectives on the institution of caste (1) *hierarchical caste* which upholds the Brahmanical-textual view of caste (Gupta, 2000) as a rigid, hierarchy founded on the religiously sanctioned binary opposition of purity-pollution (Dumont, 1970*) (2) political caste* which traces the ways in which the caste structure has been continuously shaped and reformulated by state formations and relations of power and is therefore a historical and political construction (Bayly, 1999a; Dirks, 1992; Inden, 1986), and (3) *performative caste* which examines the everyday reproduction and reconstitution of caste through social monitoring and sanctions, protest, resistance and assertion (Gorringe, 2016; Gorringe and Rafanell, 2007).

For Gupta (2004, 2000), the hierarchical understanding of caste as the division of endogamous, occupationally specialised, rigidly segregated *jatis* into the four unequal *varnas* vertically ordered by their relative ritual purity, has dominated both academic writing on caste as well as public perception. However he argues that this textual conceptualisation has little empirical basis, with few if any of the so called 'lower castes' accepting either their inferior status, or their base or polluting bodies or their poor *karma* as responsible for their subjugation. Instead, he finds that most castes take pride in their identity, value themselves highly and privilege their own ideologies and hierarchies rather than accept the Brahmin led one.

According to Bayly (1999b), Dirks (1992) and Inden (1986), the notion of a Brahmin centric caste order gained prominence during the colonial period as priests, missionaries, orientalists and colonial administrators relied on Brahmin informants and religious texts to understand Indian society. Subsequently, as this view of caste began to inform colonial administrative practices, caste division and hierarchy started to crystallise along Brahmin centric lines with a hardening of the pollution barrier beyond which the so-called 'untouchables' were placed (Bayly, 1999b; Dirks, 1992). Ethnographic surveys and census exercises, which sought to standardise Indian caste names and formalise the caste hierarchy served to further politicise caste with caste associations springing up to contest assigned positions and educate members on answering survey questions (Dirks, 1992). A standardised and ranked caste list was thus an effect of census processes rather than a representation of social reality. However, Bayly (1999a) argues that colonial intervention in caste should not be interpreted to mean that the caste system as such was a colonial creation, rather colonial policies served to consolidate a caste like social order (caste norms were in the formative stage and there was no clear hierarchy) that had begun to emerge in the political uncertainty of the post Mughal pre-colonial era. Yet colonial consolidation does imply that the caste system described in 'village studies' ethnographies of the 1950s and 60s, which informed Dumont's (1991) influential treatise on caste, was not something ancient surviving unchanged across centuries, but a product of political processes, particularly colonial political processes (Fuller, 1996).

In the hierarchical conception of caste, the religious principle underlying its structure is paramount such that the ritually pure Brahmin who represents the religious domain is considered superior to the materially powerful King who represents the political domain (Dirks, 1992). However Srinivas (1959) in his village ethnography found that dominance at the local level was based not as much on ritual purity as a combination of numerical preponderance and economic and political power. He described a peasant caste, belonging to the *Shudra varna,* the Vokkaligas*,* who were decisively dominant as they were the most numerous group, owned a majority of the land, were the biggest moneylenders and patrons, had more literate and educated members and occupied traditional and elected leadership positions. Resultantly, they were respected by all castes, including the Brahmins, and presided over the resolution of almost all conflicts, amongst and between different caste groups in the village. While the Vokkaligas possessed almost all elements of dominance, Srinivas argued, that a caste with some of the elements, especially numerical strength, was often able to acquire others, except for the Scheduled Castes whose low ritual rank was a barrier to social

mobility. Additionally, when the dominance of a caste group extended over a few villages or districts, it often translated into regional dominance.

Kothari (1970), on the other hand, distinguishes 'entrenched' castes from 'dominant' castes based on numerical strength. According to Kothari (1970) and Rao (1989) an 'entrenched' caste is economically and politically powerful, of a high ritual status but numerically small such as Thakur or Rajput zamindars in northern India. For Gupta, (2005) Jodhka (2012) and Shah (2002), therefore, caste power is rooted not as much in ritual status or numerical strength but in land ownership. Castes that owned a majority of the land were economically powerful and were patrons or *jajmans* for landless, labouring and artisan castes who owed them their service under the *jajmani* system. These vertical patron-client inter caste ties along with numerical dominance (where applicable) were the basis of the political power of landowning castes (Bayly, 1999a).

With universal adult franchise in independent India, both entrenched and dominant castes used their numerical strength based on caste solidarity and inter-caste ties to translate territorial domination into electoral representation. Palshikar (2006) identifies 70 of 288 Maharashtra state legislative assembly constituencies where a candidate of the same caste has been elected since 1978. Similarly, he notes that politics in most states since the mid-50s has been centred around one or two regionally dominant castes such as the Vokkaligas and Lingayats in Karnataka (Manor, 1989) the Reddys and Kammas in Andhra Pradesh (Reddy, 1989), the Marathas in Maharashtra (Lele, 1990), the Patidars and Kshatriyas in Gujarat (Kothari and Maru, 2002) and the Jats and Rajputs in Rajasthan.

However, just as the Brahmin centric caste order was a result of historical and political processes, similarly the dominance of particular castes is also a political and historical construct and contested by other politically aspirant and socially mobile castes through mobilisation based on caste consciousness and alliances. For instance in Karnataka the regionally dominant Vokkaliga caste was formed by the coming together of six peasant *jatis* of a similar social status that first allied with each other to gain advantages from the colonial government and continued to operate with solidarity to contest the dominance of the Lingayats*,* another regional *jati* cluster. Manor (2010) notes that during the period when both clusters dominated Karnataka politics (1947-72), there was increased friction between the jatis within each cluster as each *jati* aspired for greater political influence and benefits. But these tensions reduced when

the competition between clusters heightened or when both clusters were challenged by other social groups. In other cases, castes have allied with ritually lower and economically poorer *jatis* to improve their political bargaining power. In Gujarat, post independence, the numerically smaller Rajputs, having lost political power as rulers and facing loss of land under land reform legislation allied with the low ranked and landless Bariyas, Bhils and other *jatis* under the Kshatriya banner to challenge the political dominance of the Patidars. The process of assimilation involved accepting entire castes and caste-groups back into the Kshatriya fold and expanding traditional identities by setting aside details of ritual separation and symbols of pollution (Kothari and Maru, 2002; Shah, 2002).

Several of these alliances and associations were built upon solidarity against the domination of upper castes (usually Brahmins and Kayasthas and Thakurs in the north). Significant examples for the mid-level castes are the non-Brahmin movements that took place in Maharashtra and the South in the first half of the twentieth century. In Tamil Nadu, the non-Brahmin movement brought together peasant, trading and artisan castes under the Dravidian identity (Shah, 2002) to contest the dominance of the Brahmins who were over-represented in the political bodies, public services and education system of the erstwhile Madras presidency and demand reservations as 'Backward Castes' (Beteille, 2010). The non-Brahmin movement did not always include the so called 'untouchable castes' but its critique of caste hierarchy and Brahmanical social and cultural systems created the space for the emergence of Dalit movements, especially in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu (Jodhka, 2012).

For many of these alliances built through caste consciousness rooted in religious symbols, history, legends and myths, the alliance promoted a new and more inclusive identity, which was then deployed in the service of exercising or contesting dominance. Political identity was thus flexible and shifted by territorial level – *jati* at the local level, *jati* cluster or alliance at the sub-regional and regional level and linguistic at the national level. While most of these identities were either formed in response to state policy such as the Vokkaligas in Karnataka or to wrest benefits from the state and/or acquire state power such as the Non-Brahmins in Tamil Nadu and the Kshatriyas in Gujarat, others were a direct creation of state policy such as the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Other Backward Castes (OBC).

The colonial government clubbed the different so called 'untouchable' *jatis* that suffered ritual exclusion and stigmatisation together into an administrative category, initially

calling them 'Depressed Classes' and subsequently the Scheduled Castes in the first constitution of colonial India, the Government of India Act of 1935 (Jodhka, 2012; Rao, 2010). According to Rao (2010), such a categorisation was a result of the colonial government's mapping of constituency onto religious identity in their implementation of the political technology of franchise and representative government. However, it served to facilitate the Scheduled Castes' self identification as a discriminated community under the leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who also popularised the identity 'Dalit' for them. Given their small numbers at the local level, Ambedkar attempted to mobilise Dalits at the national level to contest upper caste dominance, through the establishment of initially the Scheduled Castes Federation and subsequently the Republican Party of India (Palshikar, 2006). While this mobilisation was able to secure a range of protective, enabling and empowering measures from the state (both colonial and independent India) to address the marginalisation of Dalits (Jodhka, 2012), in terms of electoral politics, they remained fragmented at the state level and co-opted by the dominant castes until the 1980s when another political party of Dalits was formed in Uttar Pradesh, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) (Jodhka, 2012; Palshikar, 2006). The BSP, rooted in the Ambedakarite tradition was the first Dalit political party (with a caste-based membership and pro Dalit agenda), to be elected to government in Uttar Pradesh however, in alliance with other castes and political parties. It has since then spread to other states and also contested and won seats in the national elections, in its bid to unify Dalits across the country to contest upper caste dominance (Palshikar, 2006).

The term 'Other Backward Classes', according to Jaffrelot (2006), has its roots in 'Backward Classes', another administrative category devised by the British government, in response to the Tamilian non-Brahmin movement. 'Backward classes' initially grouped the Shudra and so called 'Untouchable' castes together for the purposes of positive discrimination but the 'Depressed Classes' or the Scheduled Castes were subsequently removed and this category came to be referred as 'Other Backward Classes (OBCs)' in the constitution of independent India. However the positive discrimination policies instituted by the British and by the princely states for the OBCs, namely caste based reservation in civil service positions, were continued by the southern states of independent India but resisted by the populous northern states and consequently the Congress led national government for several decades despite the recommendations of at least two national level Backward Classes Commissions. The northern resistance was rooted in upper caste dominance, which, based on population numbers and the *zamindari* pattern of landownership was more prominent in the Hindi

speaking states than the southern and western states. When a non-Congress government in 1989 finally approved affirmative action for OBCs in government jobs and educational institutions, there were large-scale protests. This upper caste resistance, in turn, produced the political consolidation of the OBCs giving rise to new political parties such as the Samajwadi Janata Party (SJP). Since the 1990s, OBC castes have deployed their considerable numerical strength in the populous northern states such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to win electoral battles and establish their political dominance. Jaffrelot (2006) notes that although the OBCs are not a homogenous social category, the agitation for affirmative action produced them as a political category, enabling them to mobilise together, challenge existing clientelistic networks and seek political power.

For Kothari (2010), the interaction of caste and democratic politics in the Indian context follows a general pattern. The dominance of a particular caste at a regional or state level produces a response in the form of an ascendant caste/s, which then competes for dominance giving rise to a bilateral or multilateral structure of caste politics. Subsequent factions and cleavages within the entrenched/dominant and ascendant demand an expansion of the political support base, which in turn leads to co-optation of other castes through economic patronage, patron-client loyalties, bond groups and organisational forms such as caste associations and federations. Over time, the co-opted acquire a caste consciousness based on their numbers, economic independence and leadership and emerge as a political class to seek power for themselves.

In sum, caste in India has always been political and structured by state power. According to Gupta (2005) castes have historically competed for power and the caste order has been enforced by political power rather than religious ideology. In the pre-colonial period, caste hierarchies were contested and renegotiated during episodes of military and social upheaval. Under British rule, the state influenced caste initially by enabling the consolidation of a Brahmin centric hierarchy and subsequently through its policies of enumeration, political representation and reservation that facilitated 'lower castes' to mobilise and challenge upper caste dominance. Democracy in independent India rendered castes legally equal and over time produced a 'horizontalisation' of castes (Sheth, 2002). Such horizontalisation was facilitated by state policies such as the abolition of untouchability, introduction of land reforms, expansion of affirmative action and implementation of development programmes (Jodhka, 2012); and caste as system or hierarchy transitioned to caste as identity (Gupta, 2005) .

According to Witsoe (2012a) this politicisation of caste manifests in the everyday as the political mediation of the local state. He finds, in the context of Bihar, that the political mediation of the dominant Rajput caste was rooted in the 'limited Raj' of the colonial government, which operated primarily through its alliances with the local elite. Often the same families that served as intermediaries in the erstwhile *zamindari* system became political brokers of the postcolonial developmental state to maintain their dominance through connections with the police and bureaucrats. With the rise of the OBCs, particularly the Yadav caste, to political power in the state post the 1990s reservation agitation; Witsoe notes a democratisation of political mediation and the emergence of the Yadavs, the most populous caste as the new dominant caste. However, he highlights that in the case of Bihar the transfer of power to the OBCs and the Yadav caste was not attained through the capture of state institutions as these were still dominated by the upper castes but by dramatically increasing politician and broker influence within state institutions. Under Yadav rule in Bihar, political mediation, which had enabled the upper castes to reinforce their dominance, became the instrument to displace this dominance. Similarly, Jeffrey (2001, 2000) demonstrates how dominant castes use political power to wrest benefits from the state, colonise a local state institution with kin and manipulate it to isolate, exploit and abuse other, mostly poorer sections and castes. He traces the political rise of the Jats*,* a socially and economically powerful agricultural caste in western Uttar Pradesh and examines the strategies employed by them to colonise the police as a preferred means of occupational diversification. Primary amongst these were bribes. Some rich Jats also used contacts within the Police department to lobby for their candidates or act as mediators in the recruitment process. Rich Jats with more political clout and contacts were more likely to be successful at such lobbying than poorer ones. Additionally, Jats established and maintained informal political networks with local state officials, police and politicians based on caste identity, regional fraternity and masculinity to assert and enhance their social power. These included regular 'chicken and whiskey' parties organised at their homes, cultivating brokers linked to powerful politicians and/or senior police officials and extending social power through marriage alliances with rich and politically influential families. Jats used their consequent political clout to ensure that civil and criminal disputes were settled in their favour, which in turn allowed them to break the law with impunity, subdue opposition, grab land as well as steal crops.

For Ganguly (2000) and Gorringe and Rafanell (2007) the everyday practice of caste is performative – it is through the everyday enactment of caste rules of association and separation, purity and pollution that caste is upheld, but it is these everyday practices

and performances that also become the sites for protest, resistance and the reconstitution of caste identities. Gorringe and Rafanell (2007) note the embodiment of Scheduled Caste or Dalit identity in rural Tamil Nadu. The separation and subservience of the polluting Dalit body is produced through attire, posture, speech, work, food, drink and dwelling. Dalits live away from the main village, visit it only when called and cannot cycle or wear shoes through it. They stand apart from the dominant higher castes, eat and drink in separate receptacles, cannot spit in the main village or use common wells, ponds and public seating. While interacting with higher castes, they are required to hunch and lean forward and not make eye contact. They do not enter upper caste homes and if required call the householder from the backdoor using distinct forms of address. Marriage and friendship across the pollution barrier is prohibited such that even in child play the unclean Dalit body is not allowed to perch atop a higher caste one. However, Gorringe and Rafanell (2007) argue that it is these practices of embodiment that become the sites for protest, resistance and the reconstitution of caste identities. There were instances of Dalit men marrying high caste women, Dalit children using the village water tap or the common tumbler in school and Dalit young men who are members of the Dalit Panthers – an anti caste, Dalit movement –walking tall with raised chests and if required, raised fists. These transgressions also invited sanctions but for Gorringe and Rafanell (2007) such enforcement only served to underscore the performative nature of caste, that it maybe reconstituted through self-reflexive acts of defiance.

I build on the performative nature of caste and state to explore the links between the politicisation of caste and the political mediation of the everyday local state in the context of the ICDS programme in Maharashtra. I examine the strategies by which the dominant Maratha caste uses a state programme, the ICDS, to reproduce and perform socio-political and ritual dominance as well as Dalit attempts to confront Maratha domination using the idea of the state. In the process, I highlight the ways in which the politics of caste shapes the everyday practices of local state functionaries and how these practices, in turn, serve as sites for the reconstitution of this politics.

2. Informal financial practices

Formal/informal, legal/illegal and public/private are key dichotomies through which state-society relations have been understood such that transgressions of these binaries have been typically studied as 'corruption'. Such corruption is considered to be at the root of much of the Indian state's failure to deliver welfare and development in

popular discourse (Mathur, 2016). The perception of state corruption is so widespread and 'corruption talk' (Lazar, 2005) so prevalent that both Parry (2000) and Gupta (1995) studying widely different contexts of a central Indian industrial town and a north Indian village respectively found that talk about the state invariably centred on its corruption. In 2011 the pervasiveness of talk about state corruption fuelled public anger and a popular anti-corruption uprising in Delhi led by the social activist, Anna Hazare. Enormous crowds gathered to protest corruption and were enthusiastically and favourably covered by the news media as representatives of a new social movement. This movement subsequently produced a new political party, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) which contested and won two elections in the state of Delhi on a platform of bringing about a political revolution and expunging the 'biggest evil' facing India – corruption (Gupta, 2017; Sharma, 2018).

While anger and protest against state corruption may drive electoral change, there is little consensus, even amongst activists and protestors on what counts as corruption. In her study of the anti-corruption movement and AAP, Sharma (2018) finds that corruption is a messy social practice that eludes clear definition and explanation. Identifying corrupt practices as well as victims and perpetrators is tricky while there is no clarity about whether corruption emerges from the state and infects society or conversely is a cultural malaise reflected in state institutions

The issue of corruption has received much academic attention since the 1990s when the NGO, Transparency International, and the World Bank framed it as central to poverty reduction and called for a global coalition against corruption (Anders and Nuijten, 2007). Over the last three decades, there has been a 'veritable boom' of social science literature, particularly from the disciplines of economics and political science, on corruption (Anders and Nuijten, 2007; Torsello and Venard, 2016).

The economic approach to the study of corruption is based primarily on the key concepts of the 'principal-agent relationship' and the 'public-private divide'. Corruption occurs when agents (often a public official) take actions that are against the interests and goals of their principals (who maybe bureaucratic superiors/politically appointed ministers/general public) for their private benefit, usually monetary (Rose-Ackerman, 2006). The economic study of such corrupt transactions has focused on understanding the market for bribes and whether bribery improves state efficiency and furthers market development or raises uncertainty and arbitrariness deterring business investment (Rose-Ackerman and Palifka, 2016). It has explored the links between corruption and

economic growth at the national level – whether high levels of corruption cause low rates of growth in poor countries or whether it is facilitative in countries with both high levels of economic growth and corruption (Lambsdorff, 2006). Further, economists have studied the role of institutions in furthering, restraining and/or mitigating corruption and its effects (Rose-Ackerman, 2006; Rose-Ackerman and Palifka, 2016).

The political study of corruption centres on the public-private divide rather than pathologies of the principal-agent relationship (Philp and David-Barrett, 2015). Definitions of political corruption emphasise the public sphere in which political actors operate (Heywood, 1997) and revolve around the concepts of 'public office' (as in the definition by Nye, 1967) and 'public interest' (as in the definition by Friedrich, 1966). Broadly, political corruption occurs when the public interest or common good is subverted by private gain. However, the political theorist Philp (1997) highlights that since debating and determining public interest is also within the domain of the political, political corruption can only be understood in the context of the characteristics of political rule. He contends that a political relation is one in which a citizen concedes a right to rule based on the justification of resolving conflicts within the polity. Politics, then, is a response to potential disorder - it has the potential to turn conflict into order and corruption is that which undercuts the ability of politics to provide such a solution.

In contrast, the anthropological study of corruption challenges the Weberian dichotomies between private and public and eschews the search for a universal definition, focusing instead on issues of meaning and representation (Anders and Nuijten, 2007; Shore and Haller, 2005; Torsello and Venard, 2016). Anthropologists have even traditionally avoided using the term 'corruption' as in much economic and political research 'corruption' has been regarded as a systemic and endemic characteristic of the 'South and East', 'developing', 'third-world', poor and weak states giving it moralistic, evolutionary and Orientalist undertones. So although social phenomena related to corruption such as patronage, brokerage and bribery have been studied extensively in anthropology in the 1960s and 70s, the term itself is of recent usage (since the late 1990s) in the discipline prompted in part by the ubiquity of talk about corruption in field sites fuelled by the global corruption discourse and in part by anthropological research on the state (Anders and Nuijten, 2007).

Going beyond binaries, anthropology uses the phenomena of corruption to gain insights into the multitude of rules, laws, codes, conventions, norms and practices that govern action. The legality of a practice is not necessarily the only standard against

which it is judged. Behaviour that is considered morally justifiable may not always be legal and illegal actions may not always be regarded as morally or socially unacceptable. Different normative systems maybe at work such that what is corrupt in one system may not be corrupt by another. Moreover, since laws are politically determined, understandings of what is corrupt and what is legal are reflective of political relations and are subject to change over time. Anthropology therefore uses legal pluralism to understand the interplay of norms and practices that underlie 'corruption' (Anders and Nuijten, 2007; Shore and Haller, 2005).

As per existing literature, a significant practice driving much state corruption in India is political mediation (Berenschot, 2010; Witsoe, 2012a). Besides extending patronage to their voters and supporters, politicians influence state functioning through systems of vertical and horizontal corruption to generate campaign finance. Vertical or retail corruption refers to the petty informal payments needed to get routine services from the government while horizontal corruption is large scale or 'grand' corruption involving big deals and large sums of money. According to Wade (1985, 1982) the system of vertical corruption aggregates numerous small informal payments at lower levels of bureaucracy to create a substantial pool of funds at higher levels which enriches bureaucrats as well as enables politicians to fund their election expenses. In vertical corruption, the money collected is shared across levels of state functionaries with each level receiving a percentage. Further the potential for informal incomes creates a market for public office with bureaucrats vying and paying for transfers to posts with greater potential and politicians extending patronage to their supporters by appointing them to lucrative posts. For Gupta (2017) vertical corruption was the primary mode of political financing in India till the economic reforms of the 1990s accelerated economic growth rates and increased the scale and scope of horizontal corruption. India now has, according to him, a mixed system of vertical and horizontal corruption.

I study the implementation of the ICDS programme through the informal practices of state functionaries, especially those relating to informal incomes and payments, given their significance in academic and popular discourse in India. I explore the contexts within which ICDS functionaries engage in these practices and how these are justified and legitimised. Finally, I examine the links between everyday informality at the level of the local state and larger systems of power and politics.

3. Reforming the Indian Developmental State

Much economic and political scholarship on the Indian state identifies the early 1990s as a period when critical reforms to the developmental state were initiated. The bulk of these reforms related to economic policy but also involved reforms of state and governance to enable the implementation of economic liberalisation (Joseph, 2007). The major economic reforms implemented addressed the areas of investment, trade and finance and included the dismantling of the license raj, ending public monopolies, enabling greater flows of foreign direct investment and consumer goods, and the opening up of many core sectors such as education, health care, telecommunications, transport, financial services, infrastructure etc to private enterprise (Chatterjee, 2008; Corbridge and Harriss, 2000; Gupta and Sivaramakrishnan, 2011). The accompanying internal reforms of state institutions included re-organisation of public enterprises along business lines to generate incomes and profits by reducing subsidies, introducing market based financing, cutting costs, reducing the permanent workforce, increasing casualization of labour, contracting out and public-private partnerships (Joseph, 2007, 2001). Bear (2011) ethnographically traces these changes and their effects on the Kolkata Port Trust in West Bengal while Subramanian (2014) charts the travails of ITI, a large public sector telecommunications equipment manufacturer and Strumpell (2014) the restructuring of the first public sector steel plant in Rourkela, Odisha.

There is little consensus amongst scholars regarding when economic reforms began, how and why they were initiated and what form they took. Many research and policy documents identify 1991 as the 'critical tipping point' when liberalisation and marketization was initiated in response to a fiscal crisis but Sachs et al. (1999), Shastri (1997) and Pedersen (2000) highlight that liberalisation initiatives were first taken in 1985 under the Rajiv Gandhi led Congress government whereas Nayar (2009) and Kohli (1989) push the date back even further to 1980 contending that they were begun by Indira Gandhi, on her return to power. Neveling (2014) locates the seeds of neoliberal economic practice in the mixed economy of the Nehruvian postcolonial state through his analysis of the establishment and workings of the Kandla Free Trade Zone in Western India.

Bhaduri and Nayyar (1996) and Patnaik (2000) emphasise the role of international financial institutions, international financial capital, external pressures and loan conditionality in the adoption of liberalisation policies by India, Corbridge and Harriss (2000) highlight the role of the urban, industrial and financial elites in pushing for

economic reforms as the previous development model which served their interests had run its course while Shastri (1997) draws attention to the ideas and convictions of national level bureaucrats, especially those who entered the bureaucracy laterally. For Pedersen (2000) each of these explanations has validity but for different aspects of the reform process although he, Mooij (2001) and Nayar (2009) question the influence of any external pressure.

Liberalisation of the Indian economy and state was concurrent to another major internal transformation of the state, the acceleration and consolidation of the processes of decentralisation through which power was devolved to regional state governments and local elected bodies (Gupta and Sivaramakrishnan, 2011). The increased ability of regional governments to raise their own tax revenues and control their own expenditures, led to increased competition between them for domestic and foreign capitalist investment. According to Chatterjee (2008) this led to an unprecedented involvement of regional political parties with the interests of national and international corporate capital and thereby the dominance of the capitalist class in the state structure as a whole. These changes in the structure of the Indian state were in articulation with transnational discourses on neoliberalism and good governance. Neo-liberalism is commonly understood as an ensemble of economic policies to facilitate the functioning of free markets and to extend the model of the market to heretofore noneconomic domains, activities and subjects based on both economic (efficiency) and ethical (self-responsibility) claims (Brown, 2015; Ong, 2006). The 'good governance' agenda with its focus on participation, accountability, transparency, decentralisation and democratisation, according to Corbridge et al. (2005) emerged as a techno-managerial counterpart to support 'free' or 'freer' markets. The objective was to enable the informed consumer-citizen to 'participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect. . . lives' (Harriss, 2007, p. 2717).

The effects of state reform on the social sector have varied by phase. In the initial phase of reforms in the 1990s, Corbridge and Harriss (2000) note stagnation in the percentage of national government revenue spending on social services including education, health, social security and the welfare of scheduled communities while regional governments reduced spending on social services. Public investment in agriculture also declined to below 2 percent of agriculture GDP in 2002-03 from 5 percent in the 1980s. The Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12) of the Government of India accepted that despite impressive economic growth rates, inequalities had been exacerbated post economic reforms with the rate of decline in poverty not keeping

pace with GDP growth and little change in poverty incidence amongst certain marginalised groups such as the Scheduled Tribes. These weaknesses gave rise to an agenda of 'inclusive growth' under which a range of social sector schemes were launched to reverse the effects of primitive accumulation according to Chatterjee (2008) and 'pacify the dangerous classes' as per Corbridge and Shah (2013). Although increasing social sector expenditure in a context of liberal reform has been regarded as 'exceptional', a constraint of democratic politics and even anachronistic, Mathur (2016) in her analysis of one such scheme argues that its design was influenced by neo-liberal thinking involving a combination of techniques of transparency, accountability, participation and empowerment. For programme implementation new contractual arrangements were introduced in the local state to ensure fiscal prudence and efficiency. However these only served to produce new inefficiencies and fragmented governance (Bear and Mathur, 2015). Based on her findings, Mathur cautions against assuming that initiatives of reform produce new subjectivities and rationalities and calls for understanding the conflicts and contestations that ensue. I build on this approach to ask how ICDS functionaries working at the implementation level make sense of initiatives of bureaucratic reform and examine the influence on practices, relations, and subjectivities.

Summing Up

In this thesis, I grapple with the vexedness of implementation, with understanding why development programme implementation does not always adhere to its plan or design. Much literature locates the answers in the social embeddedness of the Indian developmental state, which I argue has been largely understood through the three frames of the 'dominated', the 'modern', and the 'imagined' state. The first characterises the Indian state as captured by the interests of a coalition of classes both at the macro and the local level (Harriss-White, 2003). The second argues that the idea of the postcolonial Indian state espoused in the Constitution was too modern for a majority of the population who could only engage with the state in social groups, through mediators and brokers and not through universal, undifferentiated citizenship (Chatterjee, 2004). The third redefines the problem of social embeddedness from that of the state's inability to work impartially with social groups to one in which the state-society boundary is understood as a construction, an effect of everyday bureaucratic practices reflective of relations of power and social control (Sharma and Gupta, 2006). For my thesis, I build upon this focus on everyday state practices to understand development programme implementation. I select the frame of the 'imagined state'

because only a disaggregation of the developmental state into the minutiae of the everyday reveals the processes through which policies and plans are realised and gaps and variations produced.

Bureaucratic practices have been studied anthropologically to understand how people imagine the state, what they expect of it (Gupta, 2006; Lazar, 2005; Parry, 2000) and how they engage with it (Anand, 2011; Anjaria, 2011; Corbridge et al., 2005; Jeffrey, 2000). They have been analysed to identify how the state 'sees' populations (Scott, 1998), how it performs its 'stateness' (Hansen and Stepputat, 2001) and how the state is spatialised (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002). However the role of state functionaries has not been adequately addressed. In much of this work, state practices have been studied as 'authorless strategies' leading Blundo (2014) to call for making the state itself legible by understanding the practices of its workers and Bernstein and Mertz (2011) to highlight bureaucratic administration as a site for social and political action. In this thesis, I address this gap. I study the implementation of the ICDS through the everyday practices of its functionaries. I analyse how ICDS functionaries working at the implementation or sub-district level construct, negotiate and perform ICDS practices. In these improvisations and performances, I locate explanations for variations between programme policy and its implementation.

