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**COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE FACILITATING LEARNING AND  
INNOVATION IN THE INDIAN ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES – A  
QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATIVE STUDY**

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**THESIS**

**SUBMITTED TO CASS BUSINESS SCHOOL  
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## **ABSTRACT:**

The objective of this thesis is to investigate, identify, record and capture the formation of Communities of Practice and the associated processes of Communities of Practice-facilitated learning, i.e. Situated Learning and Communities of Practice -facilitated innovation within the organizational context of Indian Administrative Services (henceforth referred to as IAS) officers. The organizational context of the IAS is a fascinating one with its rich legacy and tradition of being the successor to the erstwhile Indian Civil Services (henceforth referred to as ICS) of the British Raj; and its subsequent position as the administrative elite in the political scenario of post-independence India. This research context was selected driven by personal considerations of the researcher who enjoyed familiarity with the social world of IAS officers.

Communities of Practice (henceforth referred to as CoPs) are a cutting-edge, modern, progressive business theory of knowledge management, knowledge creation and learning. The location of CoPs lies in the theory of Situated Learning as proposed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in their work 'Situated learning'(1991) on contextualized learning. Situated Learning proposes that the learning process of an individual is much more than the cognitive process of acquisition of skills and knowledge but situated in a social context, and it is through participation in the social context that the learning process occurs. This theory of Situated Learning has been adopted in the current research as a key conceptual framework. The objective of this research investigation was to capture and record the learning processes of the IAS officers through formation of CoPs and their participation in them. CoP-facilitated innovation was studied by the researcher deploying the framework of an informal network of innovative champions, i.e. individuals with innovative ideas and practices who facilitate the diffusion of innovative practices through the organization.

The research methodology adopted has been qualitative, ethnographic, interpretive and case-study based. Two discrete case-studies were conducted in two distinct regions of India, Karnataka and West Bengal with distinctly diverse administrative and political histories.

There emerged a key surprise in this research which was the evidence of IAS officers forming an elite group, this phenomenon which was manifested while conducting the case-study on West Bengal cadre IAS officers. There were methodological issues which were emergent during the conducting of the case-study on West Bengal cadre IAS officers like access, process of data collection i.e. conducting interviews which clearly indicated an elite character of the group being researched. This necessitated revisiting and revising of relevant research literature on elites and methodology pertaining to elite research issues. The current research study did not intend to study IAS officers considering them as an elite group but more as professionals and hence the elite section in this research thesis was incorporated at later stage and separately.

The research literature on CoPs has progressed since the researcher commenced this study and there have been several differing views. This particular research work has influenced the contemporary research literature on CoPs by demonstrating the boundaries of the existing theories, the limitations of their applications and has expanded the scope of the existing theories in terms of accounting for several extraneous factors like the organizational legacies and traditions. The research findings question the avant-garde nature proposed by theorists of CoPs and it is not necessarily a panacea for all challenges of knowledge transfer and creation.

Codes of Conduct, a clear, definitive, unwritten guide to appropriate behaviour as an IAS officer, a kind of dos and donts for a good IAS officer emerged as an important building block for formation of CoPs. This well-defined behaviour guide, the Codes of Conduct were transmitted in a tacit form from one generation to another.

In conclusion, the findings of the research study indicates the tremendous influence of legacies and traditions of the ICS on the formation and functioning of CoPs and the associated processes of CoP-facilitated learning, that is Situated Learning. The ICS legacy and tradition determined their status as an elite group to a large extent, since the IAS cadres belonging to the regions which were directly under ICS rule, the IAS officers attached to those cadres displayed traits of an elite civil services group which were not evident and present in the parts of India that were not directly ruled by ICS officers.

The findings indicated fragmentation of Communities of Practice when the ambient conditions were missing which have been defined in this study as Codes of Conduct and is identified as one of the key building blocks of the formation of Communities of Practice.

## **GLOSSARY:**

**The Academy** - Training academy for IAS officers in Mussorie.

**British Raj** - The period of colonial rule of India by the British Empire.

**Burra Sahib** - This refers to someone holding an important position in British India, usually a Britisher, the phrase continued in independent India to denote people holding positions of power.

**Cadre** - The state to which an IAS officer is assigned and serves that state government.

**Civil Services** - All the designated services of Government of India.

**CoPs** - Communities of Practice.

**CoInvs** - Communities of Practice steering innovation

**IAS** - Indian Administrative Services.

**ICS** - Indian Civil Services.

**Presidency regions** - Parts of India under direct British rule during the period of British regime of India.

**Presidency cadres** - Cadres allocated to IAS officers belonging to states which were under direct British rule and governed by ICS officers.

**Princely State** - Indian regions which were run independently by Indian rulers, usually Royal dynasties during the period of British rule in India.

**Pukka-Sahib** - Proper Anglicized Indian Gentleman.

**Reservation** - The special allocation of seats in the civil service competitive examinations for different social groups like castes as part of affirmative action.

**SDO** - Sub-Divisional Officer responsible for an administrative unit of the district.

**Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes** - Historically disadvantaged sections of Indian society based on the identity of caste and tribes as recognized by the Constitution of India.

**Secretariat** - Government offices located in the state capitals of India and in the capital of India, New Delhi, the seat of power in government where all the top administrators including politicians are located.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION:**

The research origins can be traced to the days when the researcher was working on a Knowledge Management project for the energy sector in a consulting firm based in the UK. At this stage the researcher evinced an interest in pursuing a doctoral research on the theme of Communities of Practice with an empirical fieldwork. Communities of Practice is an informal coalescence of individuals who ‘share a knowledge and practice about which they shared views and thoughts regularly’ (Wenger, 1998). This is a very rich concept with its focus on meaning, identity, practice, innovation and learning and was felt to be the perfect kaleidoscopic theoretical construct to understand and study organizations and their context.

During the researcher’s tenure at the consulting firm where he was responsible for designing and developing knowledge management tools and platforms, CoPs was the buzzword sweeping through the Knowledge Management world. At the time CoPs were promised to be the revolution in organizational theory, as a new organizational form which would galvanize and radically transform the process of knowledge sharing, learning and change (Wenger et al.2002; Wenger & Snyder, 2000). The concept of CoPs, i.e. informal entities of individuals exchanging, sharing and creating knowledge is related to the notion of socially contextual processes of learning known as Situated Learning. Situated Learning as a theory was pioneered by Lave and Wenger (1991) where the notion of learning was proposed to be embedded in a social and cultural context (Wenger et al.2002; Wenger & Snyder, 2000, 1998; Orr, 1990; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Brown and Duguid, 1991).

CoPs were perceived to be the repository of knowledge generation, knowledge sharing and knowledge creation within organization, and proposed to be the most promising sources of innovation (Hildreth 2004; Wenger et al.2002; Wenger & Snyder, 2002; Brown & Duguid, 2000; Wenger, 1998). The topic seemed to the researcher as progressive, modern and interesting one in terms of the interpretation of how individuals learn, share, preserve and create knowledge within organizations.

Along with the decision made with regards to the research topic, another major decision was the location for conducting this research, and here India was selected for personal reasons. Having identified the research topic and the location, the search now was for an organization where the study could be executed. It was at this stage the researcher's mind pondered over the politics of India vis-à-vis its economics. At that point in time the well-known economic success story of India was being trumpeted by the media, politicians, industrialists and the general public. The question about India's political story sprang forth in the researcher's mind: how does one define India's political story of the last 60 years, is this story a success or a failure?

In the first decade of this new 21<sup>st</sup> century, one expression which dominated the lexicon of global policy discourse encompassing the rarefied echelons of Davos Summit and university lecture-halls was 'Democracy'. Nations, multilateral institutions and regional blocs like European Union were all engaged in a conversation about spreading democracy to different countries and societies, and this emerged as a key challenge for the new century. Against this backdrop, what really stood apart is the success of Indian democracy, with its multi-party system, fair and free elections where ruling governments have been thrown out of power on a regular basis and an active participation of the electorate cutting across socio-economic barriers. This was for the researcher a true success story of the Indian political system. The next glowing thought about India's political story which emerged was the existence of a united India with a secular identity despite all the secessionist, parochial and communal forces attempting to tear apart the social fabric.

The researcher's generation had witnessed while growing up in India of the eighties and nineties the very visible threats of 'national fragmentation', widespread communal violence and rise of identity politics along the lines of caste and language. A mention should be made of the experience of the early 1990s, the period when the researcher started his university education and the entire nation of India was engulfed in large-scale caste and communal violence affecting educational campuses leading to a large number of student deaths. The researcher recollected how he often heard in his student years in India, cynics warning of a civil war and balkanization of India into smaller states.

Thankfully when the researcher returned to India to conduct this study they have been proven wrong and India continued to march on as a democratic, secular and united nation along with all the challenges. In the mind of the researcher the two distinct embodiments of the success of Indian democracy were the free and fair elections and a national unity encompassing incredible amounts of linguistic, regional, ethnic, religious and caste diversity. Today many would ascribe this success to one of the factors being the existence of a unified civil service, the IAS being the backbone of the governing structure of the Indian nation for making it all possible to keep India united and democratic.

It is widely accepted that a strong national civil service, often referred to as the 'steel frame'<sup>(1)</sup> played and continues to play a significant role to keep a diverse country together and administer the vast institutional framework (Gurcharan Das, 2000). IAS officers being from a pan-India civil service play a vital role in maintaining the national unity (Guha, 2008; Prasad, 2006). In fact the rationale for creating the IAS and preserving the imperial British predecessor service, the ICS, was the preservation of national unity. Sardar Patel who advocated the continuance of the ICS spoke about them being 'instruments of national unity' and went on to warn the sceptics 'remove them and I see nothing but a picture of chaos all over the country.' Sardar Patel's vision of the national unified civil service was 'the new constitution could be worked only by a ring of service which will keep the country intact.' Hence in achieving the national unity, one of the successes of Indian democracy, Indian Administrative Services played a crucial role.

The second remarkable achievement being of holding fair and free elections with a very diverse electorate where the adult franchise is extended to all sections of society, irrespective of educational literacy, gender, economic status unlike many Western democracies which restricted adult franchise in its early stages of democracy. Many dubbed this universal adult franchise in the early years of Indian independence as a risky political experiment. Mr. Sukumar Sen, the first election Commissioner of India was an ICS officer 'who laid the groundwork for elections in India and the IAS officers have kept the machinery going' (Guha, 2008). IAS officers are engaged at every stage of the election process with the Chief Election Commissioners at the central and regional level, as observers and at the grass-roots district level as District Collectors conducting them

ensuring a fair and free one. It would be worthy to mention the name of Mr. T.N. Seshan, an IAS officer, who was the Chief Election Commissioner of India and is credited with cleaning up the system and was known for his stern and strict ways with the political class. Many attribute the cleansing of the Indian electoral system to Mr. Seshan and appreciate his contribution enormously. Hence in conducting free and fair nationwide elections the IAS officers have played and continue to play a key and significant role.

