

Abstract The objective of this thesis is to study the dynamics of organizational memory and forgetting in Village Panchayat, the lowest tier of India's three-tier rural local government and to examine the phenomena of managing memory and forgetting in public organization. In particular, the thesis aims to explore the locations and constituents of organizational memory, modes of organizational forgetting and the role of politics in construction and erasing of memories in local government. This existing body of scholarship on Village Panchayats is strong and has justifiably attracted scholars who have analyzed people's participation, women empowerment, service delivery and its politicization. But an analysis of Village Panchayats as a rich site for memory studies remains uncharted.

Village Panchayats work in close proximity with citizen's needs, where people's participation is encouraged so that local needs get reflected in policy outcomes. In West Bengal, panchayats have played a crucial role since their inception in 1978 in delivery of pro-poor programs such as land reform, disaster relief and poverty alleviation schemes. This makes panchayats possible reservoirs of local knowledge on policy implementation and service delivery. Local politics too, plays a major role in the functioning of panchayats. As a result, these organizations have a memory of politics and politicization of its functions and functionalities. Village Panchayats in West Bengal supposedly hold four decades of memory of implementation of development schemes and local experience of party politics. Such uniqueness embellishes Village Panchayats of West Bengal as sites worthy for memory studies. The present context of the State is crucial for studying memory since it has undergone political change after the state assembly election of 2011 when Trinamool Congress came to power with a massive mandate that effectively ended 34 years of ruling by the Left Front Government. The victory of Trinamool congress along with the downfall of the Left Front regime continued in 2013 panchayat elections and again in the 2016 state assembly election. Such political changeover provides us with an opportunity to analyze how Village Panchayats work the past and how their members present the past to suit the present or to influence the future.

This thesis is based on an ethnographic study, in which we delved into Village Panchayats from two districts of West Bengal. The finding, first, identifies five possible storage locations of organizational memory in panchayats, which include the minds of its members, social network of the officials, register books and files, oral narratives, and the