Lower level state functionaries in India work in a context of political mediation of everyday public services (Berenschot, 2010) and have been found to be either indifferent (Baviskar, 2004) or, as part of the local political order, actively complicit in such mediation (Harriss-White, 2003; Jeffrey, 2000, 2001, 2002; Witsoe, 2012a). Although existing research acknowledges that state functionaries face competing pressures from local social groups as well as their departments of work (Corbridge et al., 2005), their management of these pressures has not been adequately researched. In this thesis, I study the engagement of ICDS functionaries with structures of local power. The political mediation of the state in India has been linked to the politicisation of caste (Witsoe, 2012b, 2012a, 2011) which remains a significant political, social and cultural identity. Based on a review of literature, I argue that caste in India has been structured by state power. The caste order has been shaped by colonial and postcolonial state policies, castes have historically competed for state power and have used state benefits and resources to enhance their social and economic position. Political mediation is then about struggles over dominance and subordination in local sites (Witsoe, 2012a). In this thesis, I thus study how the politics of caste shapes the

everyday practices of local state functionaries and how these practices, in turn, reconstitute this politics.

Emerging scholarship from the anthropology of bureaucracy highlights not only the constructed nature of much bureaucratic practice but also that such improvisation, under conditions of constraint and pressure often traverses the boundaries of formality/informality and legality/illegality. Such transgressions have been typically studied as 'corruption' in political and economic literature, and in popular discourse such corruption is considered to be at the root of the Indian state's failure to deliver welfare and development. However, anthropology eschews the moral undertones that characterise all such framings and instead employs legal pluralism to understand the multitude of rules, norms and practices that underlie 'corruption.' Research on state corruption in India reveals it to be driven by political mediation to generate election finance and identifies two main kinds – vertical or retail and horizontal corruption. The former refers to a system of aggregation of small, numerous informal payments at lower levels of the administration to create substantial pools for bureaucrats and politicians at higher levels whereas the latter refers to large deals and big corporates. In this thesis, I study the informal practices of ICDS functionaries, especially those relating to informal payments and incomes. I explore the contexts that generate these practices and their links to larger systems of power and politics.

Reforms to the Indian developmental state were initiated in the 1980s and 1990s. The majority of these reforms related to economic liberalisation but also included reforms of state and governance to facilitate the changed relationship between economy and state. Public enterprises and institutions were re-organised along business lines to generate profits through reduction of subsidies and costs, increasing casualization of labour, contracting out and public-private partnerships. Economic reforms were concurrent to another major internal transformation of Indian state - decentralisation of power to regional and local governments. Liberalisation and decentralisation of the Indian state unfolded against a transnational context of neoliberalism and good governance. These changes influenced the social sector first through the stagnation of expenditure and then subsequently through a roll out of schemes such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act to address the dissatisfaction produced by growing inequality. While such programmes were regarded as opposed to neoliberalism, Mathur (2016) finds their design and implementation influenced by neoliberal thinking. Accordingly, Bear and Mathur, (2015) call for studying the impact of the 'new public goods' of 'fiscal austerity, marketization, consensus, transparency and decentralization'

on bureaucratic functioning. Against this backdrop, I study bureaucratic engagement with reform. I ask how ICDS functionaries make sense of reform initiatives and the ways in which they influence practices, relations and subjectivities.

Thus, I study the state as an ensemble of practices constructed, negotiated and performed by its functionaries. I analyse how ICDS workers engage with the local politics of caste, vertical systems of 'corruption' as well as reform initiatives to implement ICDS, perform state and thereby produce variations from programme design.

Chapter 3

**Performing Caste, Performing State: Maratha Dominance & Dalit
Assertion in the ICDS**

*Ten years before I joined the ICDS as an anganwadi worker, my cousin mother-in-law
used to work here. At that time, the division of the village population between
anganwadi workers was such that lower caste households were served by my mother-
in-law whereas only the higher caste households were served by Savita More, the
Maratha worker, as per her own rule….so… my mother-in-law's field area was
scattered around the periphery of the village. Then when I joined, Savita More said that
just like my mother-in-law I should be given the lower caste communities. I refused…. I
said give me any part of the village but I want half and I want it along a continuous line
then only will I be able to work. This led to a fight, which continued for several days.*

Meera Kale
Dalit Anganwadi worker

Meera Kale is a young anganwadi worker of the Integrated Child Development
Services (ICDS) programme in Mangaon village of Sundar block, Aurangabad district,
Maharashtra. She is one of 3 anganwadi workers in the village and joined the
programme in 2011. The other two anganwadi workers were recruited in the late 80s
when the ICDS programme began in the block. Meera Kale is a Dalit, whereas Savita
More, is from the dominant Maratha caste. In the interview extract quoted, she shares
that because she is a Dalit, the existing anganwadi worker from the dominant caste
refused to allocate higher caste households to her and insisted that she work only with
the lower caste households.

In this chapter, I explore how the performative politics of caste shapes the everyday
practices of ICDS functionaries and how they negotiate with this politics to determine
the implementation of the ICDS programme. Supplementing existing scholarship on the
links between the politicisation of caste (Jeffrey, 2002, 2001, 2000; Witsoe, 2012a,
2012b, 2011) and the political mediation of the everyday local state (Baviskar, 2004;
Berenschot, 2014, 2010; Corbridge et al., 2005; Harriss-White, 2003), I find that the
dominant Maratha caste uses kinship, caste and political networks to colonise
anganwadi worker positions and capture state benefits and resources. I contribute to

existing research by ethnographically detailing the workings of these networks and the effects of such Maratha capture on anganwadi centre functioning. I discuss how dominant caste anganwadi workers resist accountability to programme beneficiaries and use everyday programme/state practices to perform ritual superiority, producing Dalits as 'polluted', 'untouchable' subjects. Maratha anganwadi worker practices lead to the exclusion of marginalised, vulnerable communities that the ICDS is designed to benefit subverting developmental programme objectives and producing gaps in implementation.

However, in a departure from much writing on the politically mediated state, I present two case studies of Dalit resistance to Maratha domination in the ICDS. Such resistance is led by Dalit state functionaries, a group that has historically played an important role in powering Dalit political mobilisation. Dalit state functionaries in the ICDS confront Maratha attempts to control their labour and reproduce the material and cultural basis of Maratha caste power, by invoking the rules and structures of Weberian bureaucracy. Maratha attempts to reproduce caste power as state power are challenged by Dalits through recourse to the idea of an impersonal and rational state.

My focus on state functionaries and their practices, thus reveals that (1) state functionaries use state practices to perform caste, exercising dominance and contesting subordination (2) such contestations are based on competing imaginaries of state, and (3) intersections of state practices with the local political order do not only produce gaps in the implementation of development programmes but can also serve as sites for challenging social inequalities.

The chapter begins with a review of literature on Maratha dominance in Maharashtra and I locate my field area – Sundar Block, the two Supervisory beats that I studied, Laldera and Rajegaon; and the two villages where I observed anganwadi centre working, Shanwadi and Mangaon – in this literature. The next section presents the ethnographic evidence on Maratha domination of the ICDS, particularly the working of kinship, caste and political networks to produce the 'Maratha-isation' of anganwadi centres and its effects on programme implementation. The third section then reviews the history of Dalit protest and resistance in Maharashtra, which I highlight is marked by Dalit belief in the power of the state to correct historic wrongs followed by the two case studies on Dalit state functionaries challenging and resisting Maratha power. I conclude by reflecting on the implications of these case studies for the interactions of caste and state.

Maratha dominance in Maharashtra

Marathas have historically been decisively dominant in Maharashtra based on a combination of numerical preponderance, landholding patterns, economic and political control and a historically nurtured self-image as rulers and leaders (Dahiwale, 1995; Deshpande and Palshikar, 2017; Vora, 2009; Waghmore, 2013). As per available estimates, they constitute almost 31 percent of the state population (Lele, 1990) and 40 percent of the Western Maharashtra, Marathwada and Vidarbha regional population (Anderson et al., 2015). In Sundar block, in the two villages Shanwadi and Mangaon, where I studied anganwadi functioning, Marathas comprised almost 44-49 percent[10] of the population. A majority of Maratha families in these villages, 70-80 percent, were part of one kinship network and shared the same surname. Resultantly, Maratha households in the village had close ties with each other and formed a cohesive social group.

The term, 'Maratha' in these estimates refers not only to the specific Maratha caste but also an allied peasant caste – the Kunbis. In the western Maharashtra and Marathwada regions, the Kunbis were absorbed in the lower ranks of the Marathas through marriage based on landowning patterns and close interactions over time whereas in the Konkan and Vidarbha regions, the Kunbi identity remained distinct (Dahiwale, 1995; Deshpande, 2004; Palshikar and Deshpande, 1999; Waghmore, 2013). The Maratha-Kunbi caste cluster emerged as unified political entity during the non-brahmin movement and consolidated through the initial years of Congress rule in Maharashtra, which encouraged the caste combination for its numerical strength (Deshpande and Palshikar, 2017).

In the post-independence period, the Marathas emerged as the biggest landowners (Dahiwale, 1995) and building on their leadership of the non-Brahmin movement (Deshpande and Palshikar, 2017) gained political control across all levels of government. In Western Maharashtra, Marathwada and Vidarbha, Marathas occupy 60 percent of the non-reserved Sarpanch positions at the village level, 80 percent of positions in villages where they own most of the land and surprisingly 67 percent of positions in villages where they are a minority (Anderson et al., 2015). They have historically accounted for a majority of Zilla Parishad (district level government) members in Western Maharashtra and Marathwada (Palshikar, 2002) whereas in the

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[10] Based on the survey data of anganwadi workers of Shanwadi and Mangaon villages

state legislature, an average 47 percent of all MLAs from 1967 to 2004 and 45 percent in 2009 have been from the Maratha caste cluster (Datar and Ghotale, 2013; Deshpande and Palshikar, 2017; Vora, 2009). In 54 of the 288 assembly constituencies in the state only Marathas have ever been elected (Palshikar and Birmal, 2007). Maratha dominance in the legislature is mirrored in the executive with an average 51 percent of cabinet ministers from 16 cabinets across 1960-2010 belonging to the Maratha caste as well as 10 of 16 chief ministers (Datar and Ghotale, 2013).

Of the 15 village *panchayats* in the two beats that I studied, Laldera and Rajegaon, an overwhelming 80 percent had Maratha sarpanchs or elected village heads. Both Shanwadi and Mangaon, had always had Maratha Sarpanchs except when the position was reserved for other castes. On such occasions, Maratha political leaders identified a person from the required reserved castes to 'rubber stamp' their continued rule. Further, the Sundar block legislative assembly seat had always been represented by Marathas, albeit from different political parties- 1960s to 1990s by the Indian National Congress and its factions, 1990-2009 by the Shiv Sena, 2009-2014 by the Nationalist Congress Party and 2014 onwards again by the Shiv Sena. The same Maratha MLA from the Shiv Sena had represented Sundar block for 4 terms.

Political dominance enabled the Marathas to expand their economic base beyond agriculture through state supported co-operative institutions in agro-industries such as sugar, dairy, cotton and oil and allied sectors such as banking and credit (Dahiwale, 1995) State supported cooperative institutions in Maharashtra grew phenomenally between 1961 and 2001 accounting for nearly 6 percent of the state's planned expenditure in the 4th plan (1969-1974) (Commissioner for Co-operation & Registrar of Co-operative Societies, 2005) and 12.5 percent of total employment in the state by 1981 (Dahiwale, 1995). Controlled by the Marathas, cooperative institutions became an important route to and source of state political power with many Chairmen and Directors of the Board, especially of sugar co-operatives elected as state and national legislators, which in turn facilitated their nomination to the Boards of other cooperatives especially cooperative banks. Resources from cooperative institutions including funds, people and vehicles were routinely deployed to win elections to the zilla parishad, assembly and parliament (Baviskar, 2007, 1980, 1968). In the early 1980s, a Maratha led and dominated state government shifted the right to grant permissions for setting up private colleges from universities to itself and several Maratha leaders became education entrepreneurs setting up private educational institutions which in turn employed a majority of Marathas (Dahiwale, 1995). In a revealing summary of Maratha

economic and political dominance Palshikar and Birmal (2007) highlight that Marathas own 75-90 percent of land in the state, control 71 percent of cooperative institutions – chairing 23 district co-operative banks, heading 86 of 105 sugar factories and owning or controlling all milk cooperatives and cotton mills – and 54 percent of educational institutions. Even Universities are dominated by them with 60-75 percent of University management belonging to the Maratha community.

In addition to their economic and political power, Marathas possess a self-image as rulers and leaders building on their Kshatriya claims, caste pride in the Maratha warrior king Shivaji, leadership of the non-Brahmin movement during which they claimed to speak not just for themselves but all other backward castes in the region and subsequent political leadership in the Indian National Congress party which ruled the state of Maharashtra for three decades from 1960 to the 1990s except briefly in the late 1970s (Deshpande and Palshikar, 2017). For Waghmore (2013) this is the most significant and the key in understanding Maratha aggression towards Dalits. Waghmore (2013) builds on Dumont (1980) and Quigley (2003) to argue that the Marathas as dominant castes reproduce the royal function at the village level playing out their sexual and political dominance in imagined village kingdoms – many Marathas in Marathwada even refer to themselves as raje (King). The violation of caste boundaries and roles, especially by the Scheduled Castes or Dalits threaten Maratha kingly pride and honour and they respond with violence against Dalits. Marathwada has a long history of Maratha violence against Dalits, the most notable being that during the Namantar (re-naming) movement – the Dalit demand for renaming Marathwada University as Dr. Ambedkar University. The Namantar political violence lasted 15 years and resulted in much loss of life and property for Dalits. Maratha aggression during this period was aimed at desecrating symbols of Dalit assertion and change especially photos and statues of Dr. Ambedkar. However Maratha violence against Dalits is not limited to specific events such as Namantar but takes everyday forms including public humiliation, threats, beatings and sexual intimidation and violence (Waghmore, 2013).

Since the 1990s, the dominance of the Maratha community has been on the wane. The two main reasons for this decline, that emerge from much writing on this subject, are increased political competition and aggressive economic liberalisation (Deshpande and Palshikar, 2017; Palshikar and Deshpande, 1999). Marathas dominated the agrarian economy but in the 1990s, capitalist development became skewed towards the secondary and tertiary sectors and the carefully crafted Maratha nexus between

political and material interests unravelled. Additionally the 1990s were characterised by enhanced political competition with the rise of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) as a political force post *Mandal* and decentralisation through local government institutions as a result of the 73rd and 74th amendments to the constitution. These developments led to politics becoming more dispersed, local and competitive. Marathas had to share limited political power with OBCs and Dalits and became increasingly frustrated. According to Deshpande (2006, 2004) and Hansen (1996), these frustrations found an outlet in the identity politics of Hindutva groups such as the Shiv Sena, a Hindu nationalist political party, which successfully appropriated symbols of caste pride as religious pride, particularly the Maratha warrior king Shivaji, to inflame communal sentiments in the region. A political party of the Marathas, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) emerged in the late 1990s, which also encouraged the rhetoric of Maratha caste pride. Additionally, several Maratha caste associations came up, notably the Sambhaji Brigade and the Chava Sanghatana which engaged in violent contestation over cultural symbols of caste pride. One of the key demands of this dispersed political and cultural mobilisation is reservation for Marathas in public sector jobs and educational institutions, as a backward caste.

Dominating the ICDS: Of political patronage and mediation

In the Sundar Block ICDS project, Aurangabad District, I found that Marathas were most dominant at the anganwadi level. They controlled several aspects of anganwadi functioning including where it was located and who was selected as the anganwadi worker and helper. Consequently, they influenced crucial programme outcomes such as who was able to access and avail of ICDS programme services and who was excluded. Maratha control over anganwadi functioning was exerted through their complete dominance over village social and political life, the latter reinforced by their control over the panchayat samiti or block level government and representation to the state legislature or the MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly) seat as well.

Marathas were over-represented in Anganwadi worker positions in the ICDS programme despite the recruitment process favouring candidates from the reserved categories. Eligible applicants[11] from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as

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[11] To be successfully considered for the anganwadi worker position applicants need to have at least cleared the 10th standard exam, be residents of the hamlet/village where the anganwadi is located, fall within a specific age group and have only two children. For the anganwadi helper position, all the same conditions apply except the minimum educational qualification is 7th standard pass. The conditions on

well as Other Backward Castes for anganwadi worker and helper positions received additional points for their caste during the recruitment process. Despite this advantage, in the Laldera and Rajegaon beats, Marathas constituted 53 and 67 percent of anganwadi workers, respectively. This Maratha capture was a function of the working of kinship, caste and political networks. The village Sarpanch, existing anganwadi workers and the local MLA were the patrons and brokers of these networks. Political patrons, brokers and fixers typically determine people's access to information on public services and programmes, their participation and benefits and can even subvert programme objectives, sometimes defeating them altogether (Berenschot, 2010; Corbridge et al., 2005; Sharma, 2011; Witsoe, 2012a)

Sarpanchs of villages, for which anganwadi workers needed to be recruited, were officially notified of the recruitment process by the ICDS programme. They were required to certify that interested applicants were bonafide residents of the village/hamlet where the anganwadi centre was located. A 'proof of residence' certificate duly signed by the Sarpanch was an essential criterion of eligibility for the anganwadi position. The official notification and the 'proof of residence' requirement placed the Sarpanch in an ideal position to influence applications for the post.

Four of the five Anganwadi workers of Shanwadi and Mangaon villages were recruited to their position, through the patronage of the Maratha Sarpanch holding office at the time. Of these, two of the three Maratha anganwadi workers were not actual residents of the villages in which they worked but lived in Sundar block town and commuted daily to the village for their service. However they had little difficulty in obtaining information about the advertised positions or procuring residence certificates from the village Sarpanch as they were part of the same kinship/caste network.

Mangala Narke, the Maratha anganwadi worker of Shanwadi village for 27 years, had never lived in the village. She lived in Sundar block town and commuted daily to

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age, the number of children as well as educational qualifications for helpers were introduced more recently and were not part of the 1989 process. The age condition in the 2011 recruitment process was between 21-35 years. Along with the completed forms, applicants need to submit a range of supporting documents such as marksheets and/or certificates for every educational qualification that they have attained starting from the 7th standard exam and including the school leaving certificate, proof of identity and residence as well as a pledge that they currently have only two offspring and will continue to do so in the future. Candidates from the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Castes are required to attach copies of their caste certificate and those applicants who are widowed or orphaned need to produce relevant certificates as well. Candidates with prior experience also need to attach relevant certificates attesting their experience.

Shanwadi to operate her anganwadi. Her husband's family had been the *Patils* (leaders) of a village near Shanwadi and had owned almost 40 acres of land. This land was acquired by the government for a dam project in return for a small amount of money, a few acres in Shanwadi village and a plot in Sundar Block town. The resultant loss of income and social status led to Mangala's husband becoming an alcoholic and the family fell into dire financial straits. Mangala had studied till the 11th standard and so when the first round of recruitment for the ICDS in Sundar Block was announced, the Sarpanch of Shanwadi, Mangala's relative by marriage suggested that she apply for the position. He gave her a residence certificate. Hers was the only application received from Shanwadi village and she got the position.

Similarly, Savita More was not a resident of Mangaon village when she applied for the anganwadi worker position there. She belonged to a neighbouring village where the daughter in law of the Sarpanch had taken the only anganwadi worker position available. She therefore approached the Mangaon Sarpanch for a residence certificate based on the Maratha caste network and got the job as the sole applicant from the village.

The first round of anganwadi worker recruitment was conducted when the ICDS project had just begun in Sundar block, not much was known about the functioning of anganwadi centres or the role of anganwadi workers and the honorarium was a meagre Rs.275 per month. Several senior Maratha anganwadi workers shared that they had to be persuaded by village leaders and the Gram Sevak to apply and that they were the sole applicants from their village. Not many Maratha women with the required schooling were willing to take up the job because of patriarchal strictures against their mobility in the public sphere (see Omvedt, 1977). Women from other communities were not widely approached. The first round of anganwadi worker recruitment in Sundar block was led by the Block Development Officer (BDO), who had additional charge as the Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) and she used her network of Gram Sevaks and Sarpanchs to create awareness about the recruitment notification. As most Sarpanchs were Maratha, information about the anganwadi worker position was largely retained within Maratha circles and suitable candidates identified from within caste and kin networks. Here 'suitability' was understood informally in terms of economic need, rather than the few formal conditions identified by the programme regarding residence and education. A majority of those recruited in the 1989 process, in Laldera and Rajegaon beats, were Maratha and many were related to each other. Within the Maratha community as well, it was women with

political access and patronage who were able to get the position. However, as anganwadi centres started functioning across the project and recruitment into the ICDS became more desirable and competitive, Sarpanchs were no longer able to completely control information about recruitment. They increasingly relied on the residence proof requirement to influence application. Sarpanchs used anganwadi recruitment to not only extend patronage to members of their kinship and caste networks but also wider political networks. Shanwadi village consisted of the main village and a Dhangar *vasti* (hamlet) for which an anganwadi worker, resident in the hamlet, needed to be recruited in 2015. The Dhangar *vasti* had two political factions competing for the position but only one of the factions supported the Maratha Sarpanch*.* As both candidates were almost equally matched, the Sarpanch ensured a win for his supporters by wording the residence proof of the other candidate in such a way that she was disqualified.

With increasing honorariums, greater awareness about the opportunities and resources represented by the ICDS and more competition for anganwadi worker positions, existing anganwadi workers became brokers of information and access to advantage their caste and kin networks in recruitment processes. From their privileged position as insiders to the programme, they were able to provide interested family and caste members with information about available opportunities and accurate guidance for a successful application, especially the various supporting documents needed. The significance of such 'application readiness' was highlighted by the experience of Mira Admane, a landless and poor woman I met in Mangaon village. She had an alcoholic husband and made ends meet by working as a domestic help in the village. When she heard about the recruitment notice of the ICDS programme, she was keen to apply for the post of anganwadi helper. She had the minimum educational qualification required and belonged to the Dhobi caste, which as part of the OBC category would ensure additional points in the selection process. Mira called her brother from her native village to help fill out the application form and obtain documents such as a residence certificate from the Sarpanch. However, despite all her efforts, Mira's application could not be completed within the fortnight provided for application. It lacked the essential caste certificate which takes months to procure, as well as her marksheets, which she couldn't obtain as the schools were shut for the summer vacation. Her application was rejected during the marking process.

In contrast, several Maratha anganwadi workers of Laldera and Rajegaon beats had over the years exploited their insider advantage to support their younger relatives, including daughters and daughters in law, to become anganwadi workers, with some

joining the same beat and others the same village. Additionally, they were also able to misdirect and keep 'unwanted' castes and communities away from the programme. In Shanwadi village, the post of an anganwadi helper was vacant but the existing Maratha workers did not want the post to be taken by anyone from the Scheduled castes or the Muslim community so they inflated the eligibility requirements for the position while responding to interested queries from members of these communities.

After 1989, as the ICDS programme spread across the block, the formal recruitment process was also expanded to involve elected members of the block government, the panchayat samiti, and the District Guardian Minister. However, in actual practice anganwadi worker recruitment became the domain of the local MLA. The chairperson of the selection committee as well as the panchayat samiti member were typically his nominees and would manipulate the interview scores to favour a pre-determined set of candidates based on patronage as well as informal payments. Mangala Narke, the senior anganwadi worker of Shanwadi village was able to facilitate the recruitment of her daughter in the urban ICDS programme through the patronage of the then MLA as her son was active in the same political party, the Shiv Sena. She approached the MLA with the help of her son and the day before the interview process, the MLA's men came to her house and filled up the daughter's application form. The next day the daughter attended the interview and was selected.

With the MLA taking on the decisive role in anganwadi recruitment, Sarpanchs, the 'big men' or patrons of their village, became brokers facilitating the selection of their candidates. Ranjana Wakde, the young Maratha anganwadi worker from Shanwadi village applied thrice for the anganwadi worker position but was successful only when a member of her kinship network became the Sarpanch and he in turn belonged to the same political party as the MLA, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and was able to broker her selection.   For Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007) the Sarpanch as both patron and broker is part of the organisational hierarchy of exchange relations between electoral clients, a pyramid of various levels of brokers and the patron at the top. Berenschot (2014), on the other hand distinguishes between two types of political fixers based on their terms of exchange with politicians. These are the 'social worker' and the 'party worker'. The social worker or 'naya neta' (Krishna, 2007) is a neighbourhood or community leader who trades votes in return for access to state resources and will align with politicians based on their capacity and reputation to deliver. If the supported politician fails to deliver, the social worker along with his 'votes' could switch loyalties and change sides. Party workers on the other hand, facilitate

access to state resources by performing organisational services for politicians and thereby becoming close to them. Mangala Narke's son, in this sense, was a party worker but most other political fixers fall between these two ideal types.

While Sarpanchs used anganwadi recruitment to strengthen their status as patrons at the village level, the MLA also used such appointments to collect informal payments and generate campaign finance, a practice also noted for the irrigation department and the police by Wade (1985) and Jeffrey (2000), respectively. In a recruitment process conducted in 2014 that was ultimately cancelled, the MLA's representative was said to have canvassed all the villages involved to collect payments of about Rs.40-50,000 for each post. For most senior anganwadi workers and Supervisors, payments for anganwadi recruitment was a new phenomenon not prevalent at the time of their selection when the patronage of political leaders was the primary means of securing the anganwadi worker position. They attributed this change to the increased honorarium of anganwadi workers and thereby greater competition for the position.

Besides funds, anganwadi recruitment was also an important source of political power for the MLA. The newly elected MLA of Sundar Block allowed an anganwadi recruitment process, begun under the previous MLA and almost completed, to lapse so that he could accommodate his supporters through fresh recruitment. The selection committee of the cancelled process had delayed holding interviews for the recruitment and then rushed through them just as the campaign period for the state elections drew to a close. However, the final list of selected applicants could not be announced before the elections. Once the results of the state election had been declared and a new MLA elected, the Chair of the selection committee approached the ICDS project office to announce the list of selected applicants. At the same time, the new MLA instructed them not to. The CDPO at the Sundar block project office felt that she had no choice but to cooperate with the winning MLA. The previous CDPO had been almost transferred for merely following the official procedure of handing the final list of selected applicants to the Chair of the selection committee rather than the MLA's agent. The selection committee Chair then filed a complaint with the district administration against the ICDS project office for not releasing the list despite completing the process. The district administration held that since it was the Chair's responsibility to release the list, the project office was not responsible. Finally, a fresh recruitment process was conducted in 2015.

The use of anganwadi recruitment for clientelistic exchanges has led to at least three processes being cancelled in Sundar block. The ICDS Commissionerate at the state level issued a new Government Resolution or GR on anganwadi recruitment in 2015 to counter such political bargaining as well as delays and cancellations in the recruitment process. The GR scrapped the interview component of the recruitment process and thereby the formal involvement of political leaders. Anganwadi workers were to be recruited based on only the merit list shortlisted by an internal committee of the ICDS project office headed by the CDPO. However this policy change did little to counter the political control of anganwadi recruitment. Sarpanchs continued to manipulate application and the CDPO was still required to submit the final list to the MLA.

The political dominance of the Marathas, across different levels of government in Sundar Block, enabled them to occupy a majority of anganwadi worker and thereby ICDS positions at the block level. Such political mediation created a *Maratha-isation* of the ICDS akin to the *Yadavisation* of the Police in Uttar Pradesh referred to by Jeffrey (2000). Maratha Sarpanchs and the Maratha MLA enabled members of their caste, kinship and political networks to corner scarce government resources, in this case a monthly income from a government programme, for themselves. Additionally, Maratha anganwadi workers attempted to shape the programme in their terms by influencing which communities were able to apply for recruitment and thereby become their colleagues and co-workers and which were not.

The capture of anganwadi worker positions by Maratha*s* through kinship, caste and political networks not only served to strengthen their social and political power in the village and block but also influenced the delivery and uptake of anganwadi services. In Shanwadi, the Anganwadi centre was located as per the convenience of the Maratha worker rather than ease of access, especially of marginalised communities such as the Dalits who lived outside the village. Resultantly, the anganwadi centre was poorly attended by Dalit children. In Mangaon, the Maratha anganwadi worker refused to even survey the Dalit households allocated to her. They were not enumerated in the 'total population' that she served in her records and hence were entirely excluded from the ICDS. In both Shanwadi and Mangaon villages Maratha anganwadi workers rarely visited Dalit localities and were not familiar with the children or their families. In Shanwadi, the Maratha anganwadi worker had falsely recorded a Dalit child as having migrated with her parents for the sugarcane-cutting season, when she had in fact stayed back in the village with her grandmother. Additionally the Maratha anganwadi worker did not like to touch Dalit children. When a Dalit family visited the anganwadi

centre at Shanwadi for weighing their baby, the worker who had placed all other children in the weighing scale harness asked the family to pick up the child and put him in the harness. Maratha anganwadi workers in Shanwadi asked all children to bring their own vessels to eat the meal served in the anganwadi so as to avoid having to wash up utensils used by Dalit children.