The current avatar of IAS, as a successor to the ICS is one of the most 'enduring legacy' of British Raj which lives on with its unfurled glory. Apart from its contributions to the sustenance of Indian democracy, it should be mentioned there was a personal affinity and respect towards the IAS on the researcher's part. The researcher and his contemporaries growing up in India were convinced that the best possible route for a bright young man or woman was not trade but civil service, dubbed as the 'haven of mental power' (Gurcharan Das, 2000). There was enormous prestige associated with entering the IAS. They were the researcher's generation's heroes, role models who inspired the philosophy of nation-building, who embodied the very spirit of leadership and ruled India with firm and fair hand. In the post-independence years the IAS were India's 'tryst with destiny', an expression drawn from the independence day speech by the first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, since the state assumed significant control over the economic affairs of the country with limited role for the private capital. This period has often been dubbed as the 'license Raj' when the state dictated terms for pursuit of private enterprise.

Interestingly, the most alluring part of being in the company of an Indian Civil Servant was the charismatic character, they were the gentlemen-scholars, articulate, confident and yet gracious with excellent manners acquired through their schooling. Indian civil servants were dilettantes, generalists who could hold scintillating conversations about any topic under the sun and some of them went on to write poetry and fiction. Personally they held powerful fascination for the researcher which translated into a role-model professional to be replicated in all walks of life not just in administering a district, particularly the notion of being a gentleman first. The critical and impressive role as being guardians of Indian democracy and national unity coupled with the personal inclinations made the researcher seriously consider IAS as a fascinating organizational

context for conducting research. The researcher was intrigued how a modern, progressive management theory would be applicable in a traditional civil service institution in a non-Western democratic setting.

Hence Communities of Practice emerged as a fascinating and promising conceptual framework to study the mechanisms of learning and knowledge transfer within the organization of IAS. Thus was the conceiving of this particular research idea about Communities of Practice and the facilitated processes of learning, i.e. Situated Learning and Innovation within the Indian Administrative Service officers. An interesting research project, where the topic CoPs was identified on rational grounds of being progressive and modern business management theory and the organizational context being selected by personal fascination and curiosity.

### **1.1 RESEARCH RATIONALE:**

The IAS having been identified as an institution which preserves the unity of the country and has been and continues to be successful in conducting free and fair elections, the next question which arose is about the operating mechanisms. It was clear to the researcher that these IAS officers were engaged in coordinated efforts which involved sharing of knowledge, generation of knowledge and passing on knowledge to the new entrants to the institution.

The IAS as an organization must have its own distinct operational logic for processes for executing the tasks and activities.

This would be an interesting site to offer insights about the learning and knowledge management activities in business theory terms. With regards to innovation, the researcher studied the Administrative Reforms Commission report(2005) in order to understand the current IAS and this report called for re-positioning the Indian Administrative Services in 'the changed context of global integration, emergence of markets and liberalization'.

The report also ranked the Indian Administrative Services low in innovation and calls for 'Strategies for up-gradation of skills and competencies of civil servants and administrative cadres' and 'Promote knowledge sharing to realize continuous improvement in the quality of governance'. Hence according to the researcher one of the possible responses might be

the formation of Communities of Practice amongst the IAS officers as a mechanism for 'innovation' in terms of knowledge creation, i.e. generating new ideas to face the challenges of governance mentioned by the report.

Some of the key points which the researcher identified about the IAS:

- 1.0 The tasks and activities which the IAS have been credited with like conducting elections and preserving national unity requires substantial coordination between them, and is a team effort and hence there must be a mechanism of collective learning.
- 2.0 There does not seem to be any significant disruption of legacies and traditions between generations of IAS officers, even those of the earlier generations of ICS have seemed to be passed on to the next generation of IAS officers in some mechanism of contextual learning, i.e. Situated Learning. Considering the instance of free and fair elections Guha (2008) mentions that the successive generation of IAS officers kept the election conducting machinery intact which was established by the first ICS election Commissioner. This must be holding true for the successive generations of IAS officers who are clearly engaged in transfer of knowledge and information to the new recruits each year. This clearly indicates the existence of a transfer mechanism of knowledge and information between the different generations of IAS officers.
- 3.0 The pan-India nature of IAS, the celebrated notion of the custodians of united India, indicated to the researcher a tacit existence of a community of shared attributes like values, identity, meaning and understanding.
- 4.0 There might be possible formation of Communities of Practice to generate new ideas, innovation in the field of governance and administration as a response to the forces of globalization and free-market economic forces.

These above four factors provided the rationale for the conducting of research study about a modern, progressive management theory of Communities of Practice within a traditional

civil service institution like IAS. With respect to innovation, the researcher anticipated the IAS having been confronted with the forces of globalization, economic liberalization would be instrumental collectively in fostering innovation as a response to the changing world order. The above discussion is perfectly in tune with the notion of CoP- facilitated learning mechanisms and the points provide adequate rationale for the research study. As a doctoral management researcher, the researcher felt that IAS would be a fascinating study in the realm of business theories concerning learning, organization and change management.

### **1.2 RESEARCH AIM:**

To explore, identify, capture and record the formation of Communities of Practice within the institution of IAS amongst the IAS officers and the associated processes of Communities of Practice-facilitated learning, i.e. Situated Learning and CoP-facilitated Innovation.

### **1.3 RESEARCH GOALS & OBJECTIVES:**

To outline broadly the specific directions of the research questions:

1. The first objective being to ascertain whether in the light of these responses, if there are 'Communities of Practice' existing amongst the IAS officers belonging to a certain cadre? Is there a 'community' with shared dimensions' amongst the IAS officers? Or Are they all distinct individuals without any shared attributes?
2. The second objective is to explore processes of collective learning and individual learning contextually in the IAS where these may exist within Communities of Practice or are they external to them?? The fundamental question is if the mechanisms for facilitating of the processes of innovation and learning within the IAS are Communities of Practice? Does the notion of a Situated Learning exist and actively occur within the IAS relating to the induction of the newcomers, the fresh recruits into the IAS?
3. The third objective is to identify the response of the IAS to the changing world and their understanding, and if so how does it translate into innovative practices? If so, does the process of innovation occur within Communities of Practice?

The subsequent Literature Review will refine and more succinctly define the broad research questions into more sharply delineated ones. This will provide the directions for further investigations.

#### **1.4 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY:**

Research design can be defined as a framework for collection, interpretation and analysis of the data required. In this research a qualitative methodology has been adopted in tune with the literature review, type of the phenomenon being studied and the past empirical work conducted on the CoPs (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). An exploratory, descriptive, instrumental, holistic, multiple case-studies has been designed (Yin, 2003a; 2003b).

A result of the literature review was the succinct delineation of the concept of Communities of Practice into the twin distinct concepts of 'Community' and 'Practice', the notion of 'Community' being defined along the lines of shared meaning, identity and understanding and the 'Practice' being defined along the lines of 'Learning' and 'Innovation'. The research study was conducted along two lines chronologically, the first to ascertain the existence of a 'Community' element of the Communities of Practice and the final case-studies focused on the Practice element of the Communities of Practice.

The boundaries of the context were defined along the lines of cadres, i.e the Indian states where the IAS officers served or are serving and in this study the two states selected were Karnataka and West Bengal. There was an initial pilot-study conducted based on life-histories deploying the technique of story-telling to identify the existence of a Community, one of the key dimensions of Community of Practice within a selected sample of IAS officers drawn from both the cadres.

The final case-studies were conducted on West Bengal for the Communities of Practice-facilitated learning mechanism i.e. Situated Learning and Karnataka for the Communities of Practice-facilitated innovation mechanisms. Case-Study method was selected since the researcher felt that this was the most appropriate method since the researcher had practically no control over the events being scrutinized.

The primary source of qualitative data for the case-study research were the personalized interviews. Triangulation was deployed where along with the interview data the following techniques were used; participant observation, biographies, memoirs, diaries, journals and documents.

### **1.5 RESEARCH ‘SURPRISE’ FINDINGS – ELITE STUDIES:**

The researcher did not intend to study the IAS officers as an elite group collectively or individually but more as an organizational entity. This approach held true through the pilot-study stage and there were no surprises in terms of findings. However during the conducting of the case-study on West Bengal cadre IAS officer for CoP-facilitated learning, i.e. Situated Learning, there were clear indicators with respect to methodological dimensions like access and conducting of interviews, that this was an elite group under study. The researcher had to incorporate a separate chapter on elite studies, with regards to the methodology and conceptual framework. The conceptual framework was developed through a literature review on elites pertaining to Communities of Practice. This ‘surprise’ finding from the field-work research has been termed by the researcher as ‘serendipitous’ findings and has been detailed in a separate chapter on elites research.

### **1.6 RESEARCH TIMELINE:**

The research study was conducted over a period of 3 years. The timeline has been explained below:

1<sup>st</sup> Year – Pilot-Study

2<sup>nd</sup> Year – West Bengal Case-Study

3<sup>rd</sup> Year – Karnataka Case-Study and West Bengal Case-Study

Important to note that these years mentioned are not corresponding to the the years of enrollment in the study program of the PhD. The fieldwork commenced only during the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of enrollment in the doctoral program. West Bengal case-study was conducted during the researcher’s visit to Kolkata, the capital city of West Bengal over a period of 2 years intermittently. The case-study for the West Bengal cadre involved relationship-building with the respondents prior to being granted the formal interviews. The relationship-building entailed being part of the social circuit socializing with the community of IAS officers by attending events like book launches, musical concerts and

lectures. This allowed the researcher to be warmly welcomed within their social circuit and gain an insight into the political milieu they operated in and the collective history of the IAS of West Bengal cadre. This was important in order to grasp the conversations about their formation of Communities of Practice.

### **1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS:**

The introductory chapter provides the overview of the research topic, research goals and objectives and the context in which it is being conducted. A broad discussion about the rationale and relevance of the research with regards to the context was presented as part of this chapter. Research methodology and the nature of empirical work has been briefly mentioned along with the timeline. The biographical elements of the researcher, the personal decisions and choices of the researcher have been presented, these being an important driving force of the research work. The ‘surprise’ element of this particular research, the elite dimension of research have been briefly explained.

