

SEMINAR

Caste and the Business of Democracy

A Qualitative Study of Gram Panchayat
Elections in Rural Karnataka

Speaker

Kripa Ananthpur

Associate Professor,
Madras Institute of Development Studies

Chair

A.R. Venkatachalapathy

Professor,
Madras Institute of Development Studies

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CHENNAI

Over the decade, panchayat budgets in Karnataka have seen a staggering increase. Can increased devolution of funds lead to social change? What has been its impact on local democracy, especially on political contestation and caste at the panchayat level?

This seminar, based on a ten-year ethnographic study in 26 villages of Gulbarga and Raichur districts in northern Karnataka, shows a dualistic but intertwined model of local democracy emerging in a region where economic opportunities are limited.

Even as traditional political players use the local political space to regroup and remobilise to maintain caste cohesion, the new entrants, particularly non-dominant castes and educated youth, craft new forms of inter- and intra-caste alliances to stake economic and political claims.