Maratha political mediation of the ICDS thus reproduced their socio-political and ritual dominance as well as the caste exclusion of Dalits. Dominance was performed by colonising a programme of the developmental state and using its everyday practices to enforce the hierarchical caste order, specifically the 'untouchable' status of Dalits. State practices served as sites for the reproduction of state power as Maratha power thereby excluding the vulnerable communities that the ICDS was designed to address and producing implementation gaps.

Contesting dominance: Dalit assertion and mobilisation

The Dalit challenge to upper caste domination in Maharashtra has historically spanned social, cultural and political spheres. The social mobilisation of Dalits has largely revolved around socio-religious change, which has ranged from the reform of Hinduism to its repudiation through conversion. Their cultural assertion has involved establishing independent cultural institutions that proclaim pride in a re-imagined and re-valued Dalit identity whereas their political struggle has been both about exercising equal rights as citizens, special privileges as the historically oppressed as well as acquiring political power through competitive electoral politics. For Waghmore (2013), these political and non-political processes do not operate independently but grow in interaction.

In Maharashtra, the social mobilisation of Dalits was rooted within non-Brahmin politics and the ideology of Phule, which advocated modern education and cultural-religious protest against Brahmin centric rituals and practices. However, with the Marathas dominating the alliance between the Shudras and the ex-untouchables and using the Kshatriya identity crafted by Phule to claim higher social status for themselves, untouchable protests were forced to evolve as a counter current to this politics (Waghmore, 2013). These counter currents initially took the form of participation in caste Hindu reform initiatives such as the *Prarthana Samaj,* creating Dalit institutions within Hinduism through deification of Dalit saints and sanskritisation or emulation of upper caste practices – abstaining from meat and alcohol and other sources of

pollution and 'purification of thought, speech and behaviour'. Subsequently, more vigorous efforts to claim equal religious rights were made through lengthy protests to gain temple entry. However, with the failure of these efforts, Dalits under the leadership of Ambedkar, increasingly shifted towards western education and political power as the means for their emancipation (Jaffrelot, 2004; Zelliot, 1970). Finally, in 1956 a section of Dalits led by Ambedkar converted to Buddhism in a public ceremony refusing to remain a part of Hinduism till it was completely reformed (Jodhka, 2012).

Conversion to Buddhism provided Dalits with a new religious identity, freeing them of the humiliation and degradation of Hinduism and enabling them to craft a new public culture with new rituals, symbols and festivals (Wankhede, 2008). Ambedkar also rooted the new identity in an alternate history, which portrayed the Dalits as the original, pre-Aryan inhabitants of India subjugated by Brahmin outsiders thereby challenging Hindu claim to antiquity and Indian tradition (Jaffrelot, 2004). After his death, Ambedkar himself became the central icon of Dalit protest and politics and the symbol of their assertion (Waghmore, 2013). Dalit public culture was built around the iconography of Ambedkar and the Buddha with photographs, posters, busts, statues and Buddha vihars proliferating in several parts of the country. This symbology was supplemented by commemorative political performances such as public processions on the birth and death anniversary of Ambedkar as well as the production of popular Buddhist and Ambedkarite literature – revolutionary songs, plays, poems and autobiographies (Wankhede, 2008).

Dalit socio-cultural mobilisation enabled their political movement, which for Ambedkar was the central instrument of the Untouchables' emancipation. At the All India Depressed Classes Congress (1932) in Nagpur, he proclaimed, "It is very necessary that the political reins should come in the hands of untouchables. For that, all of us should unite and secure a political status. Untouchability in India will not be eradicated so long as the untouchables do not control the political strings" (Wankhede, 2008). The Dalit struggle for political power, under the leadership of Ambedkar began in the colonial period where it was largely concerned with gaining direct representation in colonial institutions of governance. Ambedkar believed that a caste Hindu could not know the mind of an Untouchable and hence could not lead or represent him. He therefore argued for separate electorates for Untouchables in the provincial assemblies of the British India government, which led to the now famous confrontation with Gandhi and the Poona Pact that provided instead for reservation of seats. Political representation was essential for the promulgation of laws that protected, enabled and

empowered Dalits from the marginalisation and oppression of the caste system. The triple prongs of a Scheduled Caste political movement, an Indian elite willing to address historical injustice and a British government open to low risk social reform produced considerable favourable legislation (Zelliot, 1970). With Independence, such legislation was significantly strengthened by the constitution drafted under the leadership of Ambedkar. However, political power continued to remain the central goal – 'the key to all social progress'. Post independence, Ambedkar established his third political party, the Republican Party of India (RPI) as an alliance of all the 'dispossessed – the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the Backward Classes based on the realisation that the Dalits lacked the numbers to gain political power on their own. However, with his death soon after, this vision was never realised and instead the RPI came to be dominated by the Mahars, the caste to which Ambedkar belonged, split into factions and co-opted by the Congress.

The fragmentation of the RPI began soon after its formation in 1957 and by 2008 there were as many as 11 factions, each led by the Mahars. Some of these factions built paternalistic alliances with the Congress for political power and increasingly became a negligible force in the politics of the state (Waghmore, 2013; Wankhede, 2008). Disillusionment with the opportunistic leadership of the RPI and party politics led to the emergence of two non-party Ambedkarite movements in the 1970s – BAMCEF and the Dalit Panthers (Jaoul, 2007). The Dalit Panthers were set up by urban, educated Dalit youth inspired by the Black Panther movement in the United States. It was a radical, intellectual movement that generated a large amount of revolutionary literature attacking Brahmanic cultural hegemony and raising class issues. It was also a movement that openly advocated retaliation of caste violence with violence. The Dalit Panthers were instrumental in the *Namantar* agitation– the renaming of Marathwada University as the Dr. Ambedkar University, which led to large-scale political violence against Dalits led by the Marathas. The Dalit Panthers popularised the term 'Dalit', garnered national attention towards the official neglect of Ambedkar's memory, institutionalised the public performance of Dalit anger/violence in response to caste atrocities and/or stigmatised exclusion and raised revolutionary consciousness amongst Dalits. However this movement too was beset by factionalism with some factions choosing to pursue electoral politics and lost momentum over time (Jaoul, 2007; Waghmore, 2013; Wankhede, 2008).

BAMCEF or the Bahujan and Minority Community Employees Federation was founded by Kanshi Ram in Maharashtra so that members of the emerging Dalit middle class –

SC, ST and OBC government employees could use their resources, time and knowledge to 'payback' to the deprived communities that they came from. It was necessarily a non-political, non-religious and non-agitational organisation, as government employees are technically not allowed to engage in political action. Although initially established in Maharashtra, it was soon joined by government employees from other parts of the country and overtly engaged in spreading the Ambekarite ideology and raising consciousness. However, subsequently, its network and support was used to launch an agitational wing, the Dalit Shohsit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti (DS4) and a political party in 1984 – the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). Both the DS4 and the BSP were built on a critique of existing Dalit political processes and party politics. The DS4 distinguished itself from the Dalit Panthers through its approach to violent confrontation, which it considered reactionary and harmful with little long-term impact. The BSP was founded on a critique of RPI leaders whom Kanshi Ram scathingly referred to as 'stooges' serving the interests of dominant upper caste political parties, most notably the Congress (Jaoul, 2007; Waghmore, 2013).

The BSP revived the Ambedkarite focus on political power as the 'master key' for social justice for Dalits. As per the stated ideology of the BSP, a new social order could only be achieved by using state power for social engineering from 'above' that is through state led developmental and welfare programmes rather than revolution based on mobilisation from 'below'. The state was the main instrument through which social justice was to be attained. Pai (2002) categorises the BSP ideology as (1) conservative and statist since it did not seek to create an egalitarian society, (2) retributive as it aimed to correct historic wrongs, and (3) exclusive as it focused solely on the Dalits as the most oppressed and exploited section of Indian society. While the BSP was quite successful in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh where Dalits constitute nearly 21 percent of the population, in Maharashtra where they are only 10.2 percent of the population and involved in electoral politics through the RPI, it has not been able to win a single seat either in the state legislative assembly or the national Parliament. However, it has emerged as the single largest party of Dalits in the state, with the largest vote share in the 2004 and 2009 national elections (Waghmore, 2013).

Several scholars consider Dalit politics in Maharashtra to be at an impasse. Gokhale, (1986) attributes the impasse to the Buddhist conversions of the Mahars, which instead of collectivising the Dalits, separated the Mahars from the other Dalit castes of Maharashtra namely, the Mangs and the Chambhars. In a similar vein, Palshikar

(2007) highlights the political competition between the Mahars and the non-Mahars as responsible for the ineffectiveness of Dalit politics. The Mahars at 9 percent of the population are the most numerous of the Dalit castes followed by the much smaller Mangs at 1.8 percent and Chambhars at 1.3 percent. Under the leadership of Ambedkar, also a Mahar, the Mahars were the first to become politicised and came to dominate Ambedkarite party politics, namely the RPI, as the natural heirs of his legacy. This dominance extended to the BSP as well, which does however attempt to mobilise the Mangs and the Chambhars. But the Mangs have also independently mobilised and politicised, though they do not completely reject the Dalit identity or Ambedkarite politics. However the Chambhars, who consider themselves ritually purer and of higher status remain entirely outside the purview of Dalit politics and have instead been mobilised by the Shiv Sena to counter the rise of the BSP.

Waghmore (2013) however argues against a pessimistic view of Dalit politics in Maharashtra and draws attention away from stalled party politics to dynamic non-party political processes, in particular campaigns for human rights and land rights for Dalits in Marathwada. These campaigns not only address specific issues such as temple entry, bonded labour and securing cultivable land for landless Dalits but also help Dalits negotiate the everyday contestation of caste. According to caste based rules and restrictions, the separation and subservience of the polluting Dalit body is embodied through attire, posture, speech, work, food, drink and dwelling (Gorringe and Rafanell 2007). Dalits are expected to live away from the main village, have different entrances to the village, eat and drink in separate receptacles that they themselves clean, wear old, discarded clothes, be humble and docile, labour on upper caste fields in return for food or meagre payment and perform caste roles in religious rituals- for instance, Mangs are expected to beat the *halagi* drum in religious processions. These embodied practices then become the sites for the everyday contestation of caste. Waghmore (2013) notes that in Marathwada with changing labour practices and affirmative action in education and government jobs, Dalits are no longer dependent on the upper castes, particularly the Marathas for labour and tend to be economically better off than before. Moreover, politicised Dalits no longer accept their marginalisation in village public spaces such as roads, temples, panchayat building or village squares. Rather, they engage in politically assertive performances such as loud and pompous celebrations of the anniversaries of Dalit icons particularly Ambedkar. Such aggressive claiming of public spaces and thereby equality is usually seen as violation of caste boundaries or deviance by Marathas and often leads to retributive violence. Dalits, once again, rely on state mechanisms to challenge such violence against them in particular the

Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe Prevention of Atrocities Act. Waghmore (2013) notes that the Aurangabad division recorded the highest number of atrocities against Dalits between 1998 and 2004 in the state. Such violence had an unusually high proportion of Maratha involvement but Maratha political and economic dominance implied that securing justice for Dalits was usually difficult. However, Waghmore (2013) highlights that Dalits while counteracting atrocities also deployed social and political networks from their marginal locations to take on Maratha influence. Waghmore (2013) interprets Dalit attempts to claim village public spaces, the retributive violence it provokes and their subsequent quest for justice as part of an overall effort to assert equal citizenship and demand a society based on civic rather than caste relations.

Such performative Dalit politics is energised by the promise of equal citizenship in the Constitution of India which according to Mahar-Moller (1958) has been interpreted by Dalits as Ambedkar's law replacing the Hindu law of Manu on which caste is based. Jaoul (2007) studied the symbolic politics behind the proliferation of Ambedkar statues, wearing a three piece suit and holding a copy of the Constitution, in Uttar Pradesh, and found that the establishment of these statues in Dalit localities of villages and towns constituted not only political acts of mobilisation and assertion of the Dalit identity but also represented the consciousness of constitutional rights amongst the marginalised.

Re-constituting Caste, Re-imagining State: Dalits in the ICDS

Maratha dominance in the ICDS is not entirely unchallenged. Just as Dalit state functionaries have powered the wider political mobilisation of Dalits through BAMCEF, in the ICDS they use bureaucratic and political means to contest Maratha caste power. In the following section, I detail two case studies of Dalit ICDS workers, an anganwadi worker, Meera Kale and a Supervisor Usha Thorat, confronting caste within the ICDS. In each case, Dalit workers question and resist their caste based subordination within the programme by upholding the rules and imaginary of a Weberian state.

Using bureaucratic means: Meera Kale – the Dalit Anganwadi Worker

Meera Kale, the young anganwadi worker of Mangaon village, referred to in the interview abstract at the beginning of the chapter, joined the ICDS programme in 2011. Kale Madam, as I called her, was a member of the small but emerging Dalit middle class, which is typically a first or second-generation beneficiary of the state's

affirmative action policies, economically secure and yet politically conscious and strongly connected to the communities of their origin (Jaffrelot, 2008; Jodhka and Prakash, 2016; Naudet, 2008). Meera Kale's father was an engineer in the Aurangabad District Irrigation Department and she grew up in an urban environment, Sundar Block town and Aurangabad city, in a home with many amenities including domestic servants, cars and air-conditioning. Kale Madam recounted that while she did avail of caste-based facilities – scholarships and reservation in college admission, she was not conscious of caste in her social interactions while living in Aurangabad city. Her friend circle was a mixed group and her family had easy, commensal relations with their Brahmin neighbours. She first experienced caste-based discrimination in her marital village, where she started residing after joining the ICDS. A similar difference in the experience of untouchability in urban and rural contexts has also been reported by Gorringe and Rafanell (2007), while Nisbett (2007) finds easy camaraderie, including the sharing of food, drink and cigarettes, in both private and public, between scheduled caste and caste Hindu young male friends in urban Bangalore. In contrast, several scholars have underscored the casteism experienced by Dalits in urban areas. Jodhka (2010) and Prakash (2015) highlight how Dalit entrepreneurs are discriminated against in urban markets, Jodhka and Newman (2007) find that caste is a consideration during recruitment interviews of corporates while Vithayathil and Singh, (2012) reveal that residential spaces, even in major metropolitan cities, are largely organised by caste. Given these contradictory findings, Dickey (2011) emphasises the interactions between class and caste for a plausible explanation. She finds that upwardly mobile lower castes, including Dalits, often counteract discrimination by flaunting the symbolic markers of their class status.

An important feature of the Dalit middle class is their emphasis on education. Kale madam was the eldest of three siblings and was the only one besides her mother who was not professionally qualified in her family. While her father had trained as an engineer and her sister a medical doctor. Kale Madam had also almost completed two years of a Bachelors in Computer Science degree but was not able to finish as she got married and then pregnant. She married by her own choice, a match her parents only reluctantly supported as her husband belonged to a family of limited means and was self-employed with no regular income. Her husband's parents lived in Mangaon village where they owned a small plot of agricultural land, while he had a photography business in Sundar block town and also worked as a freelance journalist reporting for well known *Marathi* newspapers such as *Sakaal, Loksatta* etc. Even after her marriage, Kale madam lived for many years in Sundar Block town where her parents supported

her to maintain a middle class lifestyle by providing a house and a car. It was her educational ambition for her elder daughter that prompted her decision to move to her marital village and work in the ICDS. She admitted her elder daughter to a prestigious private school in Aurangabad city and began to need money on a regular basis to pay the monthly fees.

Once the anganwadi worker recruitment notification for Mangaon village was posted, it was not a big challenge for Kale madam to secure the position. Kale Madam belonged to the Chambhar/Charmakar/Chamar caste amongst Dalits. While the Chamars of Uttar Pradesh are very much a part of Ambedkarite politics - the Bahujan Samaj Party Supremo, Mayawati is a Chamar - Chambhars in Maharashtra consider themselves socially superior to the Mahars and Mangs. They largely ally with mainstream political parties such as the Congress and more recently the Shiv Sena as Hindu Dalits, against the RPI and BSP which are seen predominantly as Mahar political parties (Waghmare, 2009; Waghmore, 2013). Kale madam's journalist husband had links with the local Shiv Sena leaders and was able to secure the support of both the Shiv Sena Sarpanch in Mangaon village as well as the Shiv Sena MLA for her appointment. The Mangaon Sarpanch provided her with a residence certificate as her in-laws resided in the village, even though she did not at the time of the recruitment and the MLA forced the Sundar Block project office to accept her application for the post even after the submission deadline had passed. As Kale Madam's husband explained, the Chambhars did not have the numbers to emerge as a political force, they therefore had no choice but to ally with a mainstream political party. However, as a journalist, he also enjoyed the additional leverage of a large network of contacts and the discretion to print news about them. The role of political journalism in shaping and being shaped by patronage networks has been noted by Rao (2012) who found that reporters and editors received favours in exchange for positive coverage, a trend that has intensified with the regionalisation and localisation of the press.

Meera Kale's recruitment as anganwadi worker caused much resentment amongst the Marathas of Mangaon village. There were three main reasons for this. First, the other contender for this position was a Maratha woman who though less qualified than Meera was seen as more needy as her husband owned no land and ran a couple of petty businesses to make ends meet. Second, a senior anganwadi worker in the village Savita More, also a Maratha, had attempted to broker the selection of this Maratha candidate to the position and Meera's appointment caused her to lose face as well as potential income. Third, the appointment represented an inversion of the traditional

socioeconomic order – an urban, more educated and richer scheduled caste took away a position that many in the village believed should have gone to a poor, needy Maratha. According to Waghmore (2013) such deviance often incites Maratha anger and caste violence. Mangaon village already had a history of Maratha- Dalit violence with two incidents of Marathas attacking the Dalit locality and burning homes. The resultant political mobilisation of Dalits meant that in this instance Maratha resentment was channelled into ensuring that the next ICDS vacancy was secured by one of theirs. As an angry Maratha told me, 'Last time they took the position, this time it must come to us.'

Much of this resentment was spearheaded by Savita More, an anganwadi worker in the village for the past 25 years, who exemplified Maratha dominance in the ICDS. Recruited because of her caste and kin network, Savita was not a resident of Mangaon and commuted from Sundar block town to operate her anganwadi. She was not very regular and did not deliver most of the services mandated in the ICDS programme. For the month that I stayed in Mangaon village, she was absent for 10-11 days and even when present did not weigh the children or conduct any pre-school activities. She would bring about half a kilo of cooked rice with her, when most anganwadis prepared nearly 1.5 to 2 kilos of raw rice for 25-30 children, and distribute it to a few homes that she visited. However, no complaints were raised against her from the village. A young Maratha parent shared that while she was aware of the gaps in Savita's work, complaining about her was not an option as she was one of them.

As the only Maratha anganwadi worker, Savita had over the years positioned herself as a broker of the ICDS, building links with the rich and powerful in the village by sending programme resources such as foodgrains and take home ration packets to their homes irrespective of their eligibility. With the other ICDS functionaries, especially Dalit functionaries, she acted as a patron appropriating their labour for the fulfilment of her responsibilities and negotiating their administrative dealing with the Sundar block project office. Two retired Dalit anganwadi helpers of Mangaon who were illiterate relied completely on Savita More for information and action and would travel to her home in Sundar block rather than directly approach the ICDS project office for their retiral benefits. To bolster her positioning and power, Savita claimed to be politically connected, through her husband, to the local Shiv Sena MLA.

When Meera Kale joined the ICDS in Mangaon village, Savita attempted to re-establish the local relations of power, disturbed by her selection, by controlling her area of work,

place of work and time. Through her regulation of Meera Kale's labour, Savita More sought to reproduce and perform the material and cultural basis of Maratha power. Meera contested this dominance by invoking the rules of Weberian bureaucracy. She began by challenging Savita's practice of allocating village localities to anganwadis by caste as referred to in the interview excerpt quoted at the beginning of the chapter.

When Meera joined the ICDS programme in 2011, there were two anganwadis in the village, one run by Savita More and the other by Shabana Syed, a Muslim. Savita's field area consisted of high caste Maratha and Brahmin households while Shabana was expected to serve all other communities. With Meera's recruitment, Savita decided that Shabana would focus on the more distant localities of the Muslim colony and the homes near the fields and the bus stand, Meera would serve the lower castes living on the periphery of the village while she attended to the Maratha households at the centre of the village. Thus, each functionary would serve her own caste. Although Shabana was resigned, Meera protested this design on both practical grounds as well as in terms of the underlying principle. Practically such a division implied that her area was scattered around the village periphery making it difficult to survey and serve. Principally, it upheld a purity-pollution ranked social order in which castes did not mix; scheduled caste bodies were too polluted and inferior to either receive child development services from higher caste workers or provide such services to higher caste children, and; a Maratha worker as her social superior had the cultural power to determine her field area. Meera's fundamental objection, based on the Weberian principle of impersonality, was that caste could not be the basis for determining the field area of a state functionary. She demanded that a more secular practice of using the 'natural' demarcation created by village roads be used such that a contiguous fifty per cent of the village could be marked as her area irrespective of caste. This led to an impasse and Meera was not allocated her area for nearly half the year till she approached the Supervisor for help. The Supervisor upheld Meera's contention that the village area should be divided on the basis of ease of work rather than caste and Savita was compelled to handover half her survey area to Meera as well as include scheduled caste households in her own field area.

The conflict over field area was accompanied by other conflicts over labour and time as Savita More attempted to assert traditional authority and ritual claim over Meera and her helper, Lakshmi Shirke, also from the Scheduled Castes. Soon after their recruitment in April 2011, Meera and Lakshmi were required to observe and assist the working of Savita's anganwadi as they did not yet have either a separate anganwadi

centre or field area. The summer break, when the anganwadi worker and helper, each get a 15 day vacation in turns, occurred during this 'internship' and Savita decided that since Meera and Lakshmi were the new recruits, they were not eligible for the May holidays and would have to take on the entire responsibility of running the anganwadi during the break while she and her helper enjoyed a 30 day holiday each. Meera protested this diktat by claiming equality of status as an anganwadi worker and highlighting that programme rules were equally applicable to all anganwadi workers. This clash was also escalated to the Supervisor, who again ruled in Meera's favour.

A few months after Meera had been allocated her field area and had successfully set up her separate anganwadi in the village community hall, she went on pregnancy leave. In the meanwhile Savita's helper retired and her anganwadi was also shifted into the village community hall. She, then, started appropriating the labour and time of Lakshmi, Meera's helper for her anganwadi. Lakshmi was expected to take care of both anganwadis and some days even bear the costs of the hot cooked meal for Savita's pre-schoolers, while she remained absent or spent time chatting with her friends in the village. Such appropriation escalated after Meera's return - Savita started taking Lakshmi with her into the village for an election related survey during anganwadi hours leaving Meera minding the pre-schoolers of both anganwadis. Once more Meera complained to the Supervisor who clarified that election related work should only be taken up after anganwadi hours.

This low level conflict intensified when Meera began to need a relaxation of rules to breastfeed her baby during anganwadi hours. She started to take a one hour break in the morning to go home and feed her infant. Although Meera claimed that she had received permission from the parents of pre-schoolers for this practice, Savita complained to the Supervisor about her breaks as 'absenteeism'. In response, Meera started bringing her baby to the anganwadi centre more often for breastfeeding. One morning while she was breastfeeding her baby, an old scheduled caste man from Meera's area whose grandchild was no longer eligible for Take Home Ration packets as he had crossed the age of 3 years, demanded Take Home Ration packets. Meera tried to explain his ineligibility but the old man insisted. Meera then decided to give her son's Take Home Ration packets for which he was eligible as a 6 month to 3 year old baby in the village, to the old man as she herself did not use them. However her house and her son were part of Savita More's changed field area. She therefore requested Savita More to give her son's Take Home Ration packets to the old man. Savita More agreed but insisted that Meera would have to sign for it before she released the

packets, as per the rules. Meera was still breastfeeding and could not get up immediately while Savita More and the old man refused to wait. The argument escalated to a crisis, Savita More used harsh, abusive language, Meera signed the register in tears and once the old man had left with the packets, Savita rushed at her violently shouting '… *you demand half of my survey, you tell me what to do….. its gone to your head, you should never have been recruited, stop this, working by the rules…..you Chambhar, what did you think just because you move with the Marathas*….'

Meera filed a case against Savita under The Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989. However, Meera had to subsequently withdraw the case as Savita threatened to file a case of sexual harassment against her husband.

This case study of a continuous simmering conflict between a Dalit and Maratha worker of a state programme is significant at two levels. First, it is important for what it reveals about how local political relations are performed and contested in an everyday context. Much research has established that dominant castes use their social and patronage networks to acquire state positions and then use the resultant state power to enhance their social status. This case study unfolds the intricacies of how dominant caste state functionaries perform social power within state institutions to mould state practices and influence development programme outcomes. The Maratha functionary used caste power to make traditional claims on the labour of Dalit colleagues and subordinates, shirk work and alter modern accountability relations between herself and programme beneficiaries. The Dalit functionary contested this dominance by invoking the Weberian state – universal, formal, impersonal and rule bound where the only relevant hierarchy was the programme structure of the ICDS and not the caste order. By confronting caste power with state power, she built upon a history of Dalit use of state mechanisms to demand interactions based on civic rather than caste relations. The informal practice of caste based allocation of field area between anganwadis in Mangaon village for nearly 25 years was a conscious affirmation of Maratha dominance by every anganwadi worker, Supervisor and CDPO who did not challenge it. However, once the practice had been openly challenged, such tacit approval had to be withdrawn to maintain the legitimacy of the state. Amongst the many Dalit functionaries who suffered Maratha dominance in the village, Meera Kale's sole voice of protest drew strength from the economic and cultural capital acquired by her family through enabling state policies such as affirmative action as well as her husband's role in the democratic institution of the media. The state thus served as the basis of both

dominant caste power as well as Dalit assertion. However the performance of Dalit resistance also served to reconstitute caste.

Second, the case study demonstrates how specific practices are used to construct a particular state effect or imaginary of state. Savita More's practices of caste based allocation and extra-bureaucratic appropriation of the labour of Dalit functionaries created the effect of blurred boundaries between state and society, of a state captured and colonised by the dominant castes such that state power was synonymous with caste power. Meera Kale's protest served to create the effect of a distinct boundary between state and society, setting the state apart from society such that although caste was the basis of relations within society, it was not an acceptable means of governing labour within an institution of the state.

Using political means: Usha Thorat – the Dalit Supervisor

Usha Thorat was one of four newly appointed Supervisors at the Sundar Block Project Office and only one of two Dalit Supervisors in the project. She was promoted to the Supervisor position in 2010 after serving four years as an anganwadi worker and 11 years as an anganwadi helper. She recounted that in her rise through the ranks of the ICDS, her first year as a Supervisor was the most challenging and difficult.

The main difficulty, according to her, was that the CDPO, other Supervisors and administrative staff at the project office had all assumed, based on her caste and reservation based promotion, that she did not know how to work and did not deserve to be promoted to this government job with all its perks and benefits. Corroborating this understanding, a senior Supervisor had whispered to me the misleading rumour that Thorat madam did not have the requisite experience needed to be eligible for a promotion and had used political clout to become a Supervisor. Patel (2008) in her research in urban north India also finds a stigma attached to Dalit achievements acquired through the facility of reservation in traditional non-Dalit strongholds such as senior public sector positions or seats in prestigious educational institutions. Dalit achievers from the 'reserved quota' whether government servants, doctors or engineers are regarded as incompetent and inefficient, undeserving candidates who attained their position through politics rather than merit. Deshpande (2005) highlights that such resentment is usually directed at Dalits who occupy high paying desirable positions rather than those who occupy menial positions such as cleaners and sweepers etc.

When Usha Thorat and the other Dalit Supervisor joined the project office, they encountered a hostile and unfriendly atmosphere. One of the main tasks of an ICDS Supervisor is to prepare the Monthly Progress Report (MPR) of her beat of 20-25 anganwadi centres. Each anganwadi worker from the beat prepares a similar report based on data from her field area, which is then compiled by the Supervisor. Although, Thorat Madam as an anganwadi worker had experience of preparing the anganwadi level MPR, she was uncertain and nervous about the unfamiliar task and the onerous responsibility of preparing the beat level MPR. However, she found that her new colleagues were unwilling to help her find her feet, not only did they refuse to help her to prepare her MPR, they did not even allow her to see their work. Supervisors would cover their data tables with their scarves to prevent Thorat Madam from getting a glimpse of their work. Confronted with such hostility, Thorat Madam learnt to prepare the beat level MPR on her own by studying older MPRs already submitted to the office.