Chapter 2 is the exploration of the research context, the organizational context of IAS in its entirety. The historical roots of the IAS have been discussed and elaborated, the predecessor service, the ICS of the British Raj and its key characteristics like recruitment, roles and responsibilities and the image and character of the individual. Similar discussions have been presented with respect to post-independence India’s civil service, IAS with all the key elements and the perception of the individual, the IAS officer in the wider society. The continuity of the traditions and legacies of the ICS in the contemporary IAS have been discerned and discussed.

Chapter 3 is literature review of the different concepts of CoPs and the key canonical works of the early pioneers of the idea of CoPs. There is a snapshot of the landscape of the contemporary research literature on CoPs. The key elements of CoPs, i.e. identity, meaning and understanding have been elaborated with respect to different authors. Situated Learning has been detailed and discussed as part of the Learning mechanism facilitated by CoPs. Innovation as relevant to CoP-facilitated practice have been discussed and the thoughts and concepts in the field explored. The literature review on Learning and Innovation have been specifically confined to the aspects relevant to CoPs, in others words Learning and Innovation as facilitated by CoPs and not the much broader

research literature on Learning and Innovation. An outcome of the chapter is the succinct definition and delineation of the key elements of CoPs as relevant for this research work.

Chapter 4 is the one on development of the conceptual framework for the current research on CoPs in the organizational context of IAS officers, this being akin to the development of a 'toolkit' for the conducting this research. The current theoretical gaps in the research literature have been explored and the potential contribution of this particular research have been explored. Identification of the theoretical gaps and the potential research contribution is an important outcome of this chapter. The detailed research questions have been developed as part of this chapter based on the conceptual framework.

Chapter 5 is an explanation, elaboration of the research methodology deployed for this particular research. The research philosophy, research approach and the epistemological direction have been discussed. Based on the broad contours of the research direction developed through these discussions about research philosophy and the epistemological dimension of this research, the research methodology was selected and have been discussed in details. The initial pilot-study results have been presented in a snapshot along with the research process outline including the different stages of conducting the research. Data Collection methods and analysis have been explained and discussed setting the framework for conducting the research.

Chapter 6 presented and discussed the methodological details of the case-study research including the background, rationale and context. The rationale and context of each of the case-studies were explained and discussed in details in separate section with respect to historical and geographical contexts as well. The process of identification of the interviewees for each of the cadres have been outlined.

Chapter 7 is the discussion on the 'surprise' element of this particular research, the elite dimension of the research. This 'surprise' element emerged while conducting the case-study research on one of the selected case-site of IAS officers belonging to West Bengal cadre. In this chapter methodological issues arising out of elite research have been elaborately discussed. The conceptual framework for studying elites have been developed and presented for interpretation of the collected data. The key outcome of this chapter has

been to provide direction and guidance to the entire research process in light of the new findings, with respect to elite dimensions.

Chapter 8 is the detailed presentation, exploration and discussion on the research findings of one of the case-study research, i.e. the West Bengal IAS cadre. The interpretation of the interview data against the template of the conceptual framework of Situated Learning have been presented and discussed. This chapter is the discussion of research findings on the case-study research conducted on Situated Learning within the West Bengal cadre IAS officers.

Chapter 9 is the detailed presentation, exploration and discussion on the research findings of one of the case-study research; i.e. the Karnataka cadre. The interpretation of the interview data against the template of the conceptual framework of CoP-facilitated innovation termed as CoInvs have been presented and discussed. This chapter is the discussion of research findings of the case-study research conducted on the Karnataka cadre IAS officers.

Chapter 10 is the concluding chapter of this research which discusses and elaborates the general findings transcending the boundaries of the case-studies, i.e. the broader context of IAS officers belonging to all cadres. The elite research findings based on the developed conceptual framework have been discussed and presented in this chapter. This chapter offers the reflexive exploration of the research journey, the biographical reflections of the researcher, the methodological, theoretical reflections and the broader reflections of the research process. The limitations of the current research work, future potential research work and the summing up of the entire research process are included in this chapter.

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## **2. RESEARCH CONTEXT – STALIN’S ‘A FEW HUNDRED MEN’:**

### **2.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION:**

This chapter explores, explains and discusses in details the organization of IAS which is the research context. The research context, organization of IAS, being a successor civil service of Indian Civil Services (ICS) of the British Raj is discussed in historical terms tracing its origins, legacies and traditions which have been inherited by the current civil service structure. In the next section, Indian Civil Service, as an administrative service is explored in terms of its global prestige and glamour, historical origins, background, methods of recruitment, image of the individual and the successor civil service in post-independence India i.e. the IAS. The following section discusses the legacies and traditions inherited in contemporary context of the IAS and the very nature of the institution of IAS in terms of recruitment, postings, training and the images of the personality associated with an IAS official.

### **2.2 INDIAN CIVIL SERVICES – STALIN’S ‘A FEW HUNDRED MEN’:**

At the height of imperial rivalry between the European powers, Russian leader, Joseph Stalin lamented the absurdity of the fact that so much of the world is ruled by the British Empire and went on to point out that it was ‘ridiculous.. that a few hundred Englishmen should dominate India ‘(Gilmour, 2005). These ‘few hundred men’ Stalin was referring to were the members of the Indian Civil Services. The Indian Civil Services evoked admiration, envy and awe from contemporary European leaders with imperial aspirations, including Bismark who thought ‘Britain’s work in India would be ‘one of its lasting monuments’ (Gilmour, 2005).

The showers of praise for ICS emanated across the Channel from old-imperial rival France, the French Abbé Dubois in 1822 extolled their virtues of ‘uprightness of character, education and ability (Gilmour,2005).’ Austrian Baron Huebner, ascribed the ‘miracles’ of the British administration to ‘the devotion, intelligence, the courage, the perseverance, and the skill combined with an integrity proof against all temptation, of a handful of officials and magistrates who govern and administer the Indian empire’ (Gilmour, 2005).

The statistics would justify this admiration of the system of governing multitudes by a few, in 1901, at the end of the regime of Queen Victoria, these ‘few hundred men’ referred to by Stalin in reality were few thousand men who governed a population nearly of 300 million people spread over the territory of modern India, Pakistan, Burma and Bangladesh both directly and indirectly of those belonging to the independent Princely states. Apart from applauses of the Imperial European leaders, ironically many Indians who were critical of the alien British over India even had few good words for the ICS. N.B. Bonarjee, an Indian nationalist, himself an ICS officer and hailing from a family of freedom-fighters praised ‘its rectitude, its sense of justice, its tolerance, its sense of public duty and its high administrative ability (Bonarjee, 1970).’ India’s first Home Minister, Vallabhbhai Patel designed the successor civil service in post-independence India, IAS along the lines of the ICS.

Gilmour(2005) mentions the candid effusiveness with which the retired members of independent India’s civil service, the IAS, were reminiscing the exploits of their British predecessors to the point of being embarrassing. In the next few sections the characteristics, patterns of recruitment, roles and responsibilities of these Stalin’s ‘few hundred men’ would be explored and discussed.

#### 2.2.1 ORIGINS OF THE ICS – THE HAILEYBURY’S SPIRIT:

The East India Company(henceforth referred to as the Company) which started as a trading outfit in India assumed a political and administrative role in 1790, and the company-appointed District Collector assumed powers of administration of criminal justice from the existing ruler of Bengal. In order to train the men who would be vested with the administrative responsibilities of India, particularly the Districts, the Company formulated an idea of training and education for such men who would be sent to India. There arose the notion of an academy to train administrators so that they can discharge competently administrative responsibilities of India and hence this academy was the brainchild of Lord Wellesley, the Governor-General of India.

ICS traces its origins to the East India College, Herts which opened officially in 1809 in Haileybury and where it lasted for fifty years. This college was along similar lines to a public school with the discipline and administration of an Oxford or a Cambridge.

Young men were appointed to this college by the nomination of the Directors of the Company who were left to their discretion to choose a young man who was 'able, industrious, had reasonably good manners and would do credit to his nominator' (Mason, 1985). The pleasant manners and social graces were evaluated during an interview process. The duration of the training was for a period of 3 years during which the students were taught Oriental languages, Western Classics, Mathematics, Law both General and Indian, General History and Political Economy. Besides academics students were encouraged to develop physical abilities and play sports like cricket, rowing and hunting. At the end of the term the students were evaluated by examinations in every subject. There was something distinct about the spirit fostered at Haileybury's which have been termed by the researcher as the 'Haileybury's spirit'. It was an esprit de corps, a camaraderie built on the playing grounds, over clinking glasses of claret and sharing dorms at the school. This spirit was about knowing each other, trusting each other, and having a sense of shared purpose of working for the Company, for the team and not just for their individual benefits. There pervaded a consciousness of having a great task ahead, of belonging to a prestigious service and a sense of grandeur of mission of serving the broader interests of the people. Interestingly despite the 'clique' of Haileybury's there existed an 'independence of outlook, a readiness to criticize' and to be candid about one's opinions even risking the displeasure of the authority (Mason, 1985).

### 2.2.2 'COMPETITION-WALLAHS' – THE CLASSICS SCHOLAR:

In 1853 based on a report by Macaulay Committee the entry to Haileybury's was thrown open to competition as opposed to the recommendations by the Directors of the company. This was regulated by a Government of India Act and was 17 years prior to British home Civil Service being opened to competition, which was still based on patronage. In other words, the competitive recruitment to the ICS was a progressive measure in its own time. The principle of recruitment being that 'the civil servant of the East India Company should have received the best, the most liberal, the most finished education that his country affords' (Mason, 1985).

These new recruits to the ICS, through competitive recruitment came to be known as the 'Competition-wallahs' and initially they were received with widespread skepticism by the older guard of 'Director-nominated' Haileybury's. They were concerned that the new

recruits would be lacking in the 'high spirits' i.e. being 'sporting' and were brandished as being 'bookish hobbledehoy's', who were unable to control a horse, who could not comprehend Hindustani and bumbled their way navigating through the customs of the country (Mason,1985). One of the Haileybury graduates, W.S. Seton-Kerr, speaking in 1864 about the competition-wallahs, 'We shall be content to be far surpassed in talent if we are only equalled in integrity and honour.' These concerns were allayed eventually with an interview as part of the evaluation and inclusion of physical sports in the qualifying examination like horse-riding(Gilmour, 2005).

The competition took place in a large number of subjects – English, Greek and Latin, French, German and Italian, Mathematics, Science and others. The ICS who went out to India to manage a district was a classics scholar and a sporty gentleman who loved the outdoors.