According to Thorat madam, the office atmosphere intimidated her so much that she did not initially have the confidence to speak in the office and share her views. She would sit silently, including during meetings prompting the CDPO to publicly declare for both the Dalit Supervisors, '*Why have they sent us these 'mati che gole' (balls of clay), these 'nandi baille' (bulls), these women are of no use to us, we don't need Supervisors like this!*'

Overwhelmed and daunted, in that first year, Thorat Madam did not even even write her reports in her own hand. She was terrified that the CDPO would humiliate her for her handwriting. She would prepare everything but get her husband to write up the final version in his hand. She followed this practice for leave applications as well. She would carry extra copies of leave applications written by her husband, in case she urgently needed one. This continued for nearly a year till the CDPO called her out for it asking her whether she was at all literate and knew how to write. She recounted that for her that was a moment of change, from that day onwards she decided to use her own hand to do her work, telling the CDPO that she knew both how to write and how to work, otherwise she would not have made it so far in the programme.

Along with the challenging atmosphere at work, Usha Thorat was also confronted with a caste-based challenge in her beat. A senior Maratha anganwadi worker, Madhu Barve, refused to accept her authority as a Supervisor. She had positioned herself as a self-styled Supervisor for the anganwadi workers of her beat and did not allow Thorat

Madam to discipline any anganwadi worker for absenteeism or poor quality of work. She would not operate her anganwadi centre regularly and expected Thorat Madam to visit her at home to check her records. She was also high-handed and disruptive during meetings. She complained to local politicians about the regularity of Thorat madam's visits and the strong language she used to reprimand anganwadi workers and even visited the Project Office to complain about her.

Usha Thorat considered three options in dealing with Madhu Barve. The first was to register a complaint under The Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989. The second was to approach Madhu Barve's village Sarpanch and complain about her and the third was to approach local Dalit politicians and leaders. As the first would have drawn too much public attention towards her and her caste identity at a time when she was still settling into her new role and the second option was not very effective, she finally chose the third. She narrated her troubles to local Dalit leaders in Madhu Barve's village who visited Madhu Barve at her house in the evening and threatened to expose her many rule violations in retaliation for her harassment of one of their own. They specifically threatened to expose the fact that she was not actually a resident of the village when she applied for and was appointed as an anganwadi worker (an essential condition for recruitment) along with her regular pilfering of ICDS resources meant for vulnerable women and children. That very night, Madhu Barve's son visited Usha Thorat's home and apologised on behalf of his mother.

In this case, Usha Thorat experienced both covert and overt forms of caste based discrimination, the former in the office and the latter in the field. Covert casteism in the office, according to Patel (2008) based on Goffman (1973) is stigma gone 'backstage'. It is shadowy and insidious, can significantly impact careers and reputations, and yet is difficult to directly confront. At the same time, the covert nature of this casteism in the context of a state institution acknowledges its illegitimacy in a formal setting, creating the effect of a boundary between state and society.

Further, while much has been written about the use of state power to enhance caste power, this case significantly highlights the use of caste power to strengthen the bureaucratic state. A Dalit Supervisor employed uncivil/unruly means to contest a caste based challenge to bureaucratic authority underlining the criticality of the liberal and Weberian state idea for Dalits. It is only in the context of the liberal state idea that Dalits are able to claim equal citizenship and hence they invest an enormous amount

of cultural and political work to uphold the imaginary of a liberal state and undifferentiated citizenship.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discuss how the dominant Maratha caste in Sundar block deployed kinship, caste and political networks to colonise the local ICDS, corner state resources for themselves and use state power to exclude the historically marginalised Dalits, thereby producing gaps in implementation. Maratha Sarpanchs, MLAs and anganwadi workers functioned as patrons and brokers to control information about ICDS recruitment processes and privilege the application and selection of their family, caste members and political clients as anganwadi workers. Resultantly Marathas were overrepresented in anganwadi worker positions and used ICDS programme sites, such as the anganwadi centre, as well as practices of service delivery to reproduce their ritual superiority and the 'untouchable' status of Dalit localities, communities and bodies. Maratha anganwadi centres remained physically distant from Dalit communities with Maratha anganwadi workers avoiding Dalit localities and the touch of 'polluted' Dalit children as well as resisting accountability to beneficiaries. The dominant caste capture of anganwadi worker positions and anganwadi centre functioning in Sundar block thus subverted ICDS programme objectives ultimately affecting development programme outcomes. These findings add to much existing literature on the political mediation of the everyday Indian state and the politicisation of caste.

However, my focus on state functionaries yields fresh insights into how Maratha dominance is challenged and resisted within the ICDS by Dalit functionaries. Dalit state functionaries have historically leveraged their position and access to resources to energise the wider political mobilisation of Dalits. I present two case studies of Dalit state functionaries, one an anganwadi worker and the other a Supervisor, who confronted Maratha attempts to control their labour and thereby reproduce social and caste power within the ICDS. In each case, Dalit workers resisted such domination by invoking the rules and structures of Weberian bureaucracy and demanding engagement based on secular rather than caste relations. The Dalit anganwadi worker invoked formal rules of programme and state to question the informal practice of caste based allocation of field area and demand equal working conditions for herself. The Dalit Supervisor even resorted to uncivil/informal means to fend off a caste-based challenge to her bureaucratic authority and uphold the formal state. Dalit functionaries thus reconfigured state practices to reconstitute caste relations based on the imaginary

of a liberal state and undifferentiated citizenship. Such Dalit resistance did not always employ liberal means but was energised by the liberal ideal.

Sharma and Gupta (2006) write that state practices are a means to exercise power and institute inequality. In this chapter, I provide detailed ethnographic evidence on the use of state practices to perform caste power, produce exclusion as well as resist domination. I also highlight that state practices are used to produce competing imaginaries of state and that they serve as sites for the negotiation of the state imaginary. For Kaviraj such contestation was between the modern bureaucratic elite and vernacular lower level state officials. I demonstrate, based on ethnographic evidence, that such contestations are very much a part of the everyday life of vernacular lower level state officials and are used to negotiate power relations between them. For several scholars intersections of local power structures with everyday state practices challenge the idea of the impersonal, rational and rule bound Weberian state, I demonstrate that such intersections can also uphold the Weberian state idea. Politically mediated state practices do not always only subvert developmental objectives, they also serve to challenge inequalities especially when the politics of affirmative action interacts with the politics of welfare. In the next chapter I consider the intersection of political mediation with informal financial practices of the local level state.

Chapter 4

Percentages & Promotions: Informal Incomes & Payments in the ICDS

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how the implementation of the ICDS by state functionaries is enmeshed in the dynamics of the local political order but that such interactions also create spaces for challenging social inequalities and reconstituting local politics. In this chapter, I examine the links between the political mediation of the every day state and the informal financial practices of state functionaries and make three related points. First, given the ethical and methodological concerns in directly observing the informal and the illegal (Shore and Haller, 2005), many scholars (e.g. Mathur, 2016; Parry, 2000) argue that the talk about such practices far exceeds its reality. In contrast, based on direct observation of ICDS functionaries and interviews, I contend that informal financial transactions are indeed a regular aspect of everyday welfare implementation and that corruption talk is not always disjunct from its practice. However, in the context of the ICDS, I also find that such transactions are limited to state functionaries and while this informality influences the quality of services received by beneficiaries, the latter are not actually required to pay for services – that is beneficiary access is not limited by demands for informal payments. Second, existing research on bureaucratic systems of informal incomes and payments in India, emphasises the central role of political mediation in the working of these systems. Politicians drive vertical systems of corruption to distribute patronage and generate election finance (Anand, 2011; Berenschot, 2010; Jauregui, 2014; Wade, 1982; Witsoe, 2012a). In my ethnography of the ICDS, I find that informal systems develop in the context of the un-implementability of formal bureaucratic rules and serve to facilitate programme implementation. Political demands did not drive these informal financial processes, rather political involvement was infrequent, opportunistic and even ineffective. The formal and informal were co-constituted (Sandvik, 2011) such that the informal was an integral aspect of the un-implementable formal (Anand, 2011; Mathur, 2016). Finally, instead of creating a '…choking atmosphere of distrust, (and) social control…' (Anders, 2009), informality at the local levels of the ICDS was performatively and relationally produced through continuous negotiations of power and authority across bureaucratic levels.

The chapter consists of two main sections – the first details the *takkewari* system of the Supplementary Nutrition Programme – one of the key components of the ICDS and the second, systems of promotion, transfers and postings. In the first section, I elaborate anganwadi worker practices relating to supplementary nutrition provision highlighting the many adjustments they make to earn an income as well as Supervisory and CDPO practices of collecting *takkewari* or commissions. In this section, I also describe the sub-systems that work to maintain the *takkewari* system including a system of sanctions devised to keep anganwadi workers in check, its excesses and the role of political mediation. The second section describes a confusing arena of political brokers and bureaucratic agents and the many attempts of anganwadi workers and Supervisors to navigate these in their search for promotions and transfers and postings of choice. In the conclusion, I highlight the links between percentages and promotions as well as the performativity of informal practices. Throughout the chapter, I bring out the contexts and methods by which informal practices were directly observed, discussed and understood.

The *takkewari* system

The Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP) is one of six services that the ICDS is designed to provide to three categories of beneficiaries: pregnant women, nursing mothers and children in the 0-6 year age group. The objective of the SNP is to address the additional nutritional requirements of pregnancy, lactation and early childhood development by supplementing home meals. During my fieldwork from November 2014 to July 2015, such supplementation took the form of Take Home Ration (THR) packets for pregnant women, nursing mothers and children in the 6-36 month age group and a snack and hot cooked meal for the 3-6 year old pre-schoolers enrolled in the anganwadi. As per programme guidelines, pregnant women and nursing mothers were to receive daily nutritional supplementation of 600 calories and 18-20 gms of protein, 6-72 month olds were to receive 500 calories and 12-15 gms of protein while severely underweight 6-72 month olds were to be given 800 calories and 20-25 gms of protein by the anganwadi centre. There were 2 recipes for the THR packets for pregnant women and nursing mothers and for the 6 to 36 month olds. These were:

Table 1: Contents of THR packets provided in the ICDS

	Recipe 1	Recipe 2
THR Packets for Pregnant Women and Nursing Mothers	A micronutrient fortified blended premix made with wheat, soya nuggets, roasted gram and jaggery **Total weight:** 2145 gms **Daily recommended intake:** 165 gms/day for 13 days	A micronutrient fortified blended premix made with wheat, soya nuggets, peanuts and sugar **Total weight:** 1920 gms **Daily recommended intake:** 160 gms/day for 12 days
THR Packets for 6 month-36 month olds	A micronutrient fortified blended premix made with wheat, roasted gram and sugar **Total weight:** 1820 gms **Daily recommended intake:** 140 gms/day for 13 days	A micronutrient fortified blended premix made with wheat, soya nuggets, peanuts and jaggery **Total weight:** 1680 gms **Daily recommended intake:** 140 gms/day for 12 days

The THR was expected to be consumed after mixing with hot milk or hot water. Each of these three categories of beneficiaries were to be given two THR packets per month while severely undernourished 6-36 month olds were to receive an extra THR packet.

Pre-schoolers (3-6 year olds) enrolled at the anganwadi were to be given a snack as soon as the anganwadi opened at 9:00 am and then a hot meal before it shut at 12 noon. Each beat decided its own weekly menu from a set of options available in the programme guidelines. In the two beats that I studied, Rajegaon and Laldera, the weekly menu was as follows:

Table 2: Weekly Pre-school Menus in Laldera and Rajegaon beats

	Laldera beat		
Day	**Morning Snack (50 gm/day/child)**	**Hot Meal (70 gm/day/child)**	**Description**
Monday	*Ladoo:* a sweet ball made either with roasted peanuts and jaggery or a mix of wheatflour and gramflour, clarified butter and sugar OR *Chivda:* a crispy savoury snack made with puffed rice and nuts	*Varan chakule/Varan phal*	Wheat flour dumplings in a lentil soup
Tuesday		*Lapshi*	Sweet broken wheat porridge
Wednesday		*Khichdi*	A mix of rice and split lentils/pulses cooked with some vegetables
Thursday		*Palak Parathe/ Dhapate*	Shallow fried flat, thick unleavened bread made of wheatflour and spinach leaves (*Parathe*) or a mix of whole wheat flour, sorghum flour and gramflour with spinach leaves (*Dhapate*)
Friday		*Khichdi*	A mix of rice and split lentils/pulses cooked with some vegetables
Saturday		*Varan Bhat*	Steamed rice and split lentil/pulse soup
	Rajegaon Beat		
Monday	Roasted peanut & jaggery *ladoo*	*Khichdi*	Same as above
Tuesday	Roasted amaranth & jaggery/sugar *ladoo*	*Sheera*	A sweet preparation of semolina
Wednesday	Roasted peanut & jaggery *ladoo*	*Khichdi*	Same as above
Thursday	Roasted amaranth & jaggery/sugar *ladoo*	*Dhapate*	Same as above

| Friday | Roasted peanut & jaggery *ladoo* | *Khichdi* | Same as above |
| **Saturday** | Roasted amaranth & jaggery/sugar *ladoo* | *Varan Bhat* | Same as above |

In the Sundar block ICDS project, THR packets were produced by a self-help group based in Sundar town whereas the freshly cooked hot food at the anganwadi centres was either produced by a village based self-help group (SHG) or by the anganwadi worker. For this chapter, I focus on the food served in the anganwadis prepared by the anganwadi worker or the self-help group. The programme policy was to give preference to self-help groups in anganwadi food production, anganwadi workers were only contracted where no SHGs were willing to undertake the work. In Laldera beat only 2 of 33 anganwadi centres were served by self-help groups whereas for Rajegaon, the number was 14 of 30. At the end of every month, the contracted anganwadi worker or the self-help group would raise a bill for the supply of cooked food to the anganwadi. These bills were submitted to the Supervisor who would check each bill and countersign and then collate the details for her entire beat and submit to the Project Office for payment. The clerk at the Project Office would collate all the bills for the cooked meals across the 8 beats, obtain the CDPO's signature for these as well as the THR bills and based on the budget available in the Project Office forward to the *Zilla Kaksha* for approval. Once the Deputy CEO at the *Zilla Kaksha* had approved the bills, the CDPO would instruct the bank to release the billed and approved amounts into the bank accounts of self-help groups and anganwadi workers, as specified.

My first exposure to the supplementary nutrition programme payment process was while I was observing the work of the Supervisor of Laldera beat, Lata Shinde. I had started visiting anganwadis with Shinde Madam from November 2014 and after four days attended an 'MPR' beat meeting with her, held at the Laldera Primary Heath Centre. Every month a Supervisor was required to have two meetings with her beat, one in the middle of the month referred to as the '*madhli* meeting' while the second was usually held towards the end of the month and called the 'MPR meeting' as during this meeting MPRs or Monthly Progress Reports and supplementary nutrition bills were collected from anganwadi workers (anganwadi workers also brought bills submitted by self-help groups, wherever applicable). During the meeting, before collecting the supplementary nutrition bills, Shinde Madam reminded the anganwadi workers to ensure that they had accounted for the Sundays and holidays of that month in their bills

and not charged for non-working days. The next day, I found Shinde Madam at home working on the bills submitted and at my request was allowed to participate in the process. I found that each bill consisted of a set of 5 papers. These were (1) a credit bill which listed by date the quantity and type of snack and meal served throughout the month along with the number of 3-6 year olds who partook of the food each day, signed by the anganwadi worker and stamped and signed by the self-help group, if applicable; (2) a certificate signed by the anganwadi worker certifying that the number of children mentioned in the bill was accurate and corresponded to the data in her attendance register and that the food items mentioned in the bill were accurate and were served to the children in the anganwadi; (3) a questionnaire on the type, quantity and quality of food served in the anganwadi during the month, answered and signed by 4-5 members of the Mother's Committee; (4) a summary sheet totalling the number of pre-schoolers fed at the anganwadi across the month, the number of days in the month when supplementary nutrition was distributed, the budgetary allocation per child and the total amount spent on pre-school supplementary nutrition signed by the anganwadi worker and countersigned by the Supervisor, and; (5) three copies of a covering form (yellow coloured for the Project Office, pink coloured for the anganwadi worker and white for the self-help group, if applicable) addressed to the CDPO, signed by the anganwadi worker and countersigned by the Supervisor submitting that X number of beneficiaries were served hygienic and good supplementary nutrition at the anganwadi amounting to a total of Y rupees. Shinde Madam had instructed her beat members to fill in all the details and sign off at the relevant places but leave the totals to her as she was concerned that they would make mistakes. She had been busy totalling the data when I arrived and happily passed on the task to me. She instructed me to again check the credit bill and ensure that all the Sundays and holidays were accounted for in each. I noticed that a few anganwadi workers had failed to account for some of these and had overwritten in their bills when reminded in the MPR meeting. While adding the numbers, I noticed that in several bills the number of children reported as having attended pre-school and received supplementary nutrition throughout the month was the same, while in others the number varied. However the variation was not random but had a distinct pattern - usually involving the same number reported as attending for continuous days and a gradual increase in the number across the month. Moreover the range of the variation was small, usually 3 to 4 points with one or two cases going upto 5 and 7 points. When I asked Shinde Madam about these patterns, she weakly attempted to defend the numbers and then dismissed them as not her responsibility.

As I accompanied Shinde Madam on her supervisory visits around the beat, the following month, I realised that although the number of children reported as attending preschool and receiving supplementary nutrition in the bills for November had ranged from a high of 53 to a low of 28 across anganwadis, the actual attendance during our visits was much less with most anganwadis attended by upto 10 pre-schoolers and a few by 15-18 pre-schoolers only. For the month of December as well, I helped Shinde Madam to calculate the totals for the bills and on cross checking children's attendance in my notes and photographs with the figures reported in the bills found that anganwadi workers had grossly inflated the number of children reported as attending pre-school and receiving supplementary nutrition across the beat. This discrepancy was found in 18 of the 33 anganwadi centres of the beat which were visited in December and for which I examined the supplementary nutrition bills for the same month, as summarised in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Observed and Reported Pre-school Attendance in Laldera Beat

S. No.	Date of Visit	Village	Anganwadi Number	Observed attendance of children	Reported attendance of children In SNP bill
1	December 5, 2014	Manewadi	1	7	38
			2	13	40
2	December 9, 2014	Laldera	1	Shut	49
			2	11	38
			3	5	38
			5	0	45
3	December 11, 2014	Nanegaon	1	4	39
			2	9	40
4	December 13, 2014	Badera	1	14	39
5	December 17, 2014	Rajgaon	1	4	32
			2	8	39
6	December 18, 2014	Danwadi	1	7	40
			3	Shut	34
			5	12	33
			6	13	30
			7	3	26

7	December 20, 2014	Panpur	1	18	55
			2	0	51

The routine inflation of pre-school attendance by anganwadi workers was further confirmed by my close observation of the daily working of two anganwadis in Shanwadi village run by Mangala Narke and Ranjana Wakde respectively. Narke and Wakde madam's anganwadis were well attended by pre-schoolers but not as much as was marked in the attendance register and subsequently reported in the SNP bill. Table 2 presents a comparison between observed and reported pre-school attendance for 16 days in January and February 2015. Mangala Narke's anganwadi reported an attendance of 37-39 students throughout January 2015 in the anganwadi attendance register whereas for February the attendance was a consistent 40 students. Similarly attendance in Rajana Wakde's anganwadi, as reported in the attendance register was a consistent 31 for the month of January and 30 for the month of February. While observed attendance in both anganwadis ranged from lows of 12 and 7 to highs of 27 and 16 respectively but rarely more.

Table 4: Observed and Reported Pre-school Attendance in Shanwadi village

S. No.	Date	Anganwadi worker	Observed Pre-school attendance	Reported Pre-school attendance in Register
1	January 16, 2015	Mangala Narke	16	37
2	January 17, 2015	Mangala Narke	0^{12}	0
		Ranjana Wakde		31
3	January 18, 2015	Sunday		
4	January 19, 2015	Mangala Narke+ Ranjana Wakde[13]	25	37 + 31
5	January 20, 2015	Mangala Narke+ Ranjana Wakde[14]	25-27[15]	37 + 31
6	January 28, 2015	Mangala Narke	20	37
7	January 29, 2015	Mangala Narke	21	37

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[12] Because of a religious programme in the village

[13] Both anganwadis conducted together as Ranjana was expecting guests that day

[14] Both anganwadis conducted together as Mangala was not feeling well

[15] A couple of children kept walking in and out.

8	January 31, 2015	Mangala Narke	15	37
9	February 1, 2015	Sunday		
10	February 2, 2015	Mangala Narke	20	40
11	February 3, 2015	Mangala Narke + Ranjana Wakde[16]	12 + 11	40+30
12	February 4, 2015	Mangala Narke	15	40
		Ranjana Wakde	12	30
13	February 5, 2015	Beat Meeting		
14	February 6, 2015	Mangala Narke	19	40
		Ranjana Wakde	16	30
15	February 7, 2015	Ranjana Wakde	7	30
16	February 8, 2015	Sunday		
17	February 9, 2015	Mangala Narke	27	40
18	February 10, 2015	Ranjana Wakde	10	30
19	February 11, 2015	Anganwadi Worker Strike		
20	February 12, 2015	Mangala Narke	12	40
		Ranjana Wakde	13	30

Besides inflating attendance numbers and thereby supplementary nutrition bills, many anganwadi workers in Laldera beat did not serve food as per the pre-determined weekly menu. In 24 of the 26 anganwadis that I visited in Laldera beat, no snack was served to the children in the morning. Some children brought tiffins from home to eat in the anganwadi in the morning while those who didn't went without. Further, as detailed in Table 5, 15 of the 26 visited anganwadis did not serve the hot cooked meal as per the menu of the beat. Almost all the anganwadis barring two were observed to have prepared *khichdi,* a mix of rice and split lentils/pulses cooked with some vegetables*.* As *khichdi* was on the menu twice a week, anganwadis appeared to be complying with the menu on those days and not on the rest.

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[16] Joint session conducted because of Immunisation Day in the village and Mangala's anganwadi helper being on leave.

Table 5: Planned and Observed Pre-school Menus in Laldera Beat

S. No	Day of Visit	Village	Anganwadi No.	SNP as per menu		Actual SNP served	
				Snack	Meal	Snack	Meal
1	Friday	Shanwadi	1	*Laddoo*	*Khichdi*	No	*Khichdi*
			2	*Laddoo*	*Khichdi*	No	*Khichdi*
2	Friday	Tupkheda	1	*Laddoo*	*Khichdi*	No	*Khichdi*
3	Friday	Manewadi	1	*Laddoo*	*Khichdi*	No	*Khichdi*
			2	*Laddoo*	*Khichdi*	No	*Khichdi*
		Rangwadi	1	*Laddoo*	*Khichdi*	No	*Khichdi*
4	Tuesday	Kadera	1	*Laddoo*	*Lapshi*	No	*Khichdi*
		Laldera	1	*Laddoo*	*Lapshi*	No	*Khichdi*
			2	*Laddoo*	*Lapshi*	No	*Khichdi*
			3	*Laddoo*	*Lapshi*	No	*Khichdi*
			5	*Laddoo*	*Lapshi*	No	*Khichdi*
5	Thursday	Phangaon	1	*Laddoo*	*Dhapate*	Yes	*Dhapate*
			2	*Laddoo*	*Dhapate*	No	*Khichdi*
		Dokheda	1	*Laddoo*	*Dhapate*	No	*Khichdi*
			2	*Laddoo*	*Dhapate*	No	*Khichdi*
6	Saturday	Badera	1	*Laddoo*	*Varan Bhat*	No	*Varan Bhat*
7	Wednesday	Rajgaon	1	*Laddoo*	*Khichdi*	No	*Khichdi*
			2	*Laddoo*	*Khichdi*	No	*Khichdi*
			3	*Laddoo*	*Khichdi*	No	*Khichdi*
8	Thursday	Danwadi	1	*Laddoo*	*Dhapate*	No	*Khichdi*
			3	*Laddoo*	*Dhapate*	No	*Khichdi*
			5	*Laddoo*	*Dhapate*	No	*Khichdi*
			6	*Laddoo*	*Dhapate*	No	*Khichdi*
			7	*Laddoo*	*Dhapate*	No	*Khichdi*
9	Saturday	Panpur	1	*Laddoo*	*Varan Bhat*	Yes	*Khichdi*
			2	*Laddoo*	*Varan Bhat*	No	*Khichdi*

In Shanwadi, Ranjana Wakde only served *Khichdi* at her anganwadi for the entire 6 weeks that I was there. No snacks were provided. Mangala Narke, on the other hand, did provide 3 of the 4 items on the weekly menu as well as a savoury snack of salted puffed rice. In Mangaon, Shabana Syed also attempted to serve as per the menu including snacks whereas Meera Kale served only boiled rice with some seasoning everyday. Anganwadi workers claimed that they served *khichdi* as the children liked it and it was filling. Others argued that as the post of anganwadi helper was vacant in their anganwadi and they had to bring the cooked food with them by 9:00 am, *khichdi* was all that was possible. Serving *khichdi* was also the most economical option for anganwadi workers. They procured rice cheaply from the public distribution system (even the above poverty line rate was only Rs.8-10 per kilo) and needed to cook only 1-1.5 kilos per day (as rice swells up nearly 3 times) with some 250 gms of split pulses (although the usual rice pulses ratio is 2:1)*,* oil and condiments to feed 30-40 pre-schoolers. The ICDS programme paid for supplementary nutrition in the anganwadi at the rate of Rs.4.92 per child for an average 25 days per month. By billing for 35-50 children per day for an average of 20-25 days in the month and economising on the ingredients, anganwadi workers earned an informal income equivalent to or a little less than their monthly honorarium, which ranged from Rs.3988 to 4113.

The potential for such profit implied that most anganwadi workers were quite keen to keep the contract for the provision of daily supplementary nutrition to the anganwadi with themselves rather than a self-help group. However, the programme policy was to give preference to self-help groups, if any were available and willing. If such a self-help group, approved by the village *gram panchayat* came forward, the contract shifted from the anganwadi worker to the self-help group. This is what happened in Rangwadi. In the beginning of December, the CDPO Deepa Pardeshi instructed Shinde Madam to visit Rangwadi as a self-help group from the village had approached the office for the supplementary nutrition contract for the village anganwadi. She said that she had accepted the contract, which also had the resolution of the *gram panchayat,* selecting the self-help group for this purpose, attached. Moreover, she had also received a call from the MLA's Secretary asking her to ensure that the transition took place. Shinde Madam was expected to visit Rangwadi to smoothen this transition. There was no direct road to Rangwadi, it could only be approached through Manewadi. A senior anganwadi worker from Manewadi Gayabai Wagh accompanied us to Rangwadi and both Wagh Madam and Shinde Madam counselled the distressed anganwadi worker in Rangwadi on how to manage the situation. They advised her to ask the SHG members to provide supplementary nutrition as per the menu and give the actual attendance of

children for preparing the bill. This, they assured her, would render the contract uneconomical for the SHG and they would drop out. Wagh madam advised her to introduce these changes gradually using expected visits by block and district officials as an excuse to allay suspicion. Shinde madam suggested that the anganwadi worker request one of the SHG members to come and serve the food to the children in the anganwadi and sign off against the number of children present. Further, Wagh madam recommended that the anganwadi worker not appear aggrieved by the loss of the contract but rather thank the self-help group for taking away an onerous, unprofitable burden. Wagh madam assured me that with these strategies, the contract would be restored to the anganwadi worker, over the next few months, within the period of my fieldwork. However events did not quite unfold as planned. Towards the end of the month when the anganwadi worker gave low attendance figures to the SHG for preparing the bill, the members objected and demanded that she show them the attendance register. She refused. This led to a fight at the anganwadi. The anganwadi worker called Shinde madam in tears saying that she was only following her advice. Shinde madam denied ever having given any advice. Pardeshi madam – the CDPO – had to visit the village to resolve the fight and soothe the grievances of the SHG members and the Sarpanch while the aganwadi worker was given a warning letter for poor attendance (three such letters can lead to dismissal).

Before 2005, cooking and providing supplementary foods in the anganwadi was part of the job description of the anganwadi worker and helper. For this food grains were provided by the ICDS. However in 2005, the responsibility for providing supplementary food was contracted out to local self-help groups and a routine task performed by programme functionaries acquired a profit-seeking character as self-help groups needed to earn an income from the contract. Subsequently in 2009, when Take Home Rations were introduced for pregnant and nursing mothers and babies in the 0-3 year age group, most SHGs dropped out of the contract as only supplying supplementary nutrition for pre-schoolers proved unviable. The responsibility for provision of supplementary nutrition reverted to anganwadi workers but now in the form of a contract. Besides being the field level functionaries of the ICDS, anganwadi workers also became private contractors supplying services to the ICDS.

The SNP contract at the anganwadi level was signed for a period of a year and renewed annually. To be eligible for the contract, anganwadi workers had to register themselves as a 'food establishment' under the Food and Safety Standards Act, 2006 for a small fee, a registration that also needed to be renewed annually. Having signed

the contract, anganwadi workers with helpers usually outsourced the actual cooking to them for a nominal fee while they sourced the raw materials and fuel, usually through the local fair price or ration shop using social and kinship networks. Mangala Narke for many years sourced pulses from a relative in another block who had the contract for preparing the mid-day meal at the school in her village and thereby access to school food supplies. However, despite these tactics the supplementary nutrition rates offered by the programme were not enough to allow anganwadi workers to earn an income from the contract based on actual attendance data and strict adherence to the daily menu. Resultantly anganwadi workers resorted to inflation of attendance figures and compromising the menu. Given that the strategy of 'outsourcing' or 'contracting out' was by design expected to generate an income for the contractees, anganwadi workers felt quite justified in their actions blaming instead the low SNP rates determined by the programme and the rising food prices in the market. The anganwadi worker practice of inflating attendance in SNP bills was known throughout the programme. Supervisors also justified it based on the meagre honorarium of anganwadi workers and the high cost of living. However the ICDS project office also set limits, anganwadi workers were regularly warned to ensure that discrepancies between observed and reported attendance and between the attendance figures in the bills and the attendance register were not so high as to attract comment and attention from the District Office or the *Zilla Kaksha*.

These practices represent 'a set of unofficial or clandestine rules' that according to Anders (2009) emerge from the bureaucratic social field to mediate between clashing expectations and obligations. For Anders (2009) and de Sardan (1999) writing in the context of Africa the contradiction was between official rules and kinship obligations. For ICDS anganwadi workers, however, the clash was largely between the form and content of the bureaucratic tool used to structure their livelihood, which then led to the development of informal rules to redress the resultant contradiction. Jauregui (2014) refers to such improvisation as provisional agency or 'jugaad', which she finds, when used by the less privileged in North India as a means for their survival has wide legitimacy. Anand (2011), Mathur (2016) and Sharma and Gupta, (2006) writing in the context of India also find that the un-implementability of bureaucratic rules often gives rise to practices which may technically be considered 'corrupt' but are accepted socially.

However, Anganwadi workers' legitimate and yet informal appropriation of SNP monies also made them vulnerable to the unofficial demands of their Supervisors and the

CDPO. The SNP bills raised by anganwadi workers and self-help groups were corrected and approved by Supervisors and subsequently the CDPO. They each charged 5 percent of the SNP bill to sign off on the inflated numbers and falsified menu. Most of the anganwadi workers resented having to pay these percentages or '*takkewari*' as they were called and considered Supervisor and CDPO claims to their meagre incomes illegitimate, especially given the significant disparity between Supervisor and CDPO salaries and their honoraria[17]. Aggrieved by the Supervisor's constant demands for money, an anganwadi worker in Lalgaon beat recorded her on her phone as she asked for her percentage. She then came to the Project Office with the recording to complain to the CDPO and highlight their vulnerability. The CDPO warned the concerned Supervisor, Jaya Rajput, to manage her beat better and not allow complaints to escalate to the office. For the Supervisors and CDPO the 'takkewari' represented 'commissions' as defined by Blundo and de Sardan (2006) – a share in the illicit gain for the service rendered and compensation for the risk involved. With all three administrative levels of the ICDS project involved, there was a hierarchy of informal incomes and payments related to supplementary nutrition served in the anganwadi, much like the hierarchies of percentages elaborated by Wade (1982) in the context of canal irrigation in South India.

I observed both Supervisors Lata Shinde and Shailaja Joshi collecting these payments for themselves and on behalf of the CDPO during beat meetings, once they were confident that I would not report on them. Each Supervisor would sit on a chair at the head of the meeting while the anganwadi workers sat on a large *durrie* or floor mat, with a list of the amounts that each anganwadi worker needed to give and collect the money. The 10 percent that Shinde madam and Joshi madam collected allowed anganwadi workers to inflate preschool attendance in their attendance register and supplementary nutrition bills as well as serve children only *khichdi* made with small amounts of split pulses or lentil and almost no vegetables. Having received their percentage, these Supervisors not only signed off on falsified attendance registers and supplementary nutrition bills but to ensure consistency also inflated children's attendance in their visit reports, which they wrote in the anganwadi visit book. In Pitambari beat, when the Supervisor wrote about the violation of the weekly menu in the visit book and also charged anganwadi workers an additional Rs.100.0 fine, they protested strongly. Anganwadi workers argued that they were paying *takkewari* in lieu of the violation of rules and hence should neither have to pay fines nor be subject to

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[17] Such resentment for the 'bribe taker' on moral grounds has been noted by Parry (2000) and Ruud (2000) as well.

any official supervisory action. The CDPO Deepa Pardeshi supported the Pitambari Supervisor's fine, chastising an anganwadi worker who had complained by pointing out that the annual SNP contract that she had signed included a clause for deducting Rs.50.0 per day for irregular supply and Rs.100.0 per day for poor quality of food. However, as per the actual rules of the contract, such monies were to be deducted from the monthly bill raised by the anganwadi worker and not collected and pocketed by the Supervisor.

In understanding this hierarchical regime of informal incomes and payments, it is also important to note that not all Supervisors collected 10 percent *takkewari* and not all supervisors collected *takkewari.* The Supervisors of Lalgaon and Pitambari beats, were known to collect *takkewari* of 14-15 percent of which they passed only 5 percent to the CDPO pocketing the rest for themselves. Whereas one of the 8 Supervisors in the project, Hira Mahadeo was not on the take. For her, it was a matter of principle. She felt she could not take anganwadi workers' hard earned money given the wage difference between her salary and their honorarium. As a result, she was often isolated in the project and ridiculed by her colleagues. When the current CDPO, Deepa Pardeshi, took charge of this project in 2014, Mahadeo madam tried to convince her to discontinue the practice of takkewari by not taking the CDPO's share and threatening official action against Supervisors who did. However, Pardeshi Madam was not convinced that it could be done. She argued that Supervisors in the project had become used to extra money and would not give it up. Since Mahadeo madam refused to take her share, it was agreed that despite her reservations Mahadeo madam would collect the CDPO's 5 percent from the anganwadi workers in her beat and pass it on to Pardeshi madam, for at least a few months until Pardeshi madam became more familiar with the beat. However, even a year after her joining, the transition had not occurred and more recently Pardeshi madam had insisted that she receive the entire 10 percent from the beat. She contended that since anganwadi workers across the entire project were paying 10 percent, Mahadeo madam's beat need not be an exception. Madadeo madam's beat had reluctantly started paying 10 percent.

Thus the practice of *takkewari* was largely controlled by the Supervisors and the CDPO. Not all projects had *takkewari* - the project to which Shinde Madam was subsequently transferred to, did not have the practice and neither did the two projects where Hira Mahadeo had initially served. Unlike the system of 'vertical or capillary corruption' (Appadurai, 2016) in which small but numerous informal payments at lower levels of the bureaucracy aggregate to enrich higher level bureaucrats and politicians

(Gupta, 2017), the ICDS Project Office CDPO was not required to pay a regular percentage of the collected *takkewari* to anyone else in the district or the block. As Deepa Pardeshi explained one afternoon, her primary problem was controlling the excesses of some of the Supervisors and ensuring that a common percentage was applied across the project. She speculated that she might even shut down the practice of *takkewari* entirely as she had recently been allocated the CDPO charge of another project and was increasingly coming to the attention of local panchayat samiti leaders such as the Chairperson who had begun to hint at a regular share. However, such a move was highly unlikely. The Sundar block ICDS project office did not, for most of the period of my fieldwork, have an accountant or clerk, the accountant had retired and the clerk was on deputation to the Zilla Parishad. The retired accountant worked in the office in a voluntary capacity to prepare and submit bills and keep track of the budget. He was remunerated through the *takkewari.* Without his 'voluntary' work the Project Office would not have been able to operate.

In addition to percentages for actual rule violations, money also needed to be given to ensure that officials overlook potential rule violations. This was particularly the case for treasury clerks, auditors and visits by state level officials. The bills raised by the anganwadi workers and self-help groups for food supply to anganwadi centres were sent to the Treasury for payment along with a commission to overlook any mistakes in the bill and make quick payments. According to Pardeshi madam, the CDPO, *takkewari* was collected to pay the Treasury but Mahadeo madam refuted this explanation arguing that the money needed to pay the Treasury was a small amount and could not entirely account for *takkewari.* Similarly, auditors needed to be paid Rs.5000.0 in advance to ensure that they did not identify any significant mistake and rule deviations. However, if the bills had too many mistakes, auditors demanded double the amount. All Supervisors contributed towards the payment for auditors with some CDPOs demanding contributions even from Supervisors who had been transferred from the project, if the years being audited related to them. The ICDS project was also expected to contribute to the *pakit* (envelope) given to state officials visiting the block to ensure that they did not submit an adverse report. In a Panchayat Samiti general body meeting that I attended block officials planned for the visit of high ranking state officials by discussing the contribution that each department would make to the Rs.20,000.0 *pakit* (envelope) that needed to be given. ICDS was expected to contribute Rs.2000.0 with each Supervisor giving Rs.100.0.

In sum, informal incomes from the anganwadi supplementary nutrition programme supported a system of commissions or *takkewari* across the ICDS project office as well as a sub-system of payments to accountants, treasury clerks, auditors and visiting state officials. The *takkewari* system was not fuelled by the vertical demands of senior politicians and bureaucrats but rather represented a local system that enabled supplementary nutrition services to be delivered, albeit of lower quality and all concerned to gain informal incomes. In addition, the variability of Supervisory commission practices as well as the CDPO's felt need to impose control on these, revealed the *takkewari* system to be contingent, dynamic and ultimately performative.

Formal Monitoring through Informal Fines

Monitoring the everyday operations of anganwadi centres and the working of aganwadi workers of her beat is one of primary responsibilities of a Supervisor (Planning Commission, 2011). Accordingly, Supervisors are required to conduct surprise visits to each anganwadi centre at least once a month and observe its functioning including the status of infrastructure and equipment, cleanliness of anganwadi centre premises, attendance of pre-school children, quality and quantity of supplementary food served, quality of pre-school education as well as review all other services by checking the records. They are expected to sign each record book with the date of their visit as well as write a visit report with their observations in the anganwadi centre visit book. Supervisors are the main source of in-service training available to anganwadi workers and are expected to help anganwadi workers improve the quality of their work. They can also discipline anganwadi workers who don't improve their performance and are frequently absent. The two main disciplining mechanisms are docking of pay and warning letters. Supervisors who catch anganwadi workers being truant can dock their pay for the number of days they were absent as well as issue warning letters to those who perform their duties poorly or constantly neglect them. Three such warning letters make an anganwadi worker eligible for termination. These practices of surveillance and discipline in the ICDS have also been noted by Gupta (2001).

Despite the existence of these well-established monitoring practices some supervisors of the Sundar Block project office had informally set up a system of monitoring through fines – Lata Shinde of Laldera beat was one such supervisor, In Laldera beat, anganwadi workers who did not fill their Monthy Progress Report forms accurately and correctly or were regularly absent had to pay the Supervisor a fine of Rs.100-200.0 in addition to the *takkewari*. Most truant workers were usually from anganwadis in interior

villages, which were rarely visited by officials from the block and or the district. Whereas the poor performers were usually newly recruited anganwadi workers who had not yet received any formal training. They were required to be trained by the Supervisor or expected to take help from senior anganwadi workers. However rather than seeking training, several of the new workers in Laldera beat had an arrangement with a senior anganwadi worker in which they paid her to complete their registers and Monthly Progress Report forms. Since Shinde madam was aware of this arrangement, she charged these workers more. While Shinde madam charged fines for incomplete and poorly filled registers and MPR forms as well as absenteeism, the supervisor of Lalgaon beat was notorious for charging Rs.100.0 for every small carelessness and oversight, for instance if some part of the anganwadi was not clean or some cells in a register had been overlooked. These practices of individual Supervisors were not known to the CDPO and she only gradually discovered them as anganwadi workers complained.

Supervisors and the CDPO did however collaborate on extracting money from anganwadi workers by issuing notices for rule violations. From time to time, Supervisors would organise surprise visits of the CDPO to anganwadi workers who they considered uncooperative either because they did not do their work – were absent without notice, had poor attendance, had been complained against by community members or because they did not easily pay the *takkewari.* Usually it was a combination of these factors. In these visits, the CDPO and Supervisor would state the obvious faults such as poor attendance and scold the anganwadi worker if she was present or call her to the anganwadi, if absent, to do so. In the next few days, the anganwadi worker would be given a warning letter by the Supervisor and called to the Project Office with her written reply. At the office, the CDPO would again scold and threaten the anganwadi worker with termination while the anganwadi worker would apologise both in writing and in person and promise to do better. I was witness to several such incidents while observing the work of the CDPO, Deepa Pardeshi. A copy of the notice given to the anganwadi worker is supposed to be added to her file such that three such letters make the anganwadi worker eligible for termination. However, as the newly assigned Clerk in the project office pointed out, there was no record of the letters issued by the office to anganwadi workers. Letters of notice were rarely added to anganwadi worker files and termination of anganwadi workers was extremely rare. Most anganwadi workers paid the Supervisor and CDPO to let the matter drop while politically connected workers called in favours. There was not a single termination

during the nine months of my fieldwork and none had ever taken place in the two beats that I studied.

Political mediation

Anganwadi workers typically countered such bureaucratic excesses through political mediation. Anganwadi workers of Pitambari beat complained about the excessive demands of their Supervisor Jaya Rajput to the MLA through a letter. The letter was received by the MLA's Personal Assistant who informed the Supervisor Shailaja Joshi's son, also a member of the Shiv Sena, about it. Shailaja Joshi, concerned about the repercussions of the complaint on the Sundar Block Project, then warned Jaya Rajput. As Jaya Rajput's son was also associated the Shiv Sena, she approached the Personal Assistant, paid a hefty amount and reminded the MLA about the laxity of anganwadi workers. The MLA then chose to ignore the complaint. Although this particular threat made through the political connections of anganwadi workers was neutralised through the political connections of Supervisors the *takkewari* system did make state functionaries vulnerable to the opportunistic demands of local politicians. A few years back, under another CDPO, the then MLA demanded Rs.100,000.0 from the entire project and each Supervisor had to contribute Rs.10,000.0 to the total amount. In July 2015, the MLA's Personal Assistant called Pardeshi madam and asked for a contribution of Rs.15,000.0 from both the ICDS projects she had charge of, for the birthday celebrations of the MLA. Pardeshi madam told all the Supervisors that each would have to pay Rs.1000.0. However, Jaya Rajput and another Supervisor argued that as they had not received their salaries for the past three months, they should not have to pay so much and instead could pay only Rs.500.0. Hira Mahadeo refused to contribute entirely claiming that as she did not participate in *takkewari,* she had no need to pay this amount. Pardeshi madam tried to convince the Supervisors and when they did not agree refused to negotiate with the MLA's office on their behalf. Jaya Rajput then called the MLA's office and presented their case. While the MLA's Personal Assistant did not argue with Rajput madam, he subsequently called Pardeshi madam and upbraided her for letting her junior respond to his call, questioning her management ability. Pardeshi madam was very angry with Jaya Rajput for humiliating her and planned to reassert her authority by giving her a memo regarding the poor quality of her work.

ICDS programme practices thus appear to emerge relationally and contingently through a continuous negotiation of power and authority between the different

administrative levels of the Project Office. The *takkewari* system and its sub-systems ensured the continued functioning of the anganwadi supplementary nutrition programme although it did give rise to offshoots such as the fine based monitoring system.

The informal incomes gained by Supervisors through *takkewari* constituted about 15 percent of their monthly salary but enabled them to invest for the economic improvement and social mobility of their families. Many of the Supervisors in the project had bought and/or built homes for their families, especially the newly appointed Supervisors who had taken bank loans and bought homes near Sundar block town. They had also used these funds to secure advantageous alliances for their children and invested in businesses and jobs for them. Besides investments for family advancement, Supervisors used informal incomes to recover the *kharch* or expenditure incurred to acquire their current positions as well as ensure favourable posts during transfers, as discussed in the next section.

Promotions, transfers and postings

Anganwadi helpers, workers and Supervisors in the ICDS programme reported incurring expenditure or *kharch* for ensuring their promotions as well as transfers and postings of choice.

Promotions: Anganwadi helpers and workers in Sundar block had to pay block and district level officials to ensure their promotion to the next level that is from anganwadi helper to anganwadi worker and anganwadi worker to Supervisor.

Anganwadi helpers who meet the educational requirement for the anganwadi worker position, whether it is the minimum of 10th standard currently or that of 7th standard previously, have completed a certain number of years of experience (5 years previously and 2 years as per the Government Resolution dated August 13th, 2014) and fulfil the residential requirement, are eligible to be promoted to the anganwadi worker position as soon as a vacancy becomes available in the village. Such a promotion can be effected directly by the CDPO based on the documents submitted and does not require an interview.

In June, 2015 while I was observing the work of the CDPO, Deepa Pardeshi we visited a large village in the block called Pitambari. One of the Supervisors, who had worked

for nearly two decades in Pitambari as an anganwadi worker, had recently retired and her former colleagues had organised a felicitation ceremony for her in an anganwadi. The entire beat had come together for the ceremony, after which lunch had been organised for the guests at an anganwadi worker's house in the village. I was seated next to Pardeshi madam during the meal and while serving her, our host told her that an anganwadi helper in the village was keen for a promotion and was willing to pay Rs.15,000.0 for it. The CDPO assured the anganwadi workers of the village that if the helper met the educational requirement for the position, it would be done. In a similar vein, the Supervisor of another beat told me that the CDPO had taken money from one of her anganwadi helpers to promote her as an anganwadi worker. Another Supervisor shared that when she herself was promoted from anganwadi helper to anganwadi worker in another block, her then CDPO had demanded money for her promotion.

Promotions from the anganwadi worker position to the Supervisor's post are determined at the district level. Thirty three percent of Supervisory positions are to be filled through promotion. Anganwadi workers who have served for 10 years (7 years previously) are eligible for such promotion, however eligible candidates are expected to clear a written examination and then appear for an interview conducted at the district level. All the anganwadi workers and Supervisors I met shared that this promotion was not possible without a hefty payment as the Supervisor is not an honorary worker but a government employee.

For two of the three senior anganwadi workers I observed closely in Shanwadi and Mangaon villages, Mangala Narke and Shabana Syed, lack of money for the payment was cited as the main reason why they did not apply for the position. For Narke madam, this was a particularly sore point because she was known as the best anganwadi worker in her beat, had won several awards instituted by the programme to reward and recognise good anganwadi workers and was a leader in the anganwadi worker union. This was the only honour that had remained out of her reach because she did not have the funds for it. She introduced me to a contemporary of hers, Leela Kulkarni, who had succeeded in becoming a Supervisor, nearly a decade ago in 1997 when the promotion process was conducted by the *Nivad Mandal* or the Regional Selection Board. She shared that she had paid a sum of Rs.40,000.0 for the promotion. However this amount was qualified by Sulabha Wade, the Supervisor of Mandi beat who was promoted in the same year and through the same process. She had paid an amount of Rs.70,000.0 and shared that most others had incurred costs upwards of Rs.60,000.0 that year, however Kulkarni was able to negotiate a lower rate because a

close relative was a journalist and he was able to exert his influence or *washila* on the process. Wade madam had applied once before in 1993 as well but was not successful. She had paid a sum of Rs.30,000.0 to a broker as well as approached the Chief Minister's office through his Personal Assistant who was a friend of her brother-in-law based in Mumbai. Her failure convinced her to eschew political brokers and instead approach agents connected to the officials in the *Nivad Mandal.* After the results of a competitive recruitment exam were put up in the *Nivad Mandal* office, agents would often approach candidates who had cleared with offers to fix the interview in exchange for money. However, most candidates would have already entered into an arrangement with an agent or a political broker to ensure their selection that is by fixing both the written exam and the interview. Wade madam met her agent through her tenant farmer whose brother-in-law had used him to ensure government jobs for his entire family – two daughters-in-law as government school teachers and a son as a *Gram sevak.* The agent, a peon in another office, asked her to contact him after clearing the exam and successfully fixed her interview.

Another anganwadi worker, Savita More of Mangaon village, also reached a similar conclusion about the effectiveness of bureaucratic agents vis-a-vis political brokers after four unsuccessful attempts to secure the promotion. More madam shared that when the *Nivad Mandal* was conducting the process, her family had paid an amount of Rs.35,000.0 to an official who had assured them that she would be promoted, even at this low price, but he did not deliver. Subsequently, the promotion process was transferred to the Zilla Parishad. Based on the belief that they needed political influence to ensure the promotion, her husband who was active in the Shiv Sena and claimed to be an assistant to the MLA, travelled twice to Mumbai during the next promotion process in 2001 and approached state level Ministers. Again, he was assured that the work would be done but this time too she was not promoted. In her third attempt in 2008, More madam passed the exam and appeared for the interview but her husband made no effort to pay officials or apply political leverage and she was not selected. During her fourth and most recent attempt in 2010, More madam was approached by a clerk from the *Zilla Kaksha* asking her if she wanted to get her work done through him but her husband had already paid a Zilla Parishad member Rs.200,000.0 for the promotion and she refused. This time she did not even clear the exam. Later, it was revealed that the Zilla Parishad member had not passed on the money to the district officials and had waited for her to clear the exam. He then returned the money in two instalments. More madam was shocked at failing an exam that she had found so easy to answer and believed that she had deliberately been

failed by the district officials because her money did not reach them. She filed an RTI application demanding to see her marked answersheet but did not receive it. District officials refused to release it instead sending her the marks received by candidates who passed. Despite all these failures More madam was keen on attempting the promotion again as the upper age limit for eligibility is 57 years and she still had a little more than a decade left. She believed that she had finally understood what was needed to achieve the promotion – the CEO's office was the key but it needed to be approached through the ICDS Department. Also it was important to have contacts who could recommend your case as had happened with Shailaja Joshi. Her husband had retired from the Health Department and was working on a contract basis at the Zilla Parishad when she was promoted. According to More madam, he was able to establish and maintain contact with key persons in the CEO's office and the ICDS Department and advocate his wife's case.

Shailaja Joshi, who had indeed joined the ICDS programme as an anganwadi worker along with Savita More and Mangala Narke and had succeeded in achieving a promotion to Supervisor in 2010, however had a different tale. She was also a much recognised and awarded anganwadi worker known throughout the block for her good work. She attempted the Supervisory promotion thrice – the first attempt was, like the others, when the process was managed by the *Nivad Mandal.* This attempt was not successful because her family did not pay any money although she had contacts in the *Nivad Mandal,* an old classmate. The second attempt was in 2001. They were assured by the then Deputy CEO ICDS that she would definitely be selected and that they should not approach or pay any politician to make it happen. However, her husband who worked in the Health Department consulted a senior official who offered to get the work done through the Deputy Chairperson of the Zilla Parishad in exchange of Rs.50,000.0 and the deal was struck. Joshi madam topped the exam scoring 85 out of 100 and was called for the interview. On the day of the interview, a clerk from the ICDS *Zilla Kaksha* contacted her husband and demanded Rs.100,000.0 to ensure the promotion. The Joshis did not have that kind of money available especially with the impending marriage of their only daughter. Mr. Joshi had to refuse and Joshi madam was not selected in the interview despite topping the exam and answering all the questions in the interview. She was very aggrieved and threatened to go on hunger strike in protest. The CEO called them into his office and showed them that the Deputy CEO of ICDS had scored her poorly in the interview and hence she could not be selected. After this failed attempt, Joshi madam did not apply in the next promotion process conducted in 2008. The then CDPO had informed them that there were only

two posts available for which the candidates had already been fixed – one post was to go to a relative of a high-ranking state level minister. The third attempt was in 2010. Joshi madam applied after being assured by the then Deputy CEO of ICDS that the injustice done to her in the previous process would be corrected. She claimed that in this third attempt, she was selected without having to pay any money to anyone because of the support of the Deputy CEO. However, most others in the project reject this claim as implausible. Joshi madam retired in 2015 after only 5 years as a Supervisor because of which she was not eligible for a pension. Her family regret not paying Rs.100,000.0 in 2001 as that would have ensured that she received a pension, however they also acknowledge that they would have had to pay a total Rs.150,000.0 as the political leader would have also taken credit for the promotion and demanded his money.

A Dalit Supervisor, Mala Wankhede from a neighbouring block, who was also promoted in 2010 as part of the same process and then posted to Sundar block, corroborated Joshi Madam's narrative of a payment less promotion. However she gave credit for this to the then CEO who also belonged to the Scheduled Castes rather than the Deputy CEO ICDS, a Maratha who, according to her, had been on the take. She shared that on the day of the interview the CEO came twice to where all the candidates were waiting and informed them that he had not asked for any money so they should not pay any broker any money. He reassured them that they had reached the interview based on their ability and should remain confident. However, some women had already paid money, including a girl from her village whose family had mortgaged land to raise Rs.400,000.0 for the payment. She was promoted with the political broker taking credit for the promotion. After clearing the interview, Wankhede Madam was approached by the Deputy CEO ICDS who wanted to know who had helped her secure the promotion. Wankhede madam had no name to give but the Deputy CEO remained unconvinced. She then went with her brother, a political activist with one of the factions of the Republican Party of India, to thank the CEO for promoting her without a payment, without which she would never have become a Supervisor as she had had no assets or money with which to pay. Her brother greeted the CEO with a 'Jai Bhim' to which he did not respond and only relaxed when Wankhede madam tearfully thanked him for the opportunity. As they left, her brother again raised the slogan of 'Jai Bhim' to which the CEO responded. According to Wankhede madam, this gave the impression to District Officials that she was close to the CEO and he had favoured her in the promotion when she had actually never met him either before the promotion or in the 5 years since.

Parry (2000) in his well-known paper on the 'crisis of corruption' in India explores the disjunction as well as the links between the talk about and practice of corruption. Highlighting the disjunction, he elaborates that although the dominant belief amongst recruited candidates as well as aspiring applicants for jobs in a public sector steel plant was that brokers and payments were essential for success, several successful candidates that he met revealed that they had surprisingly not been required to pay anything. For those who had paid and were successful, he points out that since such transactions were invariably mediated through brokers, they could not be entirely certain that the broker had actually passed on the money and that it was the money that had garnered for them their jobs. He therefore speculates that talk about all pervasive corruption in India tends to exceed its actual practice and that this optical illusion is perpetuated by agents and brokers who use the opacity of recruitment processes to claim a role and price for their supposed mediation. Parry concludes that, 'functionaries become corrupt because everybody assumes that they are; and everybody pays because everybody assumes that they must' (Parry, 2000, pp. 44–45).

In a similar vein, I also find that anganwadi worker promotion in the ICDS was dominated by the understanding that money and brokers were required with senior, qualified and eligible anganwadi workers abstaining from the process for lack of funds. However, in contrast to Parry's findings, I found that most candidates promoted from anganwadi workers to Supervisors claimed that they had indeed incurred *kharch* or costs, except for those promoted under the leadership of a particular Zilla Parishad CEO, who unanimously maintained that no payments were charged highlighting the instance as a specific exception. Thus, there was not as much of a disjunct between the talk and practice of corruption as postulated by Parry.

Further, in the anganwadi worker promotion process, as in the recruitment process described by Parry, candidates struggled to find effective and trustworthy brokers. After much trial and error, my informants learnt to distinguish between political brokers and bureaucratic agents, but in a departure from much existing literature on the mediated local state, which emphasises the role of political brokers, concluded that the latter were more effective. This is not to say that brokers in Sundar Block, did not have the opportunity to obfuscate and claim undeserved credit and monies. Parry in the context of Bhilai describes how a key modus operandi of brokers was to obtain confidential and as yet unannounced interview or selection lists and then call the already finalised candidates with offers of help in return for money. Such practices might have been in operation in Sundar Block as well, were certainly more possible for bureaucratic

agents, but the experience of Shailaja Joshi during her failed attempt at a promotion in 2001 suggests otherwise. Joshi madam had topped the merit list for the written exam and had correctly answered all the interview questions, yet her name was not on the final list of selected candidates. When she protested and threatened a hunger strike, the CEO showed her that it was the Deputy CEO of the ICDS who had scored her poorly on the interview. The only explanation was that she had refused to pay the amount demanded by the District ICDS Office or *Zilla Kaksha* clerk on the day of the interview. Thus, contrary to Parry, I find that there is not always a disjunct between the talk and practice of corruption and some brokers do actually represent decision makers such that failure to respond to their demands leads to a failed attempt at promotion.

Transfers and Postings: As ICDS Supervisors and CDPOs are district government employees, they can be posted to any block within the district and can subsequently be transferred between these posts. Wade (1985, 1982), writing in the context of the Irrigation Department, describes a market for public office in which transfer posts are ranked and priced based on their access to amenities and possibilities of raising illicit revenue. The transfer market has backward and forward linkages such that commissions from the informal incomes raised from the selling of posts travel upwards through the bureaucratic hierarchy to form part of the political masters' election finance while the funds spent to purchase posts are recovered through commissions on state contracts. I find that not much has changed since Wade's analysis. Such a transfer system does operate in the ICDS and while I have little information about the forward linkages, the commissions from the takkewari system certainly represent the backward linkages of the system. However, given that anganwadi supplementary nutrition contracts are inherently small value contracts which do not vary significantly across centres (each anganwadi centre is expected to serve a population size within a specific range), beats and projects are ranked largely in terms of amenities rather than potential for illicit earnings. In this section, I explore the negotiations involved in the purchase of posts in the ICDS and the cultural capital required to successfully traverse such negotiations.