### 2.2.3 OXBRIDGE ICS – QUEEN VICTORIA'S CUSTODIANS:

The new method of recruitment involved spending 2 years after successful performance at the competition at one of the recommended 7 British universities prior to being sent to India on postings. This posed a disadvantage for Haileybury's which proved to be incompatible with the new system of recruitment and was eventually closed down in 1858. The 1853 Macaulay Committee desired only 'Gentlemen' to be recruited to the ICS, men who were educated at Oxford and Cambridge. ICS was deemed to be a fine career for the 'picked men of the universities' (Gilmour,2005). In the early years it was Oxford which dominated the list of ICS recruits trained prior to being sent to India. Training curriculum was academic at these selected universities, consisting of learning classical Oriental language and European languages, vernacular language of the province, attending court cases and writing reports of their impressions of the court cases.

On successful completion of their training they were allocated to the province of their choice according to their ranking obtained in the competition. Interestingly in 1858 a very significant development occurred with far-reaching implications for the ICS apart from the closure of Haileybury's, that is the transfer of governance of India to the Crown from the Company. This marked the end of an era for British India and with it started the

Victorian regime in India. Henceforth all ICS officers served the Crown in London, not the Company and were custodians of Queen Victoria's empire in the Indian sub-continent.

#### 2.2.4 INDIANS IN THE ICS – HEAVEN-BORN CIVIL SERVANTS:

Indians who were excluded from the higher posts including ICS were now eligible to compete for the recruitment. The 1853 Act opened the ICS to 'all natural-born subjects of the Crown.' Satyendranath Tagore, brother of India's first nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, was the first Indian to qualify for the ICS in 1863. It would be prudent to mention about the difficulties which the Indians encountered in joining the British administration and initially were not considered seriously by their British counterparts, who thought them to be 'bookish' and 'less sporting'. Assimilation with the British administration posed serious challenges and one finds the phenomena of Indians 'being more British than the British' and 'to adopt European mode of life in toto' including the language and talked about 'going home' when they went on holiday to England (Gilmour, 2005).

In later decades one finds the rise of the breed of 'nationalist ICS', Indian ICS officers who identified with the aspirations of freedom from British rule of the Indian people and yet served the British regime imbued with their administrative ethos. There were instances of Indian freedom-fighters like Subhas Chandra Bose and Aurobindo Ghose who relinquished their ICS careers in pursuit of India's freedom movement. It is important to state that many of India's nationalist leaders and freedom fighters were sent by their families to Britain to prepare and join the ICS and many were indeed aspiring ICS officers. Even if they did not personally join the ICS, their family members joined the ICS like that of Jawaharlal Nehru, whose cousins were ICS officers. This as will be found emerges as an important factor in the interactions of politicians with the ICS officers in post-independence India and the continuance of many of the ICS traditions and legacies.

#### 2.2.5 IMAGE OF ICS OFFICER:

There is a romantic sketch of a gallant ICS officer galloping on horse-back breezing through districts, holding majestic darbars (meetings) with local people while dispensing justice ensuring fairness to all. In the evenings retiring to exclusive clubs in sylvan surroundings indulging in fine conversations, moderately drinking scotch whisky, smoking a pipe, revealing the erudite scholar well-versed in Western classic, possessing knowledge of Latin and who reads and writes prodigiously, were the pursuits associated

with the image of a typical ICS officer. These three sides of the personality cohabited harmoniously; the astute, industrious toiler and dispenser of justice, great lover of outdoors indulging in hunting and sports and the refined, sophisticated pipe-puffing gentleman. They all blended to create the mythical image of a pukka, Burra-Sahib, scholarly gentlemen entrusted with the administrative affairs of India, the ICS officer. According to the researcher these 3 distinct aspects of the image of an ICS officer deserves closer attention.

#### 1.0 Social Manners and Graces:

According to the researcher, the often derided ritualistic insistence of holding knife and fork properly as flippancy belies a far more fundamental philosophy of being a restrained, refined person while holding important positions of power. A new ICS arrival would have to pay social calls, a custom where he was required to visit people 'in society' and leave his card. Non-compliance would invite sharp rebuke from the British Indian administration (Gilmour, 2005; Potter, 1996). There were clear rules and regulations influencing interactions with peers, seniors, sub-ordinates and juniors like taking the hat off while addressing the Governor as 'Sir' and his wife as 'Your Ladyship'. In the words of one Indian ICS officer, during one of his dinners at the Commissioner's residence he was reprimanded for not staying behind with the gentlemen after dinner when the ladies retired to the drawing-room. Besides these 'high-brow' social customs there were strict rules governing their conduct at the social clubs where the British Indian administration elite congregated (Potter, 1996). These exclusive social clubs provided an important respite and a place to unwind after a strenuous and stressful day (Mason, 1985). The ICS officer with his sartorial excellence imbued from training and education would be wearing fine suits and appropriate dresses for the occasion, for instance an under-secretary will have to acquire a full-dress uniform in dark-blue embroidered with gold, accompanied by a sword and a cocked hat (Gilmour, 2005). The ICS officer was a man well-versed with the fine drawing room etiquettes of elegant British society and implemented them in Indian settings.

## 2.0 Scholar par excellence:

Many of the later generation of 'Competition-wallahs' ICS officers were distinguished from their predecessors by their scholarly contribution. As historian Anil Seal remarked about some of them, 'worked to establish much of the ancient history and ethnology of India' (Gilmour, 2005). The foremost worthy name which springs to mind is that of Romesh Chandra Dutt, Bengal ICS who had an extraordinary career in the ICS and on retirement became a lecturer of history at London University. Mr. Dutt published a number of historical and political books, translated several ancient books from Indian languages like Sanskrit into modern Bengali. The other prominent names of scholar-ICS officers with significant contribution are that of William Crooke with his studies of the peoples of the North-Western Provinces, George Grierson's Bihar Peasant Life and Charles Kincaid whose 36 books included a 3-volume History of the Maratha People. Most of the scholarly works were anthropological in nature capturing the customs, traditions of the people and the rural folk. Hence there is evidence to conclude that many of the ICS officers were scholarly in nature and contributed to many fields of knowledge about Indian life and history.

## 3.0 Industrious Toiler and Dispenser of Justice – Work ethic of ICS:

Many of the ICS officers were educated in the discipline of humanities and classics and owed their intellectual underpinnings and outlook to Plato, Bentham, Mill and were influenced by the notion of service to the people and sympathy of the underdog. This posed sometimes a contradiction between their being imperialist governing class and professing of higher moral principles, manifested in their gestures of kindness and service to the people.

In the words of an Indian ICS officer, Mr. Asok Mitra recollecting his years of service in pre-independence India 'about work ethic and sympathy for the underdog I have no hesitation in owning that I learnt more about them from such Britishers as J.Jack, A.K.Jameson and J.Peddie (who was worshipped in Munshiganj and Malda to both of which places I followed him)' then he adds 'how to cycle 80 miles or walk 30 miles a day cross country with a fever of 100.6 degrees, and a ten kilo rucksack on one's back; sleep

of nights in poor farmers' baithaks(huts) ...and at least ten days a month in swiss cottage tents in remote areas' (Bhattacharya,2007).

There is a clear historical tradition of serving with a 'self-sacrificial esprit de corps' amongst the ICS officers in the British India (Gilmour, 2005). Some of them can proudly claim to have built roads, bridges, schools, hospitals and an odd canal with their individual initiative without much governmental support. In many cases they went against their own imperial government they were destined to serve like that of S.S. Thorburn who advocated reforms to protect the independent tillers of soil, the farmers of Punjab from the vicious clutches of the money-lenders (Gilmour, 2005). Many of these poor farmers ended up losing their land by entering into unfavourable deals and negotiations with the wealthy money-lenders. After trenchant criticism of the Government and its aloofness his recommendations were accepted. In the words of Mason(1985) some of the ICS officers served the people with their ideas which was 'something beyond the day to day business of settling disputes, preserving the peace and keeping the wheels smoothly running.'

It would be prudent to mention that one of the founders of Indian National Congress, the party which brought freedom to India was founded by an ICS officer, Allan Octavian Hume who joined political life after retirement.

In conclusion, the ICS was a service where there were many who were candid about their thoughts, stood for their beliefs, cherished the values of championing the cause of the poor and oppressed and on many occasions contributed far beyond their remit of managing the affairs of India as an imperial governing class.

#### 2.2.6 DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION – PIVOTAL ROLE IN THE ICS:

Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India once said, 'India may be governed from Simla or Calcutta; but it is administered from the plains'. The plains Curzon was referring to were the districts and the men who were responsible for their administration (Gilmour,2005). Some of the districts were larger than Devon or Cornwall with a population close to a million inhabitants. The administrative head of a district was the District Collector, an ICS officer who reigned supreme and held all executive powers (Gilmour, 2005; Mason,1985). The responsibilities of a District Collector were varied; judicial role as

Chief Magistrate and as a revenue official responsible for revenue collection and general administration.

Apart from these duties the District Collector was responsible for the following activities:

- 1.0 Overall charge of forests, roads, schools, hospitals, fences, canals and agriculture.
- 2.0 Responsible for relief work during natural calamities like floods and famines.
- 3.0 Responsible for maintenance of law and order including tackling communal and inter-religious strife.
- 4.0 Persuade people to accept vaccination
- 5.0 Persuade people to apply sanitary regulation to the villages
- 6.0 Responsible for implementation of new laws and protection of government property
- 7.0 Role as the Chairman of the District Board and municipalities
- 8.0 Managed the Government's and Ward's estates – property belonging to minors, women and people mentally unfit to run them

(Gilmour, 2005; Mason,1985).

Among all these activities there were a couple which tested the mettle of the ICS District Collector, one of them being the handling of the natural calamities and the other was containing communal violence. In case of emergencies and crisis, both natural and man-made the District Collector was 'expected to take charge and respond effectively' (Gilmour, 2005). In fact addressing communal problems was the toughest challenge for ICS officers towards the end of the British Raj in early 20<sup>th</sup> century and this called for skill, tact and astute judgment.

The key role superseding all the formal officially-designated roles was that of being the 'custodian of the people,' overall in charge of their welfare and being accessible to people who would come to meet him and listen to their grievances in the form of 'petitions' (Gilmour,2005). In the words of Mason(1985), the District Collector 'if he had a normal allowance of tact and intelligence, tenacity of purpose and the good luck not to be transferred too often, he could get his way sooner or later in most things that he undertook'.

#### 2.2.6.1 District Administration Training:

Griffins (as the trainee ICS officers were known, who have arrived in India for the first time) were expected to pick up what they could from others and learn from their

mistakes(Gilmour,2005). The mode of training was informal and more in the nature of learning by observation and participation in the practical activities of the district administration. The senior ICS officer, the Collector usually brought the young trainee ICS officers under their tutelage and offered some experience of magisterial work or revenue assessment or of looking after the district treasury.

There was a paternalistic tradition where some of the generous Collectors allowed their Griffins, now known as Assistant Magistrates to live with them until they found accommodation(Gilmour, 2005, Potter, 1996). The young trainee ICS officers accompanied their senior ICS officers, the Collector on district tours which were very important part of their assignment. District Officers treated their inspection tours rather profoundly and seriously. Here it is clear that the ICS officers played a central and crucial role in the administration of Indian districts, and districts were pivotal in the lives of the ICS officers.

Most of them spend their early years, ‘cutting their teeth’ in the nuances of administration at the District level and later occupied the highest positions within the District Administration. Significantly to the people of the districts the ICS Collector was a potent symbol of ruler who can influence and impact their lives and they held him in highest reverence.

#### 2.2.6.2 Romancing the District – Disdain for the Secretariat:

There seemed to be widespread resentment of the ICS officers at the Secretariat level and their general administrative culture by the ones posted in the District. Here the phrase Secretariat means the government departments which are located in the capitals of the Indian regions and of the entire country which was then Calcutta and till 1911 when the capital was shifted to Delhi. ICS officers working in the districts despised those working in the Secretariat and were not charmed by the trappings of the power and prestige of the Secretariat whom they felt were indecisive, detached and ineffective officials ‘who hedged and compromised and wrapped up their meaning in provisos’ (Mason,1985). They were accused of not being in touch with the grassroots reality of Indian life.

In fact the Secretariat officials were ridiculed by Kiplingesque satire as ‘all head, no physique and a hundred theories’ and were criticized for their distrust of individualism (Gilmour, 2005). Clearly it can be safely concluded that the classics scholar, polished with social graces and manners, sporty, outdoor loving Gentleman ICS was in deep romance with their role at the helm of District Administration.

### **2.3 CONTINUITY & TRADITION OF ICS IN POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIA:**

Indian nationalist leaders of all hues and persuasions were trenchant critics of the ICS as an emblem of the British Imperial rule and despised its presence amidst the Indian society. There was a popular saying, that the ICS ‘was neither Indian, nor civil and nor a servant.’ Independent India’s first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru commented about the ICS, ‘But of one thing I am quite sure, that no new order can be built as long as the spirit of the ICS pervades our administration or public service. Therefore, it seems to me quite essential that the ICS and similar services must disappear completely, as such, before we can start real work on a new order’ (Potter, 1996). This was understandable given the long and arduous years of struggle of these leaders for liberating India from the yoke of an alien rule and ICS was its most visible striking potent symbol.

As independence of India approached, the realization of a long-cherished dream of the nationalist leaders and the people of India, it dawned on the leaders of the movement the complexity of the task which lay ahead; managing the affairs of a country which seemed to be on the verge of erupting into a cauldron of ethnic and religious strife at any given point in time. This was conveyed not the least by the rising tensions in those last years of the British Raj between warring religious communities and the vigorous renewal of ancient fault-lines of language, ethnicity, caste and class which was manifest in the clamour for separate representation in the political structure of independent India by these groups.

Both Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel realized the need for an administrative service to administer the socially, culturally complex society and a geographically vast country like India with its internal emotional tensions. Pandit Nehru admitted in one of the Constituent Assembly debates ‘First things must come first and the thing is the security and stability of India’ (Ghose, 2011).

The course of Indian history had a surprise in store for most of the cynics of continuance of the ICS who had confined them to annals of history and had written its demise, the first Home Minister of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel decided towards continuance of the ICS and his plea was ‘to keep the country intact.’ This decision to continue with the ICS as an all-India service was consensually agreed at a Conference of the premiers of Indian provinces in 1940. This secured the future of ICS which metamorphosed into an elite administrative service, the Indian Administrative Services (the IAS) which has been discussed in the next section.

The researcher is of the opinion that legacies and tradition of the ICS flourished with its unfurled glory in the first few decades of post-independence India albeit in a far more democratic, changed and modern form; i.e. the IAS, without any visceral antagonism towards the Imperialist ICS legacy from the politicians. Sardar Patel’s moving speech has been attached as an annexe at the Conference in 1940 since without this single man’s steely determination and wise judgment, India would not have had the current civil service structure, the topic of this research.

This elaborate section on the history of the institution of ICS is explained by the need to explore, discuss and capture the characteristics and structural aspects of IAS, which is the successor administrative service. In other words understanding ICS better would assist us in understanding and appreciating the organizational context of the IAS. According to the researcher, since there is a strong continuity of the IAS with the ICS, the organizational context of the ICS is of paramount significance for conducting any research on a theme like Situated Learning. This is because in Situated Learning, as a concept learning is embedded in a social and cultural context, and this calls for succinct definition of the continuities of the legacies and traditions of the ICS as inherited by the IAS.

### 2.3.1 STRUCTURAL CONTINUITY OF ICS IN THE IAS:

There is a remarkable administrative continuity between the ICS both in terms of structural and cultural traditions with that of the IAS (Ghose, 2011; Sethi, 2006; Sengupta, 2005; Potter, 1996; Mason, 1985; Bonarjee, 1970). This is all the more astonishing to observers, considering that the ICS was a colonial service, the very symbol of alien rule

and IAS the administrative service of an independent nation (Potter, 1996). Potter(1996) concluded from his field-work research on Indian administration that ‘in order to understand the IAS and the distinctive features of the administrative apparatus of the Indian state in which the IAS was lodged it was necessary to go back to the way the British organized the administration of India earlier this century, and particularly to the way the ICS worked within the colonial state’.

The legacies and traditions of the ICS as manifested in post-independence India’s administrative structure, IAS is summarized as below:

ICS LEGACIES AND TRADITIONS	STRUCTURAL INHERITANCES IN IAS
Pan-India services	Selection and Recruitment is on a pan-India basis
Elitist administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Selection of a few through a rigorous competitive examinations</li> <li>- Allocating the IAS officers the top positions in the administration in the country.</li> <li>- This clearly favours the IAS over all other public servants.</li> </ul>
Generalist Administrators - 'gifted amateurs'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Selection mechanism favoured the generalists</li> <li>- No specified criteria of specialization to enter the services.</li> <li>-IAS not forbidden from holding charge of specialist departments like Science and Technology, Finance or Forestry.</li> </ul>
Flexibility of positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- IAS officers could work between the highest levels of Secretariat, departments in the regional government and District Administration</li> <li>- IAS can move freely in and out of these different postings at all stages of the government.</li> </ul>
Paternalistic Benevolence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-custodians of the poor and under-privileged.</li> <li>- self-perception of IAS as 'ma baap'(Indian for parents) government where they are responsible for the well-being for the poor and the deprived sections of Indian society</li> </ul>
Service Norms - 'Gentleman-Civil Servant'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- virtue of public service</li> <li>- courage</li> <li>- confidence</li> <li>- self-discipline</li> <li>- self-restraint</li> </ul>
Training - 'Pukka Burra-Sahib'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- social graces and manners</li> <li>- sportive with skills like horse-riding</li> <li>- refinement in tastes</li> <li>- working under the tutelage of District Collectors</li> </ul>
Pivotal role of Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-districts remained the key administrative unit</li> <li>- spend first few years of their career</li> </ul>

**Table 1 – Continuities of Legacies and Traditions of ICS inherited in the IAS –**

**source: developed by the researcher**

In post-independence India the IAS had additional responsibilities of developmental work at the districts, with India having been declared a socialist state.

### **2.3.2 STATUS OF ICS OFFICERS IN POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIA:**

In the early years of post-independence India many of the nationalist politicians assuming ministerial roles of new India states treated the ICS officers with respect and had highest regards for their administrative abilities. According to one of the IAS officers (IAS;1958) who served during the first two decades after Indian independence when speaking about the tradition of ICS officers in the state cadres which belonged to the Presidency regions, mentioned that "ICS officers had a strong influence because they worked at a time during the early years of post-independence India when the main political party which was in power, the Congress which established a tradition of good governance and appreciated the contribution of ICS officers. Consequently every IAS officer who worked during this period benefited by the conducive environment." This is quite ironic given that many of these nationalist politicians predominantly from Congress fought bitterly against the very establishment to which the ICS officer belonged.

## **2.4 INDIAN ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES – ‘TRYST WITH DESTINY’:**

Indian Administrative Services is at the apex of All India Services and governed by the rules of the Indian Administrative Service (Cadre) Rules, 1954 under the Article 312 of the Indian constitution and was founded in 1947. Primary responsibility for the IAS officials lies in civil administration and policy making at all levels of the government apparatus. They occupy the highest positions in the government and only the IAS officer can be recruited to the highest level of administrative authority in any Indian state, the Chief Secretary and at the Central government in New Delhi, the Cabinet Secretary.

### **2.4.1 PROFESSIONAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS:**

IAS is corps of civil servants recruited by the Government of India and their terms and conditions are determined by the Government of India. They are assigned to different states of India where they are part of the state's cadre of All India Service officers and they serve the state government like any other civil servant employed by the state government. They have the ability and choice to serve the Government of India to which they are 'deputed' from time to time unlike other state government employees. The professional Human Resource issues pertaining to IAS officers are managed by the

Ministry of Personnel at the central government in New Delhi. The state government has no control over IAS officers posted in the state and cannot be dismissed from services but only transferred by the political bosses. IAS officers enjoy security of tenure and cannot be easily dismissed except for serious charges of corruption and misconduct in public office.

#### 2.4.2 SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT:

Mode of selection is highly competitive, through three-stage examinations conducted by the Union Public Service Commission of India which also selects other government services for instance the police, railways and postal. The examinations include a preliminary one, rigorous mains and then followed by an interview, the entire process lasting one year. Eligibility to qualify for IAS is a Bachelor's degree in any discipline from a recognized Indian university. Preliminary tests are more of an elimination round, the serious contenders are separated from the rest. The second stage, Mains examination where 10% of the candidates are selected consists of written papers, some compulsory ones like English, one Indian language, and an essay with optional subjects which the candidates can choose from a list of the subjects taught at the universities (Benbabaali, 2008).