Most Supervisors in the Sundar Block ICDS project, I found, selected their transfer posts for idiosyncratic rather than monetary reasons. Lata Shinde, the Supervisor of Laldera beat, had been posted in Sundar block for 11 years by 2015. She was due for a transfer but since she was from Sundar block and had a home and family there, was not keen to move. A Supervisor can request for a transfer after 5 years at a particular posting, known as *vinanti badali,* and after 10 years is eligible to be transferred by the

government, *prashaskiya badali*. Shinde madam had become eligible for a transfer in 2014 itself but had managed to delay it for a year by paying Rs.5000.0 to the clerk at the *Zilla Kaksha*. However, no further delays were possible. Shinde madam had to choose her next block and beat or she would be assigned the posting that no one else wanted. Shinde madam wanted a quiet block and beat, away from the spotlight and inspections and visits. One of her daughters was based in Aurangabad city and she owned a house there as well, but ICDS projects in Aurangabad block (there were two) tended to be very active with several visits by state and central government officials. Moreover, the cost of a beat in Aurangabad was very high at Rs.50,000.0. Shinde madam consulted other Supervisors in the programme and finally settled on a beat in another border block fairly distant from Aurangabad city which cost only Rs.20,000.0 . However on joining her new posting, she found that she had been misinformed and that her new beat was quite far from the railway station. This was quite inconvenient as she planned to commute weekly from Sundar block to her beat to visit anganwadi centres. Shinde madam had to again pay her new CDPO to change her beat to one closer to the railway station. According to Wade madam, Shinde madam had significantly overpaid for the transfer. Hers had been a *prashaskiya badali* for which the rate was only Rs.5000.0, it is the transfer by request or *vinanti badali,* which commands a higher price. For instance, she herself paid only Rs.5000.0 for her *prashasikiya badali* from Sundar block town (her first posting after promotion and where she settled down with her family) to another block while she had to pay Rs.25,000.0 for her transfer back to Sundar block, a *vinanti badali*. The clerk at the *Zilla Kaksha* had demanded Rs.50,000.0 for the transfer to Sundar Block but since there were no other competing applications, she was able to negotiate the price down.

Beat postings in transfer orders are assigned along with the block and project but can be changed by the CDPO after a year. A majority of the 8 supervisors in the Sundar block project reported paying the CDPO to change their beat to a more convenient one including Hira Mahadeo who wanted a beat that was easily accessible from Aurangabad city where she was based, Sulabha Wade who wanted a beat more accessible from her home in Sundar block town and Usha Thorat because of a conflict with an anganwadi worker. A CDPO in another project to which Sulabha Wade had been transferred had demanded money from her to allow her to retain the beat that she had been posted to, threatening to transfer her to another if she did not comply. Wade madam argued that technically she could not be transferred before a year while the CDPO refused to allow her to take charge without paying up. The impasse was only broken when Wade madam complained to the Chairperson of the Panchayat Samiti, a

political leader, who was known to dislike the particular CDPO. The Panchayat Samiti leader called the CDPO and Wade madam was able to start work.

According to the programme rules, Supervisors were expected to stay at their beat headquarter – a prominent revenue village in the beat after which the beat was named. Their travel allowance was calculated based on the distance travelled from the beat headquarter. However, none of the eight Supervisors in the project did so. All of them lived either in major towns of the block or in Aurangabad city. But they submitted to the *Zilla Kaksha* details of the house they rented in the beat headquarter including the name of the landlord as well as an undertaking that the information that they were providing was correct. Moreover, Supervisors were expected to submit a daily diary to the Project Office on the type of work (Monthly Progress Report, village and anganwadi centre visits, beat meetings and Project Office meetings) undertaken for each day of the month as well as their travel details. Their travel allowance (T.A.) bills were based on this daily dairy. Given that Supervisors did not actually stay at their headquarters, much of the daily diary and consequently the TA bill was fabricated and the CDPO charged Supervisors 20 percent of the bill amount for approving it. This enabled programme rules to be fulfilled while allowing Supervisors to stay in locations more suited to their family needs.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I trace the functioning of a regime of informal incomes and payments in the ICDS and the ways in which it structures crucial programme processes such as anganwadi centre based supplementary nutrition, administrative processes such as promotions, transfers and postings as well as the links between the two. I highlight that much of this informality is not driven by political demands for election finance but rather is rooted in the un-implementability of bureaucratic rules, which leads state functionaries to improvise to address the practical realities of programme implementation. Poorly paid anganwadi workers contracted to supply hot cooked meals and snacks to pre-schoolers at low rates inflated attendance data and compromised food variety and quality to earn incomes, paying Supervisors and CDPOs 5 percent each of the monthly food bill or *takkewari* to allow these manipulations. The *takkewari* system enabled supplementary nutrition services to be delivered while simultaneously allowing all personnel in the Sundar Block ICDS Project hierarchy to earn an informal income. Anganwadi workers, whose informal incomes formed the base of the *takkewari* pyramid regarded these monies are legitimate earnings of private contractors, whereas

Supervisors used the funds to recover the money that they spent to acquire their promotion as well as pay for desirable posts and beats through transfers. Additionally they used the money to invest in property, marriages, businesses and jobs for their children. The sub-system of payments for promotions, transfers and postings was thus linked to the takkewari sub-system. However, although the former may also have also been a part of a vertical system of politically driven corruption, the latter was not. Barring occasional payments to opportunistic politicians, there were no regular commissions transferred to elected political leaders. In this way the *takkewari* system was entirely local.

In this account of institutionalised sub-systems of informality potentially connected to larger political systems of election finance, what stands out are the many attempts by individual functionaries to influence the system in either direction – the Supervisors who want to charge more commission, the Supervisors who want to charge fines for other rule violations, the Supervisor who does not charge a commission, CDPOs of other blocks who don't charge commissions and the District CEO who did not accept money for Supervisory promotions. These instances highlight that although institutionalised, bureaucratic practices are performatively and relationally produced through continuous negotiation of power and authority across bureaucratic levels. Institutionalised practices refer to systematised and regulated modes of conduct that emerge from specific discursive fields, in this case the informal rules governing the *takkewari* system or promotions in the ICDS. These rules regulate how anganwadi workers fill attendance registers or prepare monthly bills or how Supervisors negotiate costs for desirable posts during transfers. However the performativity of these rules also allows the opportunity to modify and resist them. Bureaucratic social fields, in this way are both determining as well as generative of conduct and at the same time inflected by conduct/practice itself.

Chapter 5

Staging Standards: ISO Certification in the ICDS

The first few anganwadi centres that I visited in Aurangabad district, soon after starting fieldwork in October 2014 were ISO certified. These were anganwadi centres that had been refurbished and decorated by ICDS functionaries, using funds raised from the local community and had been certified for quality using the internationally acclaimed ISO 9001:2008 process. For district officials, ISO certification of anganwadi centres was a unique feature of their district by which state run child development centres had been independently verified as meeting international quality standards. Aurangabad district had pioneered the ISO certification initiative and it was believed to have changed the face of the programme. It was upheld as emblematic of the innovation and enterprise of district ICDS programme functionaries, had brought fame and accolades to them and had subsequently been replicated across the state.

One of the ISO certified anganwadi centres that I visited was located in a remote block. Because of the distances involved, I reached the block town only by mid-morning and by the time I found the anganwadi centre, it was 11 am. The anganwadi centre was located by the side of the main road and had a small garden enclosed by a compound wall and accessed by a small iron gate. The exterior and interior walls of the anganwadi were painted with attractive cartoons, the floor was covered by a vinyl sheet and the anganwadi centre furnished with a large, low, oval table and brightly coloured small chairs for the pre-schoolers. Play material including a plastic slide, rocking horse and portable basketball hoops were kept around the anganwadi, which appeared neat and clean. However there were no children present. When I asked the anganwadi worker about the children, she nervously told me that she had already distributed the supplementary nutrition and let them go. (Pre-school activities were usually expected to be conducted till 12 noon). Since there were no children to observe, I proceeded to talk to the anganwadi worker about her field area, her work and the ISO certification experience. As we talked, the anganwadi worker locked up the anganwadi centre and we walked back to her house, where over cups of tea she shared that local political leaders had supported her to refurbish the anganwadi centre. The Chairperson of the Panchayat Samiti had contributed the compound wall, a woman Zilla Parishad member had donated play material and the Sarpanch of the village had built the walkway in the

garden. However, bursting into tears, she also revealed that she had to spend nearly Rs. 45,000 from her own pocket. The anganwadi worker shared that incurring this expenditure had created a lot of pressure on her. She had become the butt of jokes amongst the other anganwadi workers in the village who taunted her by pointing out that despite spending so much of her own money on the anganwadi centre, she still had to do the same work and still earned the same money as them. She was ridiculed within her extended family, including by her husband, for spending so much money and gaining nothing in return. She said, 'I feel bad when I hear all this but console myself when visitors come to the anganwadi and praise me for the good work that I am doing.'

This chapter examines the ISO certification initiative of the Sundar Block ICDS as a project of local level state reform inspired by the 'new public goods' of 'fiscal austerity, marketization, consensus, transparency and decentralization' (Bear and Mathur, 2015). In the previous two chapters, I explored how the everyday practices of ICDS functionaries are constructed, negotiated and performed through interactions with local political relations and formal rules of the programme. In this chapter I consider the engagement of bureaucratic practices with reform initiatives.

Scholarship on standardisation and audit based reform highlights that these processes are not neutral legal-rational techniques of quality assurance, competition and regulation but rather reshape conditions of work and conditions of thought to produce new relations of governance and power (Shore and Wright, 2000). However, Higgins and Larner (2010) highlight that techniques do not automatically lead to rationalities, such translation is mediated through the politics and problematics of implementation. Building on this insight, in this chapter I study the problematics of ISO 9001:2008 quality management system implementation in the ICDS and its interaction with existing bureaucratic practices.

I find that the ISO 9001:2008 quality management system standards were altered to suit ICDS programme needs and the redesigned standards implemented through existing bureaucratic practices of staging, patronage and investment. For ISO certification, anganwadi workers were expected to proactively and innovatively raise community contributions and refurbish their anganwadi centres to look like private pre-schools. Instead, ICDS functionaries staged the audit, MIS records and financial receipts to reconcile resource constrained programme realities with programme rules and raised funds for ISO certification through their routine reliance on political patronage and personal investment. Mathur (2016) reveals that for most state

functionaries programmes can never actually be implemented as per the rules but it is their job to make it appear as if rules had been followed. Similarly, I find that in the context of ISO certification in the Sundar Block ICDS project, ICDS functionaries unable to implement the initiative through the expected model of entrepreneurial fundraising deployed routine practices to achieve ISO certification and make it appear as if subjectivities had been transformed and practices altered.

This chapter consists of four main sections. The first section describes and analyses the ISO certification initiative. It details the origins of the initiative, growth, components, incentives as well as reviews research on standards and standardisation processes. The second section presents the implementation of ISO certification in Sundar Block detailing and analysing the three main practices employed by anganwadi workers for implementation – staging, patronage and investment. The section on staging elaborates the three main aspects of the ISO certification process that were staged – the audit, MIS records and financial receipts. The section on investment is followed by a section on the anganwadi workers struggle for regularisation which justifies their strategy of investment in the ICDS. The third section focuses on the impact of the ISO certification initiative followed by the conclusion.

The ISO Certification Initiative

I was introduced to the ISO certification initiative in the ICDS during my first visit to the *Zilla Kaksha* at the Aurangabad Zilla Parishad*.* After obtaining permission for field work from the Deputy CEO, I met the Extension Officer to learn about the ICDS programme in Aurangabad district and ISO certification featured heavily in his account. He strongly recommended that I visit ISO certified anganwadi centres in the district, of which there were nearly 600 by then, especially a few that he termed as 'model anganwadi centres'. This emphasis on ISO certification as the defining feature of the ICDS programme in the district was replicated across ICDS Projects as well as Programme Officials. Every Project that I visited took me to see their ISO certified anganwadis while CDPOs and Supervisors gushed about its benefits.

A supervisor, highly rated and awarded for her ISO Certification work, shared that this quality management technique had revitalised the anganwadi centre from a 'smoke filled, grey, rundown place distributing *khichdi* to one or two dishevelled, runny nosed kids amongst dirt and flies to a bright, child-friendly preschool which was now competing with private preschools. ISO certified anganwadi centres were usually well

ventilated, pucca roofed, newly constructed buildings with a large main room, attached toilet, separate kitchen and a covered verandah in front. They were painted in gay, bright colours and decorated on the outside with large attractive cartoons whereas the inside walls had moral sayings and proverbs, digitally printed boards of fruits, vegetables, animals, birds, vehicles, Hindi and English alphabets and numbers, photographs of Hindu gods and goddesses and national and regional political leaders. Matching curtains were hung on doors and windows, sparkly streamers and bunting strung across the roof while the floor was covered with vinyl sheets referred to locally as 'carpet'. ISO certified anganwadi centres were equipped with child friendly furniture- low tables and small chairs, a full-length low mirror and a desk and chair for the anganwadi worker. They usually had a water filter, an electricity connection and a working Indian-style toilet with a low sink although most did not have any running water. Some had toys, rocking horses and swings. Finally, children enrolled for pre- school were given uniforms and identity cards.

Variations in this general pattern included a garden with swings and slides, innovative furniture design such as variously shaped table chair combos and better equipment such as digital weighing scales and a television. Such variations were largely a function of resources. At the steep end of this resource continuum was one of the first ISO certified anganwadi centres that I was sent to visit in the district famous as the 'hi-tech anganwadi'. It was known for its air-conditioning, phone connection, projector and colour TV and had been visited by senior officials from the state and the district as well as the State Minister for the Department of Women and Child Development, which administers the ICDS programme. Teams of panchayat members and ICDS workers from other districts also regularly visited the anganwadi to gain inspiration and create replicas in their villages. The anganwadi was located on a big plot of land, the majority of which was dedicated to a garden, which included a turf lawn, a rose garden, a play area for children with swings as well as a kitchen garden. The verandah had granite steps and vitrified floor tiles and a large steel and wood swing. The furniture inside was equally rich with a wooden glass display cabinet, steel and glass coffee table, large wooden office desk and an ergonomic swivel chair. The anganwadi had running water and the anganwadi worker was planning to install a water filter with a cooler as well as a biometric attendance system. More economical variations of ISO certified anganwadis included spruced up versions of older anganwadi centre buildings with tin roofs and walls painted with pictures of fruits and vegetables etc instead of digitally printed picture boards or posters.

For Anganwadi workers and Supervisors the central narrative underlying the ISO certification initiative was competition with private pre-schools. Several private preschools had come up in Sundar Block town and other major towns of the district in recent years, although the anganwadi was usually the only pre-school available at the village level. Private preschools were attended not only by urban children but also by children from nearby villages. Many anganwadi workers and Supervisors had also admitted their children and grandchildren to these private preschools rather than their anganwadis. According to the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) this shift is part of the larger but gradual movement from publicly provided education in government schools to private schools, at the primary level (NSSO, 2016). The NSSO attributes this change in rural areas primarily to the perception of a 'better learning environment' in private schools, poor quality in government schools and the desire to learn English. For Nambissan (2010) rising private school enrolment is linked to the perceived role of English medium private school education in social mobility. She traces this link to the colonial period when an english education in a private school modelled on the British public school was the route to wealth and power. The elite upper middle classes who accessed this education, went on to occupy crucial positions in the power structure and set the standards for a 'good' education. They were emulated in independent India by newly affluent middle castes who used these 'public schools' to convert economic capital into symbolic and social capital. The middle class flight from state schools began in the 1980s followed by the lower middle classes in the 1990s such that government run schools are currently attended largely by poor children belonging to the lower castes and minorities.

ICDS functionaries perceived the future of the ICDS programme to be in early childhood education and ISO certification was projected as the means to prepare the programme for its future. Anganwadi centres were thus prepped to look similar to private pre-schools and ISO certified with the belief that an upgraded look along with an internationally acclaimed third party verification of quality would convince parents that ICDS centres were not only equal in all ways to private pre-schools but superior in that they were also free.

ISO certification is a process of independent verification of products, services and systems for quality, safety and efficiency against a set of internationally developed and accepted standards. The International Organisation for Standardization or ISO, an autonomous, non-governmental membership organisation of national standards bodies develops the standards through a system of technical committees and sub-committees

whereas the certification is conducted by independent agencies. Some of the most popular ISO standards include ISO/IEC 17025 Testing and Calibration Laboratories, ISO 9001 Quality Management, ISO/IEC 27001 Information Security Management, ISO 14001 Environment Management, ISO 50001 Energy Management and ISO 45001 Occupational Health and Safety. Almost all of these (besides ISO/IEC 17025) are management system standards or standards for the design and management of organisations rather than specific products and services. ISO 9001 Quality Management and ISO 14001 Environment Management standards are the most popular with nearly 1.3 million organisations across 178 countries adopting them by the end of 2010 (Heras-Saizarbitoria and Boiral, 2013). Anganwadi centres in Aurangabad district were certified for ISO 9001:2008 Quality Management System Standards.

Given their widespread diffusion, international standards and standardisation processes have been studied to understand their impact on organisational systems and performance. They have been analysed for their role in facilitating international trade and the functioning of transnational corporations by addressing information asymmetries between potential exchange partners and providing market signals. In terms of their larger implications, standardisation and certification processes have been studied as a form of non-governmental, supranational regulation, and hybrid governance (Fonseca, 2015; Heras-Saizarbitoria and Boiral, 2013). Finally, scholars of governmentality have analysed standards as a technology of rule that facilitates the 'conduct of conduct', aids marketization and enables government at a distance (Gibbon and Henriksen, 2012, 2011; Higgins and Larner, 2010; Higgins and Hallstrom, 2007), the key features of neoliberal governance (Brown, 2015; Burchell, 1993; Rose, 1996). In this framework, standards, especially management system standards serve to propagate the core 'practices of the self' – internalised discipline, self-reporting and inspectability – for organisations and their workers (Gibbon and Henriksen, 2012). Organisations are expected to voluntarily adopt international standards for ensuring quality, managing environmental impact and risk, keeping accounts and so on, in response to market demands and through such self-regulation exercise the regulatory functions of government (Higgins and Hallstrom, 2007). Governance through standards enables government at a distance or the dispersal of regulation across a variety of institutions including international and national standard bodies, certification agencies and autonomised groupings such as the 'business community', 'accounting community', 'consumers', 'parents' etc (Higgins and Hallstrom, 2007). Finally, by providing a metrics of comparison, standards enable discrete units, whether businesses, organisations or individuals; private or public to compete with each other,

generating possibilities for the marketization of different aspects of human activity (Gibbon and Henriksen, 2012). Not the least of which, is a market in management standard related literature as well as experts and businesses focused on consulting, auditing and certification (Higgins and Hallstrom, 2007).

For Power (2003), the ISO 9001 quality management certification is part of the line of 'quality assurance' ideas that formed a crucial base for the audit explosion of the 1980s and 1990s. This audit explosion represented a rise of 'control of control' in which '… first- order questions of quality…(were)…subordinate to a logic of management system integrity, and in which audit serve(d) a virtualist form of 'meta-regulation'.' (Power, 2003, p. 189) The ISO 9001 standards focused on an organisation's management system for defining and monitoring performance rather than people, practices and products, a shift that enabled a variety of complex operations such as schools, hospitals and the police force to become 'auditable'. Quality certification was achieved by demonstrating the existence of mechanisms of quality control rather than good teaching, caring, manufacturing or banking. The focus on management systems rather than first order performance objectives homogenised and standardised audit processes making them cost-effective and economical and thereby facilitating their proliferation. Audit processes in turn lead to organisations reshaping themselves into auditable commodities, adopting the norms, procedures and subjectivities demanded by auditors.

Governmentality analyses of standards are based on a distinction between the rationalities and technologies of governing such that technologies are the means for making rationalities of rule possible in programmatic form. For Gibbon and Henriksen (2012, 2011) much of this analysis focuses on the underlying links between techniques and rationalities and their implications for practices of governing, but there is not as much research on the contexts from which these technologies emerge and their translations into neoliberal political programmes. Similarly, Higgins and Larner (2010) argue that governmentality analyses of standards tend to study technologies of governing from the perspective of 'programmers' rather than the everyday problematics of implementation. They highlight that while technical devices can enact political programmes at a distance, they can also act in contradiction to intended political objectives. Building on this argument, in this chapter, I explore the problematics of ISO 9001:2008 quality management system certification in the Aurangabad district ICDS programme.

While standardisation processes are expected to generate an enterprising subjectivity, the ISO initiative in Aurangabad district itself emerged from a programme context that valued innovation and enterprise by functionaries. Historically, the district had been the centre of two nationally recognised and lauded innovative initiatives on addressing child undernutrition – the Marathwada Initiative (2001-2004) which grew into the Rajmata Jijau Mother-Child Health and Nutrition Mission (RJMCHN) (2005 onwards). The RJMCHN was a state-wide nutrition mission which built on the many learnings of the Marathwada Initiative. It was subsequently replicated in different states. RJMCHN worked specifically by encouraging innovative thinking, building capacity among front line workers and fostering ownership, leadership and motivation amongst them. One of the main strategies for motivating workers was by promoting healthy rivalry, rating performance and offering rewards (R4D and Amaltas, 2016; Ramani, 2011). Subsequently, a focus on innovation was built into ICDS programme processes such that Sundar Block Project Supervisors, in their performance report for 2013-14 and plan for 2014-15, were mainly required to state the innovative initiatives they had implemented in the previous year and were planning for the next. Inspired by this 'enterprise culture' a dynamic Supervisor raised community contributions for upgrading the appearance of and facilities in anganwadis of her beat. The Supervisor and her CDPO then approached a local firm for ISO 9001:2008 certification and initially had three anganwadi centres ISO certified. Enthused by this work, the Deputy CEO in-charge of administering the ICDS at the district level at the time, encouraged other CDPOs and Supervisors to replicate these efforts and the initiative spread. The Supervisor who started ISO 9001 certification was widely feted and recognised for her work including by senior state and district level bureaucrats, the local MP and MLA and officials of UNICEF. Articles were published in the local newspaper about her and she received several awards including best supervisor, best employee and best woman employee, the last two from the Governor and the Chief Minister of Maharashtra respectively. When I met the Supervisor in October 2014, she was the proud administrator of a Whatsapp group of state bureaucrats, UNICEF officials, Deputy CEOs, CDPOs and Supervisors from across the state, set up to share innovative practices and initiatives implemented in their respective areas. The Deputy CEO under whose leadership ISO certification spread across the district was also widely credited with the transformation and revitalisation of the ICDS and received a promotion for his efforts.

However, it is also important to note that the ISO 9001 quality management system standardisation process followed for anganwadi centres in Aurangabed district was quite different from that specified by ISO. According to Hoyle (2001), the five main requirements of ISO 9001 (condensed from the 250 or so specific ones) are: (1) the organisation should determine the needs and expectations of customers and other interested parties; (2) it should establish policies, objectives and a work environment necessary to motivate workers to satisfy these needs; (3) it should design, resource and manage a series of interconnected processes necessary to implement the policy and attain the objectives; (4) it should measure and analyse the adequacy, efficiency and effectiveness of each process in fulfilling its purpose and objectives; and (5) it should pursue the continual improvement of the system from an objective evaluation of its performance. In contrast, the process followed in Aurangabad focused on the standardisation of anganwadi infrastructure, interiors, equipment, education material and pre-school skills, that is, on outputs rather than the quality management system. An Aurangabad based consultancy firm, that had certified nearly 1000 anganwadi centres, interpreted the ISO 9001:2008 quality management system requirements for anganwadi centres in terms of a list of 89 parameters which were used for rating anganwadi centres during the daylong ISO audit. Each parameter has a specific maximum score such that every anganwadi centre was rated out of a total of 359 points. The parameters could be roughly categorised under 15 broad heads. The 8 main heads that accounted for 78 percent of the parameters and almost 80 percent of the points were as follows:

Table 6: Parameters used for rating anganwadi centres

S. No.	Category	Number of Parameters	Points	Percentage
1	Pre-school skills	14	57	16
2	Interiors	10	43	12
3	Educational material	13	37	10
4	Infrastructure & Fittings	7	35	10
5	Services	11	32	9
6	Neatness & Cleanliness	6	30	8
7	Records	2	30	8
8	Beneficiary Interviews	6	20	6
	Total	69	284	79

Amongst these 8 heads, 4 related to the infrastructure and material available in the anganwadi and its upkeep whereas the other 4 referred to the services provided, with the former accounting for half the parameters and points. The specific parameters developed were often quite simple such as those under the head 'Interiors' which included checking for the provision of a mirror, dustbin, shoe stand etc, the head 'educational material' which involved checking for specific charts such as those on animals, parts of body etc, the head 'infrastructure and fittings' which included checking for the availability of a toilet, wash basin etc and the head 'pre-school skills' which included singing of 3 specific Hindi, English and Marathi songs. The four service-related categories were dominated by demonstrable 'pre-school skills' which accounted for 41 percent of the 139 total service-related points while all other services accounted for a mere 23 percent. The main auditor was particularly focused on the pronunciation of English numbers and alphabets by anganwadi workers and checked them for their Marathi accent. He had recorded videos of anganwadi workers reciting numbers and letters with an American or English accent and played them at every opportunity.

Further differences between ISO standardisation processes and the process followed in Aurangabad relate to the understanding of the 'organisation' being standardised and certified. While each district level ICDS programme could be regarded as an organisation given that all ICDS employees were district government staff (although programme policies are still set at the state and central government level) and each ICDS project could be regarded as a unit of such an organisation, the standardisation process followed in Aurangabad district treated every anganwadi centre as an independent organisation that needed to standardise and certify its quality management system. Anganwadi centres were voluntarily registered for ISO certification by the worker and the concerned Supervisor by paying the audit fees of Rs. 6500.0 per anganwadi centre. This was a significant sum for Sundar block even though it was a reduction from the initial price of Rs.10,000.0 per anganwadi centre charged by the consultancy firm for the first set of ISO certified anganwadi centres. During my fieldwork, I observed the Sundar Block CDPO and Supervsior discuss the possibility of shifting to other cheaper consultancy firms because of their discomfort with the fees being charged. A Supervisor even highlighted the incongruity and perverse incentives in the auditee directly paying the auditor for the certification.

On registration, anganwadi workers were to be trained on the ISO requirements, but this was rarely done. Post audit, the consultancy firm awarded ISO 9001:2008 certificates that said, 'This is to certify that Quality Management System of Anganwadis

(Name of ICDS Project) (List of Anganwadis) has been assessed and found to conform to the requirements of ISO 9001:2008 for the following scope: to implement government policies run by ICDS for the children between age group of 0 to 6, to enhance the services towards pregnant women, lactating mothers, teenagers girls, to remove malnutrition completely, to improve and maintain sound standard of pre-school education'. The consultancy firm that had devised the ISO certification process for anganwadis in Aurangabad and conducted the audits did not have the necessary accreditation for issuing ISO certificates. ISO certificates were issued in partnership with a Delhi based accredited firm. Although ISO certification as a process of third party, 'independent' verification holds the promise of greater accountability and transparency, the initiative in Aurangabad district exemplifies that audit processes themselves can be quite vague and non-transparent (Higgins and Larner, 2010). For Power (2003), however audits make little contribution towards the goal of transparency and are more likely to foreclose questioning rather than stimulate it.

Implementation of ISO certification in Sundar block

In the Sundar block ICDS project 61 of 235 anganwadi centres were ISO certified. The ISO certification process in the project began in 2013-14 under the leadership of the previous CDPO when for the first time 23 anganwadi centres across the 8 beats were ISO certified. In that year each beat had a target of ISO certifying at least 1 anganwadi centre. In the second year, this number was raised to 5 per beat. The table below details ISO certification in Sundar block:

Table 7: ISO certification of anganwadi centres in Sundar Block

S. No.	Beat	Number of anganwadi centres	Number of anganwadi centres ISO certified	
			2013-14	2014-15
1	Laldera	33	1	5
2	Rajegaon	30	1	5
3	A	24	5	2
4	B	30	2	5
5	C	35	3	5
6	D	31	5	8
7	E	24	3	4

8	F		28	3	5
		Total	**235**	**23**	**39**

ISO certificates to the 39 anganwadi centres that successfully cleared the audit in 2014-15 were distributed in a grand function attended by anganwadi workers and Supervisors from across the district. The event was organised at a large public auditorium in Aurangabad city and graced by dignitaries such as the CEO of the Aurangabad Zilla Parishad, the Deputy CEO, Women and Child Department, the Chairperson of the Aurangabad Panchayat Samiti, the Chairperson Education & Health Committee, Aurangabad Zilla Parishad and the Chairperson of Sillod Panchayat Samiti. The function honoured CDPOs who had contributed significantly towards ISO certification in the district including the CDPO in whose project the first anganwadi centre was ISO certified. It also conferred awards on 7 'Double Digit Supervisors', those who had ensured the ISO certification of more than 9 anganwadi centres in their beats, a number which ranged from 10-25. These honours included an award for the previous CDPO of Sundar Block project who had achieved the certification of 62 anganwadi centres in the project as well the Sundar Block Supervisor who had completed the certification of 13 anganwadi centres in her beat. The certificates awarded to individual anganwadi centres were received by the anganwadi worker but also usually by the Sarpanch of the village gram panchayat along with other members.