In the final stage of selection, candidates appear for an interview which is a personality test conducted in English and Indian languages to test qualities like presence of mind, motivation, sharp wit, leadership qualities, intellectual abilities and the aptitude for administrative work. It would be prudent to mention that this stage of evaluation, the interview has been contested as being elitist, discriminatory favouring the upper-middle or middle class urban youth who have access to English education and have acquired fluency of the language (Ghose, 2011; Benbabaali, 2008). Earlier the interviews were conducted in English language solely with a certain emphasis on Anglicized Indian quick-wit and humour which called for a good grasp of the language beyond mere fluency which can be acquired only in selective English public school-styled Indian schools. For instance when one of the recruits was asked about his ability to ride horses given the obese figure by the interview panelists prompt came the response, 'Are you worried about the plight of the poor horse given my bulky size or my ability to ride horses?'

There has been a corrective measure in the form of authorization since the 1970s for the choice of conducting the interview in one of the Indian regional languages recognized in the 8<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The top 80-100 candidates would be offered to join the IAS selected at the end of this entire process including interviews translating into an acceptance rate of nearly 0.01%.

#### 2.4.3 ASSIGNMENT OF CADRE:

The Republic of India is divided into 28 states and each IAS officer is allocated a state where the individual will commence work and be initially posted, which is known as cadre, for instance if someone is assigned the state of West Bengal then that individual belongs to West Bengal cadre. There is no provision for any central cadre, and during the tenure of an IAS officer's career the individual might spend sometime working for the ministries in the central government in New Delhi, known as central posting and then return back to the state after the central tenure. A few of them move on to occupy key posts in the central government for extended periods of time before retiring from the service. An IAS officer serves the government of the state, the cadre to which he or she belongs and is under their control, though their employment rules are governed by the central government. The highest position which an IAS officer can attain within the state government is that of the Chief Secretary, the administrative head of a state government.

#### 2.4.4 TRAINING – THE ACADEMY:

After the assigning of cadres and the selection process is over for IAS officers, they are inducted through a training process at the National Academy of Administration, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA)(henceforth referred to as the Academy or the Training Academy). The Academy is located in Mussoorie, a hill station in the foothills of Himalayas. The Academy is housed in a majestic former 'Charleville Hotel' overlooking the magnificent Himalayan mountains. The architectural ambience is one of grandeur redolent of the 'bygone days of the Raj' with excellent learning facilities of library and modern audio-visual teaching aids. There is a foundation course for all the IAS recruits where they learn about Public Administration, Indian Politics and Constitution, Criminal Law, Revenue Collection, Economics and Policy Planning.

Apart from the intellectual training in the relevant subjects a lot of impetus is laid on personality building through extra-curricular activities like sports, debating, drama and music. Horse-riding was an important part of the training academy and was widely believed if one could not control a horse then they cant control the district. The trainees are exposed to a practical training program as well where they visit districts and watch the process of administration and have an opportunity for first-hand exposure.

Gentlemanly behavior and manners are taught as well with regards to norms relating to social calls, formal invitations, table manners, dress, civic manners, and ceremonial functions (Potter, 1996). Grooming to be 'Gentleman-civil servant' along the lines of an ICS officer is very much part of the process of training an IAS officer and there is even a manual for proper conduct. This training period is an impressionable part of the life of an IAS officer and some of the Directors became legend with their students like the ICS officer, Aditya Nath Jha who was a Director in the early 1960s.

#### 2.4.5 FIRST POSTING AND CAREER PATH:

Subsequent to the completion of training at the academy the IAS officers are sent on probation for a one year period to one of the districts in their 'cadre' state where they are placed under the tutelage of a senior-ranking IAS officer, the District Commissioner or District Collector and start learning the ropes of the administration. After their probationary period the IAS officers are posted in their first posting and from then on life of an IAS officer is a journey like that of 'a river, you start as a small stream and then at the end you are a wide river, deeper and broader and slower....'(Chiranjiv Singh, IAS).

Most importantly an IAS officer spends nearly 10 years of his working life at the District Administration. The IAS officer manages the affairs of the state relating to the respective departments of education, industry, finance and energy at the Secretariat level both at the State government and the Central government in New Delhi. It would be prudent to elaborate on the responsibilities of the District Administration, headed by the District Collector/Commissioner/Magistrate.

Tasks and responsibilities of the District Administration are as below:

1.0 Maintenance of law and order in the district.

2.0 Revenue management, Revenue Collection erstwhile remit of the ICS officers has been discontinued by the Indian government.

3.0 Relief work in case of natural calamities like floods, drought and cyclones.

4.0 Developmental work which is a key element of district administration in post-independence India pertaining to areas like education, health care, family planning and women welfare.

5.0 Ensuring communal harmony amongst the religious, ethnic, caste and linguistic groups.

6.0 Overall responsibility of the District Administration.

The postings of the IAS officer and the training scheme in the first few years of service is as explained below:

POSTING	LOCATION	NATURE OF CHARGE – TRAINING/INDEPENDENT
Assistant Magistrate	District Headquarters	Training under the supervision of the Sub-Divisional Officer with the control of the District Collector/Commissioner/Magistrate
Sub-Divisional Officer (henceforth referred to as the SDO)	Sub-Division of the District	First independent charge under the supervision of the District Collector/Commissioner/Magistrate
Assistant District Collector/Commissioner/Magistrate	District Headquarters	Independent charge under the supervision of the District Collector/Commissioner/Magistrate
District Collector/Commissioner/Magistrate	District Headquarters	Independent Charge reporting directly to the State Capital Administration

**Table 2 – Postings and Training Scheme for an IAS officer – source: developed by the researcher**

The post of District Collector is known differently in different states of India, in some places it is District Collector, in some District Commissioner and in some places District Magistrate, but in all of them meaning the Administrative Head of the District.

#### 2.4.6 THE NATURE OF THE 'PERSON' – AN IAS OFFICER:

There is a lot of caricature in popular imagination about the 'aloof', 'elitist', 'detached', 'eccentric' pompous English-speaking civil servant presiding over the lives of citizens concerned with the maintenance of anachronistic rules. None epitomizes more profoundly this impression than the satirical novel of Upamanyu Chatterjee, '*English August; An Indian Story*', written by an IAS officer himself about an IAS trainee, Agastya Sen, an urbane, cosmopolitan, English-speaking being sent to rural India on his first posting. In his first posting Agastya experiences tremendous culture shock and indulges in eccentric and bizarre fantasies with a sense of dislocation. Potter (1976) in his exhaustive qualitative study on IAS officers arrived at some of the findings about an IAS officer which is relevant in understanding the person beneath the civil servant and their transformation process.

Some of which are listed below:

- Interestingly the first posting influenced their identity far more than the training.
- A generalist stance is there and the image of a 'generalist administrator' pervades the psyche which some deridingly call 'amateur dilettantism.'
- A conscious effort is made to 'mould' the IAS officers along certain ideal of administrative elite similar to that of the ICS.
- Scholarship is highly valued and sought after given the nature of competitive examinations. Many have pursued doctoral degrees during their professional careers.

#### 2.4.7 AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAM IN THE IAS:

In post-independence India the successive governments at the Centre decided to fashion the IAS in a way that it reflects the diversity through empowering the oppressed and under-privileged sections of the society. The criteria for ensuring fair and adequate representation of the backward sections of society chosen was caste, which has been a mechanism of historical inequity and oppression in the Indian society. Affirmative action programs were launched protected by Constitutional provision to assign quota for the backward castes in the Indian society during the selection and recruitment process.

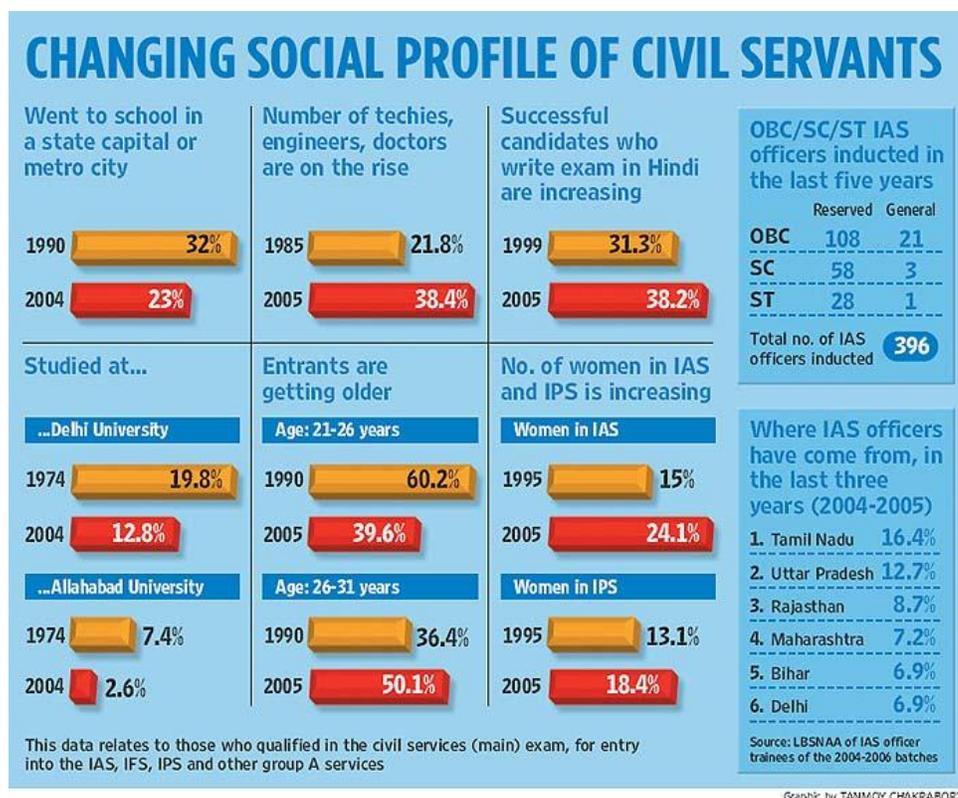
This is known as reservations in the Indian political lingua-franca. Here is a snapshot of the reservation program:

- 15% of the seats are reserved for the Scheduled Castes, the most backward and oppressed caste group in India.
- 7.5% of the seats are reserved for the Scheduled Tribals, the backward and neglected tribal communities in India.
- 27% of the seats are reserved for the ‘Other Backward Classes’ (OBC) who are deprived sections of society having been denied educational opportunities for generations.

Reservations have had a tremendous impact in terms of inclusive participation of oppressed and backward castes of Indian society in the IAS.

#### 2.4.8 CHANGING SOCIAL PROFILE OF THE IAS:

The most dramatic development in the IAS over the past few decades have been the changing composition of the candidates qualifying and joining the IAS. There has been a significant shift with respect to the social, cultural and economic background of the new generation of IAS officers. To offer a glimpse here is a sketch below:



**Table 3 – Changing Social Profile of IAS officers Outlook(2007)**

### Who's Getting Into The Civil Services?

- Less than 2 in 10 entrants were from a metro or a state capital in '04
- More than 5 were born in a tehsil or district town in '04
- One out of four are kids of fathers who have not studied beyond matriculation
- 4 in 10 were engineers, techies or medics
- New recruits are older. About 50% in '05 were over 25.
- 4 in 10 now sit for the exam in Hindi, but English-types still have the upper hand
- 12 of top 50 rank-holders in the latest (2006) civil services exam are OBCs
- 32.5 % of IAS officers inducted in the last five years are OBCs
- Despite reservation, only a tiny fraction of civil servants are first-generation learners
- More women are making it to the IAS
- Tamilians and UP-ites dominate the last three years' IAS intake

**Figure 1 – Facts about entrants to Civil Services in India Outlook(2007)**

The key points about the changing profile has been summarized as below:

- Less from elitist Anglophone institutions like St. Stephens College.
- Less from urban middle-class backgrounds but more from rural backgrounds.
- More professionals like engineers, doctors and less humanities general studies background.
- Decreasing domination of the upper castes.
- Increasing women participation in the IAS.
- Less of English-styled Indian public school educated students.
- 

Most significantly there is little reproduction of IAS officers, where the offspring of current IAS officers would join the civil services. This is expected to have a dramatic shift in the dominant ethos, norms and culture of the IAS, reflecting a broader diversity and the true demographics of Indian society.

The archetypal Agastya Sen, the metro-born protagonist of Upamanyu Chatterjee's 1988 novel, *English, August*, with 'St Stephen's College' written all over him, who finds himself in a district town—a "dot in the hinterland"—after joining the IAS, is even more of a rarity than he already was in the '80s and the '90s(Outlook, 2007). Earlier generations of the IAS officers reflected the ethos and culture of Anglophone Indian upper middle class urban society which were in turn the dominant ethos of the IAS.

## **2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY:**

This chapter explored, discussed and explained the organization context where the research study on Communities of Practice, the IAS officers is located. ICS being the predecessor of the IAS has been detailed and discussed in a slightly exhaustive manner. The relevance of the historical description of the ICS for this study is explained by the remarkable continuity with the IAS, hence to understand IAS better one needs to have a good knowledge of the ICS. Contemporary IAS has been explained in terms of recruitment, training and the postings. Some of the important and significant socio-cultural changes in the IAS like affirmative action programs have been explained and clearly the IAS in modern India wishes to reflect the diversity, demography and the aspirations of the people. This has been a shift from the earlier elitist nature of the IAS.

### **3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW – COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION:**

This section will explore the contemporary research literature on Communities of Practice and the associated CoP-facilitated processes of Learning and Innovation. The literature review is aligned with the research goals and objectives of investigating, capturing and recording the formation of CoPs and the facilitated process of Innovation and Learning within the specified organizational context, i.e. IAS officers belonging to the Karnataka and West Bengal cadre. It is important to specify the literature review section covering learning is restricted to CoP-facilitated mechanism of learning, i.e. Situated Learning and the researcher does not cover the general broader scope of organizational learning literature.

Similar fact holds true for the section covering innovation which is restricted to CoP-facilitated mechanism of innovation, i.e. CoInvs and the researcher does not cover the general broader scope of innovation literature. The researcher clearly has set the boundaries of the literature review with respect to the specific research goals and objectives.

#### **3.2 CURRENT RESEARCH LITERATURE ON CoPs- ‘OMINOUS START’ :**

The phrase ‘Community of Practice’ has often been criticized as nebulous, filled with ambiguities and the related research literature is ‘still evolving’ and ‘hardly coherent’ (Handley, 2006; Lindkvist, 2005; Mutch,2003). There are varied and diverse existing descriptions and characterizations of the concept of CoPs (Handley, 2006; Lindkvist, 2005). The field of CoPs have been significantly shaped and developed by the works of Wenger along with a whole of host of researchers, some of the important and influential ones being Lave and Wenger(1991), Wenger(1998), Wenger et al (2002) and Wenger and Snyder (2000).

Most of the works on CoPs cite heavily the canonical works of Wenger (1991; 1998) which define the CoPs along a particular definition and the studies differ to the extent of the clarity of the definition (Cox,2005; Johnson, 2001). Researchers working on the

notion of CoPs incredibly cite the canonical texts of Wenger and there are serious divergences within that body of literature leaving the definitions of CoP fluid and difficult to grasp and have been left vague (Cox, 2005; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004; Johnson, 2001; Fox 2000). CoPs have not been defined precisely leaving the room open for myriad interpretations and potential stretching of the concept beyond its possible capacity (Cox, 2005; Duguid, 2005; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004).

The idea has been applied as evident from the landscape of the research literature in a very varied fashion to widely differing contexts. Cox (2005) argues that this ambiguity in the concept of CoPs can be perceived as one of its strengths and might be responsible for its 'longevity' and 'fecundity' which allows it to be appropriated in different contexts. Besides most of the research literature on CoPs is confined to the specific studies or the phenomenon under research (Johnson, 2001). This makes the literature review of most of the research work on CoPs rather contextual and more embedded within the research setting.

The broad conclusions which can be drawn from the preview:

- 1.0 Most of the current research works on CoPs rely heavily and cite incredibly only a few handful canonical texts which are primarily the early works of the conceptual pioneers of the CoPs like that of Jean Lave & Etienne Wenger(1991). Hence the scope of available research literature is confined to these few canonical texts.
- 2.0 There is no absolute clarity and structure in the definition of CoPs and the scope of application of that theoretical concept. The applications of the concept have been rather laissez-faire. Conceptual boundaries of CoPs have been very fluid in terms of application and interpretation.
- 3.0 Interpretations of the concepts of CoPs have been contextual pertaining to the context of the research being conducted.

Against this ominous and rather dispiriting background the researcher had to make a clear decision about the roadmap for conducting of the research and the literature review. The research literature landscape did not offer any assuring notion of a reliable ‘toolkit’ to conduct the research. Fundamental challenge which lay ahead for the researcher was to arrive at clear working definitions given the ambiguity of the concept of the CoPs, clarity in the application of the concept and the serious contextual considerations for application of the notion of CoPs in the research setting of IAS officers.

Here Cox(2005) came to the rescue of the researcher with his succinct categorizing of the four predominant concepts prevalent in the research literature on CoPs and provided direction for this research:

- 1.0 Situated Learning – Legitimate Peripheral Participation –Lave & Wenger(1991)
- 2.0 Organizational Learning and Communities of Practice: toward a unified view of working, learning and innovation – Brown & Duguid (1991)
- 3.0 Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Innovation – Wenger(1998)
- 4.0 Cultivating Communities of Practice – Wenger, McDermott & Snyder(2002)

Based on the research goals and objectives the researcher adopted primarily the 2 concepts as enumerated below:

- 1.0 CoP-facilitated Learning – Situated Learning Lave & Wenger(1991)
- 2.0 CoP-facilitated Innovation – reviewing all the relevant works

The researcher adopted the objective of the literature review to develop a succinct working definition of CoPs, conceptual clarity with respect to the associated CoP-facilitated processes of learning and innovation and to develop a conceptual framework which will function as a ‘research tool-kit’ for conducting the research study.

The aim of the literature review based on the current research literature scenario on CoPs can be stated as below:

- 1.0 To obtain a succinct working definition of the Communities of Practice.

2.0 To arrive at succinct definitions of the concepts of the ‘Communities’ and ‘Practice’ as applicable in the Communities of Practice.

3.0 Develop a theoretical framework of CoP-facilitated mechanism of learning, i.e. the Situated Learning.

4.0 Develop a theoretical framework of CoP-facilitated mechanism of innovation i.e. CoInvs.

Hence the current literature review may not be exhaustive and comparative in terms of considering different versions of the CoPs prevalent in the contemporary research literature. The relative brevity of the literature review section can be attributed to the efforts being focused towards achieving the fundamental objective, which was to develop a crystal clear ‘conceptual framework’ for conducting the research on CoPs.

### **3.3 INTRODUCTION - COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE:**

As the ever expanding field of management literature attempts to address newer challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century business world, one of the ideas which have been sweeping through the domains of management thinking in the recent past is Communities of Practice. Communities of Practice is a concept which was pioneered by Lave and Wenger in their path-breaking work, Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation (1991), where the very idea of Communities of Practice was launched. The same year another significant work related to CoPs by Brown and Duguid in 1991, a paper titled “Organizational learning and communities of practice” in *Organizational Science* was published. In his work in 1991 Wenger identified Communities of Practice in the realm of organizational learning where the concept arose within the context of Situated Learning. Wenger has often been regarded as the ‘guru’ of the Communities of Practice and most of the other contemporary works has been influenced by him, and he stands as a benchmark setting the standards for all subsequent publications in the field of Communities of Practice, some of which include Wenger, McDermott & Snyder (2002), Brown & Duguid (2001) and Lindkvist (2005).

Communities of Practice were promised to be the revolution in organizational theory, as a new organizational form which will galvanize and radically transform the process of knowledge sharing, learning and change (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). Initially, Communities of Practice were identified as a vehicle for knowledge transfer and creation

but subsequently it has made an impact on Organizational Learning, Individual Learning and Knowledge Management.

### **3.4 DEFINITIONS – COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE:**

There is a whole plethora of literature on Communities of Practice in management academia and the definitions of Communities of Practice is very diverse, with interpretations made according to the specific context and organization. Most importantly the academic literature is evolving and still there are several contesting definitions on what exactly is Community of Practice (Lindkvist 2006). For the purposes of this research work it is important to identify and adopt some relevant definitions which will play a crucial ontological role in clarifying the exact nature of Community of Practice, and this will allow this specific research work to build upon that foundation. This is important since when the researcher is looking for a community of practice within an organization, in this case the Indian Administrative Service, he will know exactly what characteristics to look for in identifying a Community of Practice.

According to Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 98):

“an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their community. Thus they are united in both action and in the meaning that that action has, both for themselves and for the larger collective”. The above definition will be the ‘guiding light’ of this research work since it captures all the essential ingredients of a Community of Practice distilled from all the current definitions and understandings of the concept. It is worth being emphatic that the attributes of shared passion, meaning, understanding or a repertoire is not good enough, but a Community of Practice needs to be engaged as part of a broader activity system.