Once an anganwadi worker had agreed for ISO certification, the implementation process began through her attempts to raise money for the audit fees and collecting information on the ISO requirements. The latter was usually accomplished by contacting anganwadi workers with ISO certified anganwadis or Supervisors who had successfully facilitated such certification. Anganwadi workers and Supervisors then estimated the work needed to refurbish an anganwadi centre to the expected standard and began the all-important process of raising the financial resources required. Anganwadi centres located in peri-urban areas, such as the 'hi-tech' anganwadi centre, were able to raise substantial contributions from nearby businesses and industries, with Supervisors and even CDPOs holding meetings with owners and managers to convince them of the genuineness of the cause. However such resource raising was far more difficult for the majority of anganwadis located in rural areas. Anganwadi workers predominantly used the following three strategies for the implementation of ISO certification - staging, patronage and investment.

1. Staging ISO requirements

As the ISO certification was based on a visit by the auditors to the anganwadi centre on a fixed day, anganwadi workers laboured to make their fulfilment of ISO requirements visible to external auditors on that day. The Anganwadi centre was spruced up, records readied for inspection, children coached to recite poems, songs, alphabets and numbers, beneficiaries readied for interviews, gram panchayat members gathered as a welcoming committee on behalf of the village – the whole procedure taking on '…the feel of an artificial and staged performance' (Shore and Wright, 2000, p. 72). I examine three aspects of the staging of ISO requirements in detail – facilities, records and financial receipts.

Staging facilities: Shore and Wright (2000) and Kipnis (2008) have noted that performance audits typically include an element of staging - universities run dress rehearsals for Total Quality Assessment visits, tutoring students and teachers on what to say and what not to say (Shore and Wright, 2000); while school students put on performances and give speeches (Kipnis, 2008). The anganwadi ISO audits also featured such formalised and choreographed elements but in this case the theatricality was extended to the anganwadi centre, which functioned almost as a stage. Many facilities displayed during the audit were withdrawn once it was completed and the certification obtained. Most common among these were audio-visual appliances such as television and VCR/DVD players, furniture and decorations. Electronic appliances were usually borrowed from the anganwadi workers' home or extended family and returned after the audit. In some instances, anganwadi furniture such as small plastic chairs for pre-schoolers and/or desk and chair for the anganwadi worker were also borrowed, the small chairs from other anganwadi centres which had already been audited and the desk and chair from the panchayat office. Other anganwadi centre facilities were organised for the audit and subsequently displayed but rarely used. These included consumables that were costly to replace, instruments and furnishing which would wear and tear through use as well as facilities that required regular maintenance. The Shanwadi ISO certified anganwadi centre displayed toothbrushes and combs for pre-schoolers which were never used. Children were rarely given the toys to play. Electric fittings were only occasionally switched on. One anganwadi centre rolled up and put away the floor carpet. Many put away the expensive furniture- it was not unusual to find anganwadi centres with furniture stacked high on the side and children sitting on mats on the floor. Preschoolers were not encouraged to use the

anganwadi toilet or steel utensils either to avoid the cleaning that would be subsequently required and/or because of the lack of water/running water. The reluctance of Maratha caste functionaries to clean up after the formerly untouchable caste children also played a role. Water filters were packed up and put away and children asked to bring their own water to avoid the responsibility of providing safe drinking water. What remained were the building, the wall paintings and digital boards/posters and some of the decorations. The rational and objective method of third party certification did not actually communicate the true picture.

However, in the ICDS programme, it is important to note that staging was not only limited to occasional audits but was a regular feature of programme performance especially during official visits. As Ferguson and Gupta (2002) and Gupta (2001) highlight, the ICDS programme had a practice of surprise inspection visits by senior officials (above the supervisory level) to anganwadi centres. The objective was to 'swoop down' on unsuspecting anganwadi workers, take stock of the true status of service delivery such as the attendance of pre-school children and accordingly encourage, reward, discipline and punish. Ferguson and Gupta refer to a blue coloured UNICEF jeep used by the CDPO for these inspections in the block in UP studied by Gupta, with the dust raised by the jeep acting as a smoke signal for anganwadi workers to quickly gather children in the anganwadi centre. In a definitive sign of the 'national' nature of the ICDS, the Sundar Block project also had a blue UNICEF jeep that the CDPO used for her surprise inspections. However, given changing times, it was not clouds of dust that signalled its approach but rather mobile phone calls. Supervisory beats in the ICDS were determined by ease of travel such that adjacent anganwadi centres along a particular route were part of the same beat. As soon as an anganwadi worker or her extended family members spotted the distinctive blue ICDS jeep on a particular route, the message was sent to all anganwadi centres in that beat and on that route. Anganwadi centres were cleaned, the entrance decorated with *rangoli,* children were called in and menu wise supplementary nutrition prepared. Often the driver of the jeep would initiate the signal based on his connections with the anganwadi workers on the route. For more senior officials from the district, the signalling network included the Supervisors and the CDPO as well.

Staging records: ISO auditors as well as other visitors to an anganwadi centre, checked the many registers that anganwadi workers maintained, on the different services that they provided, as part of the programme MIS. According to Ferguson and Gupta (2002) the registers served three inter-related purposes – they were tools for

self monitoring or self-discipline, they enabled surveillance of the allocated population and simultaneously allowed surveillance of the anganwadi workers. While some aspects of ICDS service delivery such as pre-school attendance and provision of a hot cooked meal could be staged at short notice, this was not possible for the anganwadi registers. However the data in the registers could be and was manipulated over time. Anganwadi centre data was the foundation on which the performance of the programme at the beat, the block, the district, the division and the state level was determined. It was therefore under tremendous pressure to meet the performance expectations at each of these levels or to appear to have met them. I detail the staging of ICDS records by examining the collection, recording and reporting of child undernutrition data.

A key objective of the ICDS is to reduce the prevalence of undernutrition amongst children in the early years of life. Towards this objective it tracked the growth of all children registered in the programme through monthly measurement of their weight and height, determined their nutritional status in terms of underweight, stunting and wasting and accordingly provided supplementary nutrition and access to health services. Data on nutritional status and service delivery was reported on a monthly basis by each anganwadi centre through a format known as the Monthly Progress Report (MPR). To demonstrate programme effectiveness and their own performance, Anganwadi workers were under pressure to reduce the number undernourished children and raise the percentage of normal children in the MPR. While this resulted in many anganwadi workers like Mangala Narke and Shabana Syed tracking cases of undernutrition, making home visits, giving nutritional advice and distributing supplementary nutrition, anganwadi workers also followed a set of informal reporting rules to keep their numbers in the expected range.

The anthropometric measurements of children (weight for age, height for age and weight for height) were classified into 3 categories based on their position in the population distribution charts/tables, namely normal, underweight/stunted/wasted, and severely underweight/stunted/wasted. These 3 categories were colour coded into green, yellow and red respectively for ease of use and recall. An important informal rule prevalent in the Sundar Block Project was that children in red on any of the three parameters and/or those who suffered severe and moderate acute malnutrition were always reported in the MPR as they were at a higher risk and needed immediate attention. An unattended malnutrition death would have repercussions for the anganwadi worker concerned and hence workers were more vigilant. Moreover, the

ICDS programme was able to access funds available in the public health system for the care and rehabilitation of such children through an initiative referred to as the Village Child Development Centre (VCDC). This served as an incentive for the reporting of such cases. However, a related rule was that children who had undergone 3 rounds of VCDC and had not improved but had no medical complaints were no longer reported.

While children in the red zone were almost always reported, there was more ambiguity about the reporting of children in the yellow zone as these were usually the numbers that were trimmed to maintain the expected range. For instance, one of the informal rules was that babies below 6 months of age in the yellow zone were not to be reported. A senior anganwadi worker explained that since such young infants were expected to be exclusively breastfed not much intervention was possible till after 6 months of age. Another practice was that children who were 100-200 gms short of normal nutritional status were reported as normal. Mangala Narke of Shanwadi justified this practice by arguing that if the children were weighed on a full stomach they would be at least 150-200 gms heavier. Meera Kale of Mangaon, on the other hand accepted that this was done to keep the proportion of undernourished children small but defended the practice by revealing that she would inform the parent about the true weight and nutritional status of the child and advice them to improve it. Narke madam also shared that differently abled children in the yellow zone who did not improve and were not ill, were not reported because their poor nutrition was attributed to their disability.

Additionally, Narke madam, the most senior and experienced anganwadi worker of Laldera beat revealed that anganwadi workers were not always able to weigh all children registered with them every month - a few would usually be missed out. In such cases, if the child had been in the green zone previously and had not fallen ill that month, an increase in weight of 200 gm could easily be recorded. Similarly for height an increase of 1 cm could be recorded over 3 months. However she stressed that such a projection should only be done for 1 month, after which the child should be weighed. She also emphasised that children in the yellow and red zone should be weighed every month.

While these manipulations were a result of performance targets, other were caused by excessive workloads. For instance, Narke madam also had the responsibility for another anganwadi in her village for which an anganwadi worker was yet to be

recruited. Sanctioned anganwadis which did not yet have a dedicated anganwadi worker were typically assigned to the nearest experienced anganwadi worker who did not receive any extra honorarium for her additional labour. In the Sundar Block Project, there were 29 such anganwadi centres for which anganwadi workers were subsequently recruited. Narke's madam second anganwadi was in a distant hamlet at least 2 km away from the village centre and it was not practically feasible for her to serve both anganwadis simultaneously. Resultantly, her MPR for the second anganwadi was largely fabricated based on her few and occasional interactions with the children and their parents.

The MPRs submitted by individual anganwadi centres were aggregated at the beat level by the Supervisors. Supervisors had their own informal practices for such aggregation. Lata Shinde, the Supervisor of Laldera beat revealed that instead of relying on the MPRs submitted by the anganwadi workers which tended to be riddled with mistakes, she preferred to work backwards based on the percentage of 'normal' children expected by the *Zilla Kaksha* – more than 94 percent. First, she estimated the number of children weighed from the total population of children in the 0-6 year age group in her beat. According to her this number needed to be a high but realistic 97-98 percent. She then calculated 94-95 percent of the total children weighed in her beat to arrive at the number of children with normal growth and from the remaining number of children subtracted those in the red category to estimate the number of children in the yellow category.

I observed Shinde Madam, who was responsible for preparing the Project level MPR for the months of October, November and December, also make similar adjustments to the Project level MPR. Based on data submitted by the Supervisors of other beats Lata Shinde filled in the 'Classification of Nutritional Status by Weight for Age' table in the Project level MPR form as depicted in Table 8. She found that in three columns the number of children weighed exceeded the total number of children in the survey (shaded). Moreover the total number of children weighed was 99 percent of the total number of children in the survey. This was too high and not realistic and needed to be changed. Shinde Madam adjusted data in the three problematic columns as well as reduced the total number of children weighed by reducing the number of normal children as the total number of children weighed is a sum of the children in the Normal, Underweight and Severely Underweight categories. The adjusted figures are depicted in Table 9. Working backwards, Shinde Madam also adjusted the beat wise data from which these totals were supposed to be derived. These adjustments are depicted in

Table 10. Narke madam's rules and Shinde's madam adjustments were representative of the practices by which anganwadi workers and Supervisors of the ICDS reconciled programme objectives with workloads and performance targets.

Table 8: 'Classification of Nutritional Status by Weight for Age' table prepared by Supervisor Lata Shinde in the Project level MPR form

Classification of Nutritional Status by Weight for Age	0-6 mths		6 mths-1 yr		1-2 yr		2-3 yr		3-5 yr		0-5 yr		5-6 yr		Total
	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	
Total children in the survey	901	841	1008	957	1847	1714	1895	1734	3505	2937	9156	8183	1617	1451	20407
Number Weighed	871	794	1021	950	1824	1704	1915	1734	3417	2858	9048	8040	1603	1507	20198
Normal	866	790	1002	932	1740	1623	1776	1598	3170	2649	8554	7592	1569	1451	19166
Underweight	5	4	15	13	67	67	112	112	203	164	402	360	24	45	831
Severely underweight			4	5	17	14	27	24	44	45	92	88	10	11	201

Table 9: Adjustments to 'Classification of Nutritional Status by Weight for Age' table made by Supervisor Lata Shinde in the Project level MPR form

Classification of Nutritional Status by Weight for Age	0-6 mths		6 mths-1 yr		1-2 yr		2-3 yr		3-5 yr		0-5 yr		5-6 yr		Total
	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	
Total children in the survey	901	841	1008	957	1847	1714	1895	1734	3505	2937	9156	8183	1617	1451	20407
Number Weighed	865	794	1004	950	1824	1704	1891	1731	3417	2858	9001	8037	1603	1417	20058
Normal	860	790	985	932	1740	1623	1752	1595	3170	2649	8507	7589	1569	1361	19026
Underweight (MUW)	5	4	15	13	67	67	112	112	203	164	402	360	24	45	831
Severely underweight (SUW)	0	0	4	5	17	14	27	24	44	45	92	88	10	11	201

Table 10: Adjustments made by Supervisor Lata Shinde to ICDS Project MPR

Beat	Data Reported by Supervisors				Shinde Madam's changes			
	Number of 0-6 yr olds weighed	Normal	MUW	SUW	Number of 0-6 yr olds weighed	Normal	MUW	SUW
A	2236	2134	87	15	2226	2124	87	15
B	2010	1975	26	9	2000	1965	26	9
C	2556	2442	92	22	2536	2422	92	22
D	2447	2257	149	41	2427	2237	149	41
E	2900	2759	117	24	2890	2749	117	24
F	2649	2492	127	30	2639	2482	127	30
G	2788	2688	73	27	2780	2680	73	27
H	2564	2370	161	33	2560	2367	160	33
Total	20150	19117	832	201	20058	19026	831	201

Staging receipts: Anganwadi workers in Rajegaon and Laldera beats spent significant sums of money on the ISO certification of their anganwadis. In Laldera the total money spent by the 6 ISO certified anganwadi centres ranged from Rs.16,000.0 to Rs.76,000.0 whereas the 6 ISO certified anganwadi centres in Rajegaon spent Rs.8,000.0 to Rs. 40,000.0. More money was spent by those workers who needed to repair or complete the construction of their anganwadi centre building compared to others whose buildings were in a better condition. Workers in Laldera spent more money than Rajegaon as they invested in electric fittings and connection, variously shaped table chair combos made of iron and plywood and put up digitally printed posters mounted on wooden frames. In contrast, anganwadis in Rajegaon were more economical and used colourful wall paintings and simple plastic chairs and did not opt for electricity. According to a majority of anganwadi workers with ISO certified centres, there were three main sources of funds – the Sarpanch, the untied fund available to the Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Committee of the village gram panchayat and the anganwadi worker herself. In Laldera beat 36 percent of the total funds spent on ISO certification were sourced from the VHSNC, 38 percent contributed by anganwadi workers and 20 percent provided by the Sarpanch. In Rajegaon, nearly half the funds spent or 48 percent were sourced from the VHSNC, 37 percent from the anganwadi worker and only 14 percent from the Sarpanch. Community contribution, which was

touted as the main route to raise money for such innovation, was negligible. Model anganwadi centres such as the hi-tech anganwadi had successfully raised hundreds of thousands of rupees in donations because they were located near industrial areas. However, both Laldera and Rajegaon beat extended across agricultural areas so it was not feasible for them to raise such monies.

The Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Committee (VHSNC), which provided the bulk of the money used for certification, was allocated funds under the National Health Mission (NHM) of the public health system. VHSNC funds were categorised as untied funds in the Mission and their use was to be governed by the VHSNC, chaired by the Sarpanch within the framework of issued guidelines. These included expenses on transport for pregnant women, children and other patients, immunisation sessions, nutrition for undernourished children, repairs to the water supply system, malaria prevention and so on. Each revenue village had a VHSNC, which covered all anganwadi centres in the village. One of the anganwadi workers was chosen to be the secretary of the VHSNC either by mutual agreement between the anganwadi workers or by the Supervisor. According to national guidelines, each VHSNC was expected to receive Rs.10,000.0 as an untied fund annually. However the Government of Maharashtra had opted for population-based disbursement of funds to account for differences in village size and thereby the need for funds. Under the active instructions of the CDPO and Supervisors, the ISO certification initiative drew heavily on these funds available in the VHSNC account, jointly operated by the Sarpanch and the anganwadi worker. There were two main modes of fund utilisation - either the entire annual sum allocated to the village was given to the anganwadi centre registered for ISO certification or an equal amount made available to all the anganwadi centres under the VHSNC to undertake improvements even if they were not opting for certification. There were few, if any actual meetings of the VHSNC and the use of the funds was entirely determined by the Chairperson and Secretary - the Sarpanch and the anganwadi worker, respectively.

In the last quarter of the 2014-15 financial year, the Sundar Block Project Office received a copy of a letter sent by the Director, NHM to the Chief Executive Officer of all Zilla Parishads which directed that VHSNC funds should be utilised as per the recommendations in the VHSNC guidebook issued to all districts. The guidelines suggested that 60 percent of the VHSNC untied fund should be spent on health issues, 20 percent on nutrition, 10 percent on sanitation and 10 percent on water supply. The letter further stated that in the financial years 2011-12, 12-13, 13-14 it had been

observed that most of the nutrition funds had been utilised towards the repair of anganwadi centre furniture (8.22 percent), purchase of toys and weighing machine (5 percent) and repair and painting of the anganwadi centre building (6.64 percent). It pointed out that this was against guidelines and hence not acceptable and directed that for the year 2014-15 it should be ensured that expenditure is shared across all other objectives of the VHSNC and not just nutrition. This letter caused mild consternation at the Project Office but much concern to anganwadi workers. The CDPO simply instructed her Supervisors to direct anganwadi workers to procure bills for VHSNC expenditure that would conform to the requirements outlined in the letter. But at the Laldera beat meeting held at the Primary Health Centre, the Medical Officer informed anganwadi workers that as the Secretary of the VHSNC they would be held accountable for unauthorised use of VHSNC funds. Anganwadi workers had merely been following orders of ICDS officials in using VHSNC funds for anganwadi centre refurbishment but the ICDS had no decision making authority over VHSNC funds. They were therefore required to cover up, through false bills, for allowing the ICDS programme's use of VHSNC funds for ISO certification. Such staging of VHSNC expenditure receipts represented yet another instance when ICDS functionaries at the project level improvised or engaged in *jugaad* to fulfil programme directives.

Mathur (2016) finds that state functionaries often differentiate between '*asli zindagi*' (real life) and '*sarkari zindagi*' (state life*),* where the latter refers to the official version of state programmes laboriously produced through a variety of documents. The distinction between the official and the real, according to Mathur, is based on the functionaries' understanding that state programmes can never actually be implemented by the rulebook but it is their job to make it appear as if the rules have been followed, as if goals have been achieved. For Mathur, the *sarkari* version of programmes is produced essentially on *kagaz* (paper), whereas field visits and meetings reveal the gap between 'paper truths' and the real. In the context of the ICDS however, I find that the staging of performance is not only limited to paper but extends across meetings and visits as well.

2. Political patronage

Political patronage was the second strategy used by anganwadi workers to raise resources for ISO certification. It was also the primary means through which anganwadi workers engaged with the ICDS programme administration. The patronage of the Sarpanch and subsequently the MLA was critical for their recruitment into the

ICDS (see Chapter 3) and was also called upon to manage any disciplinary action as well as unjustified and excessive demands for commissions and other informal payments by senior officials (see Chapter 5). Anganwadi workers therefore turned to their village Sarpanch for support for the ISO certification of their anganwadis as well. In Shanwadi, the anganwadi worker with the ISO certified anganwadi, Ranjana Wakde, credited the Sarpanch for the anganwadi centre building, for which he had directly executed the construction contract. Although funds for anganwadi centre construction were provided by the district government, the Sarpanch was acknowledged for not cutting corners and using the best available material, as well as investing some of his own money to build a boundary wall for the verandah. In contrast in another village of the same beat, the Sarpanch left the anganwadi centre building of a worker, related to his political rival, incomplete, preventing her from submitting her anganwadi for ISO certification. In Rajegaon beat, Sarpanchs contributed to pay the audit fees. Sarpanch contributions to ISO certification reinforced their position as the 'big-men' or patrons of the village and they were honoured as such during the grand function for the distribution of ISO certificates.

3. Investment

Anganwadi worker contributions were the third strategy and the second major source of funding for ISO certification. When I asked anganwadi workers why they spent their own money for ISO certification several shared the same underlying reason – they considered it an investment into their future in the programme. Some said that since they expected to work at the anganwadi centre till retirement, they did not mind investing some money to make it a pleasant place to work. Others saw it as an extension of the expenditure incurred in obtaining the job. Still others revealed that they did not have a real choice. They were compelled by their Supervisors who in turn were working under the pressure of the CDPO and the Deputy CEO. The premium placed on new ideas and practices -- 'innovation' -- in terms of awards, recognition, fame and promotions meant that senior programme officials zealously pursued ISO certification. When community contributions to meet the requirements of ISO certification, were not forthcoming, they pressured the junior most ICDS functionary- the anganwadi worker to meet the gap. Anganwadi workers were particularly susceptible to this pressure not only because they were the lowest ranking workers of the programme but also because they were volunteers, paid an honorarium less than the minimum wage. All

the justifications used by anganwadi workers to contribute to programme expenses were essentially about spending money to keep their jobs.

The voluntary status of anganwadi workers not only deprived them of a fair wage and benefits but also increased job insecurity. In the Sundar Block ICDS project, poor performance of anganwadi workers routinely provoked threats of dismissal by the Supervisor and the CDPO. While Supervisors were disciplined through confidential reports and threats of suspension, anganwadi workers were disciplined through pay cuts and threats of dismissal. The vulnerability of anganwadi workers and the tenuousness of their position was highlighted by the treatment meted out to Mala Kulkarni, a senior anganwadi worker of Laldera beat. I only met Mala Kulkarni towards the end of my fieldwork. She had suffered a stroke in November 2014 while working in the anganwadi centre. She had been carrying a vessel full of food when she collapsed. She was rushed to the hospital and was only able to rejoin work after 7 months in June 2015. When she came to the Project Office to submit her rejoining letter, the CDPO cautioned her that the programme would not tolerate any laxity on her part and that she should rejoin only if she felt fully capable of fulfilling all her responsibilities as an anganwadi worker including performing the duties of the helper, as her helper had retired and the post was now vacant. Basically, the CDPO suggested that as Kulkarni madam had only 2 years to retire, she should not rejoin and instead allow the programme to hire a new anganwadi worker in her stead. However Mala Kulkarni insisted on rejoining. Then in July, the new Supervisor of Laldera beat complained in the office about Kulkarni madam's absenteeism. She said that she had visited her village a few days back and found her anganwadi centre closed. The CDPO, Deepa Pardeshi decided to make a surprise visit to Kulkarni Madam's anganwadi with me and the Supervisor Shailaja Joshi to explore if there were sufficient grounds for her dismissal. She was convinced that Kulkarni Madam was not able to work and was simply being obstinate in hanging onto her position in the programme.

We reached Kulkarni Madam's anganwadi at 1230 in the afternoon. The anganwadi was locked. The CDPO asked families living nearby if the anganwadi had been opened that day. They confirmed that it had been. Kulkarni Madam was then called and the CDPO set out to prove her incapacity and incompetence. She first accused Kulkarni Madam of shutting the anganwadi before time – before 1 pm. Kulkarni madam explained that she had been making a home visit and the CDPO could check with the family, if she desired. By then, the anganwadi centre was unlocked and we went inside. Once inside, the CDPO accused Kulkarni madam of not distributing the Take Home

Ration packets as they were all stacked against a wall. Kulkarni madam explained that these had just been delivered a few days ago while the older sacks had collected over the 7 months that she was not there and had torn packets. They were causing a rat menace and she was not sure what to do with them. The CDPO then said that from the appearance of the anganwadi, it did not seem as if any hot cooked meal had been served that day. Kulkarni madam explained that they had served *roti* and *dal* and showed the left over *rotis.* She also showed the snack that had been served to the children – *laddoos* of roasted and ground peanut along with sugar of 50 gms for each child. However the *laddoos* had fallen apart because of the use of sugar instead of *gur.* The CDPO seized upon this along with some mistakes that Joshi Madam had found in her records to again accuse Kulkarni madam of lying and being incapable of fully delivering her responsibilities. She threatened to dismiss her pointing out that her anganwadi had been shut when the Supervisor visited her village a day before. Kulkarni madam insisted that she had been in her anganwadi till 1 pm that day and that the Supervisor had in fact not visited. Her confident assertion shook the CDPO's conviction and she called the Supervisor (who at that time had charge of two beats – temporary charge of Laldera and her own) only to find that she had been referring to another anganwadi worker in another village and beat. Kulkarni's madam's voluntary status in the ICDS implied that not only was she not eligible for any health benefits even after two decades of work, the programme would rather dismiss her for her ill health in the name of women and child welfare, than support her through it.

However, despite its voluntary nature, the anganwadi worker position was valued in Sundar block for its promise of a regular, although meagre income in the short term and potential for regularisation, with all the accompanying benefits, in the long term. Given the paucity of secure, salaried employment in rural India, qualified village women were willing to 'invest' in a voluntary position of a government programme and then 'wait' – wait for the honorariums to increase, for the position to be regularised and/or for a promotion as Supervisor. The strategy of 'investment' and 'waiting' noted by Jeffrey (2010) in the context of educated, unemployed young men in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh looking for a respectable job, was quite prevalent in Sundar block. It was especially common in relation to teaching positions in privately managed and publicly funded educational institutions commonly known as grant-in-aid schools and/or colleges. Substantial sums were required to secure such employment, where salaries were received only after the grant-in-aid was approved and disbursed which often took a few years. Teachers who had invested in these positions worked without pay waiting for the required approvals and disbursements, which were usually made with

retrospective effect helping them recoup their investment in a lumpsum. Narke madam's daughter-in-law had invested in such a teaching position in a charity run school for deaf children – she had paid nearly Rs.150,000.0 for the post and worked without pay for two years while the school applied for a grant in aid which was received towards the end of my fieldwork. It was therefore not surprising that Narke madam coached younger anganwadi workers such as Wakde madam, her colleague in Shanwadi to invest in ISO certification, in her future in the ICDS.

The struggle for regularisation

Anganwadi workers hope for regularisation was based on their active struggle for it. They believed that the voluntary nature of their position was unjustified and since the 1990s have engaged in alliance building, unionisation and collective bargaining for regularisation. The only justification provided in policy documents for the volunteerism of anganwadi workers is that it is part of the programme design. The ICDS was originally conceived of as being implemented through the involvement of voluntary work and voluntary organisations, especially the volunteerism of women, given that welfare policies in India have historically brought women and children together (Sreerekha, 2017). Women were considered as 'naturally' ready to volunteer for childcare and thereby contribute to the development of the community and the nation. Thus, for the state, the role of the anganwadi worker and helper in the design of the ICDS was merely an extension of women's 'natural' and domestic duties into the public sphere (Gupta, 2001). Their honorarium was expected to honour their voluntary service and not compensate for their labour or time (Sreerekha, 2017).

The higher involvement of women in voluntary work or unpaid work in the public sphere has been explained by some feminist scholars in terms of the sexual division of labour in the private sphere – the family. Women restricted by social norms to managing homes and caring for families find an acceptable outlet through volunteering. For Baldock (1998) however, the higher participation of women in day to day volunteer work is equally a function of the sexual division of labour in the public sphere which marginalises women into poorly paying, low skilled and labour intensive work. Baldock connects the out-sourcing of government welfare services to non-governmental organisations in Australia with the increasing demand for women volunteers in such organisations to conclude that there is a 'continuum between volunteer and waged labour markets'. Women volunteers like their paid counterparts '… form flexible and expendable pools of labour, available to take up volunteer work when governments

reduce expenditures by contracting-out and privatising services to the non-government sector' (Baldock, 1998, p. 28). For Palriwala and Neetha (2011), in the Indian context, state policies for women, despite the lofty goals of equality, are imbued with 'gendered familialism', which views women primarily as dependent family members and mothers rather than independent and productive workers and citizens. Historically, policies for women's development – work and livelihood – were framed based on notions of child welfare and child development. Through income generation and self-help programmes women were encouraged to take up informal, flexible and home-based work, considered more conducive to the fulfilment of their domestic responsibilities with little attention paid to state provision of maternity benefits and childcare facilities.

In the ICDS, a practical reason given for the volunteerism of anganwadi workers and helpers was the part time nature of their work. Officially, anganwadi workers and helpers were expected to work for the ICDS for only 4-5 hours a day (Committee on Empowerment of Women, 2011). However much research, deliberation and advocacy, including my own observations in Sundar block revealed that in real terms, on several days, they ended up working for many more hours. This was usually due to one of two factors. The first was that their community based location plus the detailed population records that they maintained made them a convenient and cheap conduit for a host of other government programmes. In the Sundar block ICDS project during the 9 months of my fieldwork itself, anganwadi workers were asked to perform 4 additional tasks[18]. The second was that the cumulative but extensive list of 21 tasks (Committee on Empowerment of Women, 2011) that they were expected to undertake within the 4-5 hours that the anganwadi centre operated, often exceeded the allotted time frame. Further, the Sundar Block ICDS project anganwadi workers were also expected to implement various innovative initiatives including the ISO certification of anganwadi centres - all of which implied that they worked for the ICDS for many more than the prescribed hours. Additionally anganwadi workers were not like other volunteers studied by Baldock (1998), who could choose their volunteering tasks carefully based on their interests and expected special treatment (gentler management) because of their voluntary status. In contrast, anganwadi workers as honorary or voluntary workers

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[18] These were (1) facilitating the enrolment of all 0-6 year olds in their village population for an Aadhaar number- a 12 digit unique identity number for Indian residents based on demographic and biometric information, (2) formation of the Village Child Protection Committee in every panchayat as part of the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) and coordinating its functioning as secretary, (3) implementation of Sukanya Yojana of the Government of Maharashtra, a programme of financial assistance to poor couples with only 1-2 girl children, and enrolment of adolescent girls for computer literacy, vocational and self-defence training programmes. Each of these tasks required significant awareness generation, counselling, mobilisation and organisation on the part of the anganwadi worker.

received little or no choice, were required to follow the instructions given by seniors officials and were routinely treated as the junior most functionaries in the ICDS programme hierarchy. They were expected to stand as soon as senior officials came in and always sat at a level lower than the officials. Finally, anganwadi workers were not allowed to hold elected posts in the local *panchayat* along with their position in the ICDS. They could contest the local election and if they won had to give up their anganwadi worker post, as a further mark of the non-voluntary nature of their volunteerism. In sum, anganwadi workers often worked more than 4-5 hours a day, were expected to follow all the instructions given by senior officials and constituted the lowest rung of the programme hierarchy. According to the International Labour Organisation's, (2007) indicators of an employer-employee relationship, they worked almost as formal employees of the programme even though they were deemed as voluntary workers and paid a minimal honorarium and few benefits.

Consequently, anganwadi workers have unionised to demand better working conditions for themselves through regular strikes, hunger strikes, marches, demonstrations and protests. Their key demands include regularisation as Grade III and Grade IV government employees and in the interim improved wages or minimum wages, regular payment of wages, regular increments, social security benefits including gratuity, pension, health benefits, paid and medical leave and avenues for promotion (People's Democracy, 2014). The street protests and blockades of anganwadi worker unions have not only successfully captured print and television media interest and thereby raised public awareness about their issues but their sheer number and collective strength have attracted political interest as well. Sreerekha (2017) lists numerous occasions ranging from 1987 to 2009 when Members of Parliament of either house have, based on the protests of anganwadi workers, raised the issue of their poor working conditions and demanded answers and/or action from the government of that time. In 2006, the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers filed a petition in the Rajya Sabha on the institutionalisation of the ICDS and the regularisation of anganwadi workers. The petition was discussed by the Committee on Petitions which recommended improved working conditions for anganwadi workers including additional honorarium for additional work, regular revision of honorarium in consonance with inflation but concluded against anganwadi regularisation given the '…. huge financial implications involved….' (Rajya Sabha, 2006) In 2010, a Lok Sabha MP introduced a private member's bill on the

regularisation of anganwadi workers, which lapsed[19]. In 2011, the Lok Sabha Standing Committee on the Empowerment of Women tabled a report on the working conditions of anganwadi workers in both houses of parliament which recommended a systematic review of the workload of anganwadi workers, instituting a system of periodic review and revision of their honorarium linked to the consumer price index and the extension of retirement benefits and health insurance to them (Committee on Empowerment of Women, 2011). The 2014 national election manifesto of the winning political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) promised to 'Review the working conditions and enhance the remuneration of anganwadi workers.' (Bharatiya Janata Party, 2014)

These examples highlight the wide recognition of the issues and concerns of anganwadi workers by the political class, which in turn has yielded some results – increases in honoraria over time and the granting of a few benefits. For instance, the Central Government increased the honorarium of matriculate or 10th pass anganwadi workers from Rs.150.0 in 1975 when the ICDS began to Rs.500.0 in 1997 (after more than 20 years) to Rs 1000.0 in 2002 (after another five years) to Rs.1500 in 2008 and finally Rs.3000.0 in 2011 (Committee on Empowerment of Women, 2011). Commensurate increases were also made for other categories of anganwadi workers based on education and experience and for anganwadi helpers. Additionally, anganwadi workers receive paid maternity leave of 180 days and are insured in the event of death, disability and critical illness. They also receive a uniform annually. Further, Government of India has recommended that state governments reserve 50 percent of Supervisor positions for matriculate anganwadi workers with 10 years of experience, set up a grievance redressal mechanism and a welfare fund for anganwadi workers and helpers[20].

Several state governments supplement the honorarium provided by the Central Government, given its inadequacy, as well as provide additional benefits. However even these have been wrested by state and regional anganwadi worker unions through persistent demands and agitations. As of October 31, 2017, 32 of the 36 states and union territories provide additional honorarium to anganwadi workers ranging from lows of Rs.750.0 per month by Bihar, Rs.600.0 by Jammu and Kashmir and Rs.100.0 by Manipur to highs of Rs. 3062-11,937.0 per month by Goa, Rs.6750.0 by Tamil Nadu, Rs.6678.0 by Delhi, Rs.4000.0 per month by Telangana and Rs.3000.0 per month by

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[19] Please see < www.loksabha.nic.in>

[20] See <www.icds-wcd.nic.in>

Karnataka and Uttarakhand. In contrast, Government of Maharashtra supplemented anganwadi worker honorarium only by Rs.2000 so that they earned a total of Rs.5000.0 per month (Kumar, 2018). The state government's contribution had increased from Rs.1050.0 to Rs.2000.0 in April 2014 only after anganwadi workers across the state struck off work indefinitely in January of the same year to press for their demands. The strike lasted for a month and was called off only after the workers were assured by the Chief Minister that their demands would be met. Through this agitation the anganwadi workers union won not only an increase in their honorarium but also a retirement benefit of Rs.100,000.0 for anganwadi workers and Rs.75,000.0 for anganwadi helpers (Shamim, 2014). Their other existing benefits include casual leave of 1 day per month, 20 days leave for festivals and 15 days leave in the summer as well as a festival allowance of Rs.500.0.

In the Sundar Block project, all anganwadi workers were members of the Union and most were part of Maharashtra Anganwadi Balwadi Karamchari (Employee) Union affiliated to the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC). Anganwadi workers in both Laldera and Rajegaon beats participated in the successful January –February 2014 strike but by the end of July 2015 had received only 3 months of raised honorarium although they were supposed to receive it from April 1, 2014 onwards. Further, in March 2015 the Project Office was asked by the Government of Maharashtra to take back the three months of raised honorarium that had already been paid and implement the hike from April 2015 onwards. The non-payment of dues and the change in orders led to further agitation by the Union with day long strikes being called almost every month.

While anganwadi workers across the country have been successful in raising their honorariums and gaining some benefits through collective agitation, their core demand regarding regularisation as Grade III and IV government employees has been consistently denied by the central government. All parliamentary questions, the Rajya Sabha Committee of Petitions, the Lok Sabha Committee on Empowerment of Women which deliberated this issue have received a standard response from the central government, irrespective of the political party in power, that , '….Anganwadi workers and Anganwadi Helpers are 'honorary workers' from the local community who come forward to render their services, on part time basis, in the area of child care and development.   Since Anganwadi Workers and Anganwadi Helpers are honorary workers, these functionaries cannot be declared as 'Government employees/regular

employees' or extended the benefits as admissible to employees of the Government' (Kumar, 2018; Rajya Sabha, 2006).

Anganwadi workers and their unions have also approached the courts on the issue of regularisation but with mixed results. In 1996, the Karnataka State Administrative Tribunal held that although anganwadi workers and helpers received an honorarium they were holders of a 'civil post' and hence could be considered government employees. However this decision was later overturned by the Supreme Court in 2008 which acknowledged the employer-employee relationship between anganwadi workers and the state but held that as they were recruited under a scheme and not a statute and their recruitment was not governed by the standard rules ordinarily applicable to government employees, they could not be considered to hold a 'civil post'. On the other hand, a recent judgement by the Bombay High Court in 2010, while addressing a dispute regarding the selection of an anganwadi worker, recognised anganwadi workers and helpers as 'workmen' and the ICDS as an 'industry' under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, thereby once again raising hope for regularisation.

Impact of ISO certification

Anganwadi workers of ISO certified centres claimed that the upgradation in appearance and facilities had improved pre-school attendance with some citing cases of financially better off parents choosing the new and improved anganwadi centre over private schools. They also claimed that it had re-centred the attention of the village community on the anganwadi centre and its activities and re-energised their working. In the 5 anganwadi centres that I observed, pre-school attendance was more a function of the anganwadi worker. In Shanwadi more children regularly attended the senior and experienced anganwadi worker, Narke madam's tin roofed old anganwadi centre than the shining new ISO certified anganwadi centre run by the younger but not yet trained Wakde madam. Narke madam used local material – pebbles, grain – to create activities and games for children and hence was more popular. In Mangaon, amongst the two anganwadi centres that had buildings, the one where the anganwadi worker was regular although younger and untrained was better attended than the other where the anganwadi worker was senior and experienced but irregular. Thus, regularity of the anganwadi worker followed by creativity were important for pre-school attendance rather than ISO certification.

The practices of standardisation and audit have been extensively analysed by governmentality scholars as techniques for the engendering of neoliberal subjectivities that enable governance of conduct from a distance. As these techniques become increasingly prevalent, they are expected to effect neoliberal rationalities of rule by transforming the objects and subjects that they seek to govern. In contrast, I found that in the ICDS programme of Sundar Block, the implementation of ISO 9001:2008 quality management system had little transformative effect on programme practices or anganwadi worker subjectivities, rather the ISO certification initiative was shaped through the needs and practices of the ICDS.

Shore and Wright (2000) build on Power (1994) to detail the way in which audit practices and cultures transform organisations particularly universities by making the curriculum more market oriented, quantifying and standardising the learning experience, changing definitions of quality and performance and introducing new forms of auditable records. Kipnis (2008) compares audit cultures in post socialist China and Poland with the United States to find that each context introduced numeric performance measures that ended up distorting the phenomena being measured producing dissatisfaction amongst the affected employees. However, in Sundar Block I found that the ISO 9001:2008 quality management standards were radically altered to address the needs that had given rise to the initiative. ICDS functionaries anticipating competition from the growing private pre-school sector wanted their anganwadi centres to be certified, by a trusted authority in the market, to be as good as private providers. For such certification to be considered legitimate, anganwadi centres had to look like private pre-schools. Consequently, the ISO requirements emphasised infrastructure, facilities, appearances and accents, aspects relating directly to the quality of services rather than quality management control systems.

Similarly, there was little autonomisation and responsibilisation of anganwadi workers as anticipated by governmentality analyses, even though anganwadi centres were audited independently rather than as part of the ICDS project. Supervisors and CDPOs were expected to meet ISO targets and were actively involved in motivating and supporting anganwadi workers for the same. ISO certification was used for its market signalling function and did not enable governance at a distance – no new performance measures linked to budgets and bonuses were introduced. Rather the ISO certification initiative was implemented through the routine strategies that anganwadi workers employed to perform in the ICDS – staging, patronage and investment.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyse the implementation of the much lauded ISO certification initiative in Sundar block of Aurangabad district. The initiative emerged in a programme context that valued innovation and grew to prepare anganwadi centres to respond to the perceived threat of competition from private pre-schools. Select anganwadi centres were refurbished and resourced to resemble private pre-schools and then independently certified for quality as per the requirements of the ISO 9001:2008 quality management standards. Targets were set for ISO certification and awards and honours instituted to motivate ICDS functionaries – CDPOs, supervisors and anganwadi workers to achieve and exceed targets.

Standardisation and audit practices have been understood as technologies of neoliberal governance that aid marketization and enable rule at a distance by engendering an enterprising subjectivity and facilitating competition. The frames of such governmentality scholarship anticipate that anganwadi workers would independently prepare anganwadi centres for ISO certification and through this process significantly alter anganwadi centres practices. However, neither transformation of object or subject took place in the ISO certification initiative in Sundar Block. Instead, the ISO certification process was altered to suit ICDS programme needs. The parameters developed for certification were focused on resourcing anganwadi centres to look like private schools rather than the establishment of a quality management system. While anganwadi workers resorted to the routine practices of ICDS implentation, for ISO certification as well. These included the practices of staging, patronage and investment.

Anganwadi workers staged the audit day, MIS records and financial receipts in their implementation of ISO certification. In each case, such staging enabled anganwadi workers to reconcile the realities of programme implementation with the rules of the programme. They staged the ISO audit to arbitrate the resource intensive demands of ISO certification with their resource poor contexts. They staged records to reconcile their workloads with performance targets and they staged receipts to reconcile their use of 'untied funds' as per the directives of block officials rather than official

guidelines. In each case, ICDS workers made it appear as if rules had been followed while devising informal practices to implement the programme (see Mathur, 2016).

Additionally, anganwadi workers made use of their patronage networks to raise resources for ISO certification and finally, in several cases, invested their own monies. This last strategy emerged from a context in which the paucity of regular salaried employment in rural areas meant that educated women were willing to 'invest' in a voluntary position offered by the district government and 'wait' for it to be regularised. However such waiting was not passive but involved vigorous unionisation and collective bargaining. Anganwadi workers employed performative protests and used political as well as judicial forums to demand their perceived rights. Much like Anjaria's (2011) street hawkers in Mumbai, they deployed their voluntary status to create spaces of negotiation and claim making with the state.

In sum, I demonstrate that initiatives of state reform based on neoliberal technologies do not always unleash neoliberal subjectivities, rather they engage with existing bureaucratic practices and may be reformed in turn. The introduction of the neo-liberal techniques of standardisation and audit in the Sundar block ICDS project did not produce entrepreneurial subjects but rather led to the production of documents and staging of visits to make it appear as if such entrepreneurship had been generated.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

In this thesis, I studied how the everyday governance of one of the largest child development programmes in the world, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) was determined at the sub-district or implementation level. Governance in the context of development has been largely understood as 'good governance'; instead I built on a non-normative concept of governance (de Sardan, 2009; Lemke, 2007) to study the entire process of the everyday production and supply of ICDS services (de Sardan, 2009) or the translation of development programme design into practice. While the ICDS has been researched to identify whether its implementation is effective (Kandpal, 2011; Planning Commission, 2011) and the consequent implications for design (Das Gupta et al., 2005; Gragnolati et al., 2006), the question of how the programme is implemented, produced or translated has not been adequately addressed. For Mosse (2004) and Mathur (2016) implementation is often derided in development literature but rarely described except in terms of an 'unintended 'gap' between theory and practice, to be reduced by better policy more effectively implemented' (Mosse, 2004, p. 640).

Focusing on the 'how' questions, I described the processes and practices through which the ICDS was implemented in the everyday, and through which gaps in plan and implementation were produced. In the context of state-implemented development programmes in India such gaps have been largely attributed to the social embeddedness of the state in society (Corbridge et al., 2005). Political and anthropological literature offers three broad explanations for why the boundaries between state and society are blurred in India. Some scholars contend that the state is dominated by a coalition of classes for the promotion of their interests both at the national and intermediate level (Bardhan, 1999; Harriss-White, 2003), others argue that the postcolonial Indian state is too modern for the majority of its population who consequently access it in groups, through brokers, mediators and the frames of social identity rather than individual, undifferentiated citizenship (Chatterjee, 2004; Kaviraj, 2010), whereas still others conceive of the state-society boundary as a construction, an effect of bureaucratic practices reflective of relations of power and social control (Mitchell, 1991; Sharma and Gupta, 2006).

I build on this Foucauldian understanding to study ICDS implementation as a set of bureaucratic or state practices. State practices have been studied to understand citizen imaginary of and engagement with the state (Anand, 2011; Anjaria, 2011; Corbridge et al., 2005; Gupta, 2006; Jeffrey, 2000; Lazar, 2005; Parry, 2000) as well as the way the state 'sees' populations (Scott, 1998), however the role of state functionaries has not been sufficiently addressed (Bernstein and Mertz, 2011; Blundo, 2014). I contribute to the anthropological literature on the state by illuminating *how* state functionaries construct, negotiate and perform state practices to determine the everyday governance of state implemented development programmes, and through this, provide an explanation for the disjuncture between development programme design and implementation.

State functionaries in India are known to work in a context of political mediation of everyday public services (Berenschot, 2010). State and local politicians use government programmes to extend patronage to their supporters (Corbridge et al., 2005) and generate campaign finance through informal systems of percentages or commissions (Berenschot, 2010; Witsoe, 2012a). Concurrently, liberalisation of the Indian economy in the 1990s has led to reforms of state and governance (Joseph, 2007). Accordingly, I studied how ICDS functionaries engaged with local political relations, vertical systems of 'corruption' and bureaucratic initiatives of reform to construct, negotiate and perform state practices.

The political mediation of the Indian state has been linked to the politicisation of caste (Witsoe, 2012a, 2012b). Castes have historically competed for state power (Gupta, 2005) and the caste order has been shaped by colonial (Dirks, 1992) and postcolonial state policies (Jodhka, 2012). I built on the links between caste and state to explore how the performative politics of caste shapes the everyday implementation of the ICDS. I found that in Sundar Block, the dominant Maratha caste deployed social and political power through kinship, caste and political networks to corner a majority of ICDS field positions and thereby programme benefits and resources. Additionally, Maratha anganwadi workers used everyday programme/state practices to perform caste dominance and produce Dalit localities, communities and bodies as 'untouchable', 'polluted' subjects. Dalit localities and beneficiaries were excluded from ICDS services thereby subverting ICDS programme objectives and producing gaps in development programme implementation. However, in a significant departure from available literature on state and development, I also found that Dalit state functionaries (a group that has historically energised Dalit political mobilisation) in the ICDS,

challenged and resisted Maratha domination by invoking the structures and rules of Weberian bureaucracy. A Dalit anganwadi worker and a Dalit Supervisor confronted Maratha attempts to undermine their bureaucratic position and subordinate their labour by invoking the imaginary of the formal, rule bound state. This Dalit challenge performatively reconfigured the local politics of caste, reset state practices and re-established the state–society boundary that had been blurred by the Maratha use of state power as caste power. The intersection of local caste politics with everyday state practices reproduced dominance and exclusion and thereby gaps between policy and practice, but also created spaces for confrontation, resistance, competing imaginaries and the reconstitution of politics, practices and boundaries.

Political mediation is also known to influence state functioning through systems of vertical and horizontal corruption to generate campaign finance (Berenschot, 2010; Witsoe, 2012a). Such corruption is regarded as the main cause of the Indian state's inability to deliver welfare and development in popular discourse (Mathur, 2016). I took an anthropological approach that eschewed moral framings and built on legal pluralism, to study informal financial practices in the ICDS. I studied two aspects of the ICDS programme that emerged as ethnographically significant during fieldwork – the Supplementary Nutrition Programme and the administrative process of promotions and transfers. I found that the process of provision of daily supplementary nutrition at the anganwadi centre was governed by a regime of informal payments called *takkewari*. Anganwadi workers contracted to supply hot, fresh meals and snacks to pre-schoolers at low rates inflated attendance numbers, menus and bills to extract earnings and paid Supervisors and CDPOs a percentage or *takkewari* to do so. Informal payments were also required for promotions and transfers in the ICDS at the district level especially the promotion from anganwadi worker to Supervisor. However unlike much existing literature on informal financial practices in India, I found that the *takkewari* system was not driven by political demands and neither were promotions and transfers effectively mediated by political brokers. Rather, the *takkewari* system emerged as a means to address the contrariness and thereby un-implementability of bureaucratic rules and enabled supplementary nutrition services to be delivered, anganwadi workers to gain incomes and Supervisors and CDPOs to recover the monies spent to acquire their promotions and transfers. Instead of being part of larger systems of political and social control, the *takkewari* system was local and performatively produced through continuous negotiations of power and authority across bureaucratic levels. Informal financial practices in the ICDS did produce gaps in implementation by affecting the quality of supplementary nutrition and worker motivation, however, they did not impede

beneficiary access to ICDS services. These findings challenge prevalent anthropological understandings, based on the methodological difficulties of studying informal practices and the wider pathologisation of financial informality, that 'corruption talk' far exceeds its reality.

Reforms to the Indian developmental state, initiated in the 1990s, amidst a transnational context of neoliberalism and good governance (Gupta and Sharma, 2006) have contributed to the proliferation of the new orienting values of fiscal austerity, marketization, consensus, transparency and decentralization (Bear and Mathur, 2015). In the Sundar block ICDS project, these values inspired a project of local level state reform, ISO certification, under which ICDS officials anticipating competition from private pre-schools sought to secure the future of the programme by requiring anganwadi workers to entrepreneurially refurbish and redecorate anganwadi centres to resemble private pre-schools. The spruced up anganwadi centres were then independently certified for quality as per the ISO 9001:2008 quality management system. Scholarship on standardisation and audit technologies emphasises that these processes generate new relations of governance and power but I built on the insight that the translation of technologies into rationalities is mediated by the problematics of implementation to study the ISO certification initiative. I found that most anganwadi workers operating in resource poor contexts struggled to raise the resources required for ISO certification and ultimately resorted to their routine practices of implementation namely, staging, patronage and investment, for ISO certification as well. Anganwadi workers staged the audit day, MIS records and financial receipts to reconcile the realities of programme implementation with the incompatibility of programme rules. They raised funds from political patrons and in several cases invested their own funds. This last strategy emerged from a larger context of anganwadi workers anticipating and struggling for the regularisation of their position as volunteers in the ICDS. Neo-liberal technologies thus did not generate entrepreneurial subjects but led to the improvisation of strategies to make it appear as if such entrepreneurship had been produced.

In sum, governance of the ICDS at the sub-district or implementation level was determined in interaction with the politics of caste and the unimplementability of programme rules but not vertical systems of corruption or neoliberal rationalities. ICDS functionaries performed and negotiated caste politics through state practices as part of local struggles of domination and subordination. They also improvised and staged programme practices in response to resource scarcity and the impracticalities of adhering to programme rules and expectations. ICDS functionaries' performances,

negotiations and improvisations produced gaps and variations between programme policy and practices. However, these gaps and variations did not always imply that programme objectives were being subverted and services not delivered.

Interpreting the gaps between development policy and practice

For Mosse (2013, 2004) the disjuncture between development policy and practice is the inevitable outcome of the differences between, respectively, the worlds of policy thought and developmental action. Mosse conceives of policy as a mobilising metaphor around which transnational, national and local agencies including donors, governments and non-governmental organisations as well as professional communities of researchers and administrators coalesce. Enrolling and building coalitions between such dispersed and diverse interests requires policy to be necessarily vague and ambiguous (including concepts such as empowerment, participation, partnership, governance, social capital) and thereby essentially un-implementable or a poor guide for action. Practice, on the other hand, is shaped by the relations, interests and cultures of implementing organisations. Building on Latour (1999), Mosse and Lewis (2006) use the concept of 'translation' to understand the processes underlying the transformation of policy (development models, strategies and project designs) into practice. In this understanding, people and institutions that enrol into/adopt particular policy models and programme designs translate them into the different logic of their interests, goals and ambitions, which in turn determines practices. In a participatory rural development project in india, Mosse (2005) found that participatory planning processes were dominated by the village elite who used them to reproduce power relations, garner public support for private interest and grab project resources for themselves and/or their patronage networks. Similarly, the 'local choices' that emerged were found to be influenced by the development agenda of the scientists, researchers, government officials and consultants associated with the project from time to time. Finally, the managerial and organisational systems of the implementing agency such as budgeting, approval and accounting systems profoundly shaped project choices and practices. Thus, the policy design of 'participation' was translated through the everyday action of tribal villagers, field workers, office staff, project managers, consultants and researchers into non-participatory project practices of tight schedules, quantified targets and pre-determined budgets as well as relationships of patronage and hierarchy. However, at the same time, this diverse group of actors also worked actively to uphold the policy model of 'participation' to which project success, financial resources and support communities were attached. For Mosse development projects

thus work as systems of representations oriented towards wider policy goals and funding institutions rather than operational realties. Policy models are not implemented, they do not generate practices rather practices emerge from organisational contexts and sustain policy designs that offer the most coherent interpretation of events

Building on this influential analysis, a growing body of anthropological work has explored the inner workings, practices and processes of international development. These studies underscore the socially constructed nature of development programmes highlighting that development actors at all levels from 'beneficiaries' to project managers exercise agency assigning a variety of goals and meanings to projects, acting in diverse and not always expected ways in the context of specific development models and creating order and unity through political acts of composition (Beck, 2016). Bending and Rosendo (2006) and Rossi (2006) find that beneficiaries of development are not passive recipients but actively collude with the dominant rhetoric and/or manipulate it through many small acts of reinterpretation to serve their own ends. Similarly, Desai (2006) and Shrestha (2006) highlight that frontline workers, who are expected to bridge the disjuncture between policy and practice actively work to maintain such disjunctures as part of the construction and maintenance of their own professional identities. Such distributed agency leads to the multiplication of criteria for and claims of success (Mosse, 2013). Development projects may lead to unexpected outcomes, project outcomes may not be uniform across beneficiaries and beneficiaries may regard a project as successful even if policy goals remain unmet and vice versa (Beck, 2016). Finally, development expertise/knowledge/policy ideas are found to be shaped institutionally and maintained through extrainstitutional and/or transnational networks of experts (Mosse, 2013).

Much of this research on development policy and practice has been described as 'aidnography' (Mosse, 2013, p. 232) as it focuses on the international development apparatus and amongst other issues, examines the tensions between the development goals and organisation goals of NGOs (Beck, 2016). My thesis builds on and contributes to this analytical literature on development by highlighting the constructed nature of state practices, particularly, the agency of state functionaries in shaping these practices. I detail how the social lives and professional motivations of state functionaries at the sub-district level as well as the incompatibility of programme rules to operational contexts influenced ICDS programme implementation and practices. ICDS functionaries used state practices to perform caste dominance and produce the exclusion of marginalised groups. The intersection of state practices with caste politics,

however, also opened up spaces for confronting the caste order. That is, functionaries from the dominant caste used state power to reproduce caste power, whereas those from marginalised groups used state power to challenge caste power. Additionally, ICDS workers' objectives of gaining contractual incomes from the Supplementary Nutrition Programme as well as obtaining convenient posts, career advancement and ultimately social mobility supported a system of informal financial practices within the programme which compromised the quality of supplementary nutrition services. Finally, the un-implementability of programme rules based on resource limitations, unrealistic targets and the contrary directives of senior officials generated a variety of functionary improvisations including,the staging of audits, manipulation of MIS records, faking of financial receipts and the investment of personal funds. This last strategy was motivated by frontline functionaries' desire for the regularisation of their volunteer position.

Mathur (2016) in her study of state practices in India too identified that officials believed that programme rules could never really be implemented as intended and they needed to improvise to make it appear on paper as if they they had been. However I also found that such improvisation by ICDS functionaries was not a given, that is official representation and programme realities did not always diverge. There were instances when programme goals cohered with the interests of workers especially when these related to establishing the legitimacy of their roles, the programme and the state. That is ICDS workers also needed to be seen as performing their roles by the community. So, while ICDS workers manipulated undernutrition data in the Monthly Progress Reports (MPRs) to match unrealistic targets, they reported data on children with severe acute malnutrition accurately as the legitimacy of their roles as anganwadi workers, the ICDS programme and the state was linked to the reduction of undernutrition related child deaths. Thus not all data in the MPR was a fabrication to generate an official reality or uphold particular policy models. Similarly, while anganwadi workers did source funds by inventing receipts, the funds were indeed used and often supplemented to materially alter the appearance of their anganwadi centres and secure the future of the programme and thereby their own future.

One of the significant findings of the thesis is that the interaction of caste politics with development programme practices enabled performative sites for challenging the dominant social and political order. The assertion of Scheduled caste ICDS functionaries was facilitated by the policies of reservation in public sector employment, which enabled them to access state power and bureaucratically claim the same or

higher social status as members of the dominant and general castes. The exclusion produced through the politics of caste in welfare programmes was thus countered through the assertion inherent in the politics of reservation. This finding sheds light on the additional paths through which state implemented development programmes can potentially facilitate social change.

Finally, I highlight that the practices of ICDS functionaries were both performative as well as sometimes a performance. Performative practices such as providing hot cooked meals to pre-schoolers, measuring and recording weights of under 6s, preparing MPRs, refurbishing anganwadi centres and attending meetings produced the ICDS programme and the developmental state as effects as well as ICDS workers, anganwadi centres and MPRs as agents and symbols of the developmental state. Interactions with the politics and performativity of caste as well as incompatibility of rules influenced everyday enactments creating gaps between design and practice. The disjuncture, which produced exclusion of the marginalised but also facilitated implementation, was concealed through 'performance'.

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