The interpretation of the ‘activity system’ within Communities of Practice according to the researcher is that one where the individuals through their active participation ensure movement, progress for enriched domain knowledge and not executing mere routine tasks and responsibilities. Domain in a Community of Practice being defined as common knowledge shared amongst the members. In case of this particular research it would be matters and issues relating to Indian public administration. ‘Community of Practice is

about ‘something’ and not just a set of relationships’ (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). Collective and individual are gently and nicely blended through shared Meaning and Practice (what that means in their lives and for the community).

According to (Lindkvist, 2005, p. 1191):

‘CoPs as tightly knit groups that have been practicing long enough to develop into a cohesive community with relationships of mutuality and shared understandings’.

One of the lacunae of the above definition is the emphasis on practice as the source of ‘cohesiveness’ and ‘mutuality’ without any clarity as to what is meant by that except for an abstract feeling. How do a group of individuals feel that kind of cohesiveness in the first place? Shared identity is stated by other scholars like Assimakopoulos and Yan (2005), who argue that the common practice of a community gives them ‘a knowledge domain, a shared identity and cohesiveness to sustain interactions over time’. Wenger does dwell extensively on the identity in very broad aspects of community and participation touching upon both the collective and individual (Wenger 1998).

This particular research work wishes to explore this conundrum of the source of mutuality and cohesiveness within the Community of Practice, a hidden community or a shared practice. Do people who practice long enough necessarily form a Community of Practice with its very important shared meanings and understandings? Shared practice alone will not create ‘cohesiveness’ but need to possess more the deeper and complex realities of shared meaning and identity (Wenger, 1998; Lindkvist, 2005; Handley et al., 2006).

According to Brown and Duguid (1991) & Brown and Duguid (2001):

“CoPs emerge among people who have a mutual engagement in a joint practice around which they share a common repertoire of knowledge. CoPs are places where problem identification, learning and knowledge creation can take place”.

This definition focuses on the practice part of the CoPs, defining the dynamics of the Communities of Practice which are learning, knowledge creation and problem identification.

To summarize from the working definitions as to what defines Community of Practice.

COMMUNITY	Shared understanding, shared meaning, shared identity (Wenger et al.)
PRACTICE	Specific knowledge creation, Learning, Innovation

**Table 4 – Elements of Communities of Practice – developed by the researcher**

This research work will explore the community along the dimensions of meaning, identity and understanding, while the practice along the dimensions of individual and collective learning and innovation. A very important research objective remains to ‘see’ and ‘spot’ the latent Communities of Practice within the studied organization. (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002).

### **The characteristics of communities of practice**

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*Key characteristics of a community of practice*

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- Sustained mutual relationships – harmonious or conflictual
- Shared ways of engaging in doing things together
- The rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation
- Absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process
- Very quick setup of a problem to be discussed
- Substantial overlap in participants’ descriptions of who belongs
- Knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise
- Mutually defining identities
- The ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products
- Specific tools, representations, and other artifacts
- Local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter
- Jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones
- Certain styles recognized as displaying membership
- A shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world

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**Figure 2 - Characteristics of Communities of Practice -Wenger (1998, pp. 125–6).**

### **3.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE:**

#### **3.5.1 ARE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE BORN NATURALLY OR CAN ONE BE ESTABLISHED?**

Fundamentally Communities of Practice are spontaneous, organic and informal in nature, and are not part of the formal organizational structure (Wenger et al., 2002; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). They arise, emerge, and flourish in rather invisible forms without any broad awareness about its existence amongst the members of the organization apart from the members themselves. It is argued that Communities of Practice being natural formations they cannot be ‘formed’ or ‘established’ by management but only supported, nurtured and leveraged for strategic advantage (Wenger et al 2002; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Communities of Practice can be metaphorically stated as natural flowering sites of human interaction which need to be watered and cared for. It is worth stating a few words about the very notion of establishing Communities of Practice, it sounds rather daunting and absurd and has been highly challenged (Roberts, 2006). There is a consensus amongst the management scholars about CoPs, that CoPs are indeed a natural organic coalescence of individuals within an organization (Wenger et al.2002).

The researcher is of the opinion that sometimes one completely loses sight of the very basic criteria for the formation of a Community of Practice; the existence of a community. To create a community through formal organization structures is looking from the entirely mistaken perspective and it should have something natural and organic about them. Here it would be prudent to make a distinction between different team structures possible within an organization.

#### **3.5.2 EMERGENT COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE- DIVERSE SITUATIONS AND CONTEXT:**

The entire research work is seeking and investigating the presence of ‘emergent’ Communities of Practice having subscribed to the idea of it being a naturally-forming, self-regulating system with voluntary membership (Pettonen & Lämsä, 2004; Pastoors, 2007). Communities of Practice have been accepted as ‘emergent’ (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002; Juriad & Gustafsson 2007) phenomena. ‘Emergent’ phenomena being defined as complex pattern formation and in case of Communities of Practice the phenomena are ‘context-dependent’ and arising out of very ‘diverse situations’.

### 3.5.3 CONTRASTING WITH PROJECT TEAMS:

Communities of Practice are often contrasted with formal work groups and/or project teams (Wenger and Snyder, 2000): communities are driven by shared interests or practice while project teams are guided by shared goals and results. The boundaries of a community of practice are permeable, as opposed to a team, where interdependent tasks are performed according to the clear division of labour between the team members.

O'Donnell et al. (2003) argue, the two kinds of groups need to be managed differently – Communities of Practice cannot be “managed” in the traditional control-oriented manner but can only be cultivated. The findings suggested that CoP-like processes (Wenger and Snyder, 2000) seem to emerge because of the complexity of the task at hand. There is a table below contrasting the differences.

### CONTRASTING WITH PROJECT TEAMS

**A Snapshot Comparison**

Communities of practice, formal work groups, teams, and informal networks are useful in complementary ways. Below is a summary of their characteristics.

	What's the purpose?	Who belongs?	What holds it together?	How long does it last?
<b>Community of practice</b>	To develop members' capabilities; to build and exchange knowledge	Members who select themselves	Passion, commitment, and identification with the group's expertise	As long as there is interest in maintaining the group
<b>Formal work group</b>	To deliver a product or service	Everyone who reports to the group's manager	Job requirements and common goals	Until the next reorganization
<b>Project team</b>	To accomplish a specified task	Employees assigned by senior management	The project's milestones and goals	Until the project has been completed
<b>Informal network</b>	To collect and pass on business information	Friends and business acquaintances	Mutual needs	As long as people have a reason to connect

**Figure 3: Communities of Practice: The Organizational Frontier.** By: Wenger, Etienne C.; Snyder, William M.. *Harvard Business Review*, Jan/Feb2000, Vol. 78 Issue 1, p139-145, 7p, 1 chart, 1c; (AN 2628915)

### **3.6 MECHANISMS OF ‘COMMUNITY FORMATION’ IN COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE – AMBIENT CONDITIONS:**

Wenger (1998) raises the question of belonging along with Handley (2006) with regards to a Community of Practice as to what is the source of ‘cohesiveness and mutuality’ (Lindkvist, 2006) which holds the Community together, the ‘social glue’ (Juriado & Gustafsson, 2007). There is a need to answer the fundamental question ‘why does one join CoPs?’ and ‘what brings these individuals together as a ‘Community’? Juriad & Gustafsson (2007) identified some of the key cultivators or as the researcher calls the ‘triggers’ for an ‘emergent’ Community of Practice formation, the factors which would stimulate ‘emergent’ Communities of Practice. One of the triggers being existence of an atmosphere of relative trust through knowledge-sharing and collective memories.

The role played by informal events and socializing platforms is often highlighted as key factors for creating the forces of social bonding (Juriado & Gustafsson (2007). The researcher introduces the term, ‘Draw Factor’, which is defined as the forces that bonds the social groupings, which interest individuals to participate in a ‘Community of Practice’ and consists of all that draws individuals towards participating in a Community of Practice. The ‘draw factor’ or ‘social glue’ (Juriado & Gustafsson, 2007) would be the riddle for future generation of scholars in trying to identify the very basis of a Community-formation, what will bring disparate individuals working within and across organizations together to share a ‘practice’.

One of the great flaws evident in a lot of literature on Communities of Practice, is interpreting broad-based Communities of Practice who mutually engage with each other and perform similar tasks as Communities of Practice, as compared to the ‘tightly-knit’ Communities of Practice who are constantly redefining their world of practice and belonging sustained over a period of time through mutual interactions and in the process learning and innovating. The latter ones are appropriately qualified to be Communities of Practice in the truest sense of the term as drawn from the above definitions. A good instance is to identify a regular meeting of IAS officers interested in rural development who exchange stories, notes and expertise as a ‘sustained’ Community of Practice. How far these interactions influence their work and understanding of rural development? What sort of repertoire does it generate? Can they be termed as Communities of Practice?

Socializing against the backdrop of a highly engaged and interested community is effective, but certainly the Community does not emerge through socializing alone. Interestingly the researcher went into the exercise to locate the ‘draw factor’, which brings the IAS officers together to form CoPs, with the idea that Communities were built around rather very ‘pragmatic’ ‘realistic’ considerations of competencies (defined as domain knowledge) and immediate goals and objectives (Carbery & Murphy, 2007). Quite contrarily a romantic impression emerged that of a ‘Gentleman’s Club’ with quaint, antiquated rituals and ceremonies and clear rules of conduct, termed in this research as Codes of Conduct laced with humor, wit and cultivating bonds. Here in the context of CoPs ‘competencies’ are defined as domain knowledge (Jorgensen & Lauridsen, 2005; Carbery & Murphy, 2007).

To summarize some of the ‘ambient’ conditions for natural formation of CoPs are:

- Relative atmosphere of trust
- Informal platforms for friendships
- Mutual exchange of stories and shared narratives
- Shared goals and objectives
- Competencies – Domain knowledge

### 3.6.1 STORYTELLING AND COMMUNITY FORMATION:

‘Expertise is also shared through storytelling about previous events and happenings’ (Juriad & Gustafsson, 2007) Storytelling provides a powerful bonding and this is what makes the mechanism of formation of a CoP so subtle and yet too complex to be replicated across the board (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Historically there is a tradition of story-telling in the Indian Administrative Services; if one strolls back to the days of ICS officers then one would find that they were excellent raconteurs who narrated their life experiences to the juniors and general society. Referring to ICS men who retired to Britain (Gilmour,2005) writes ‘Yet once home, a strange fondness for India would often afflict them, and they would spend their evenings sunk in a club chair with a gin and tonic, boring everyone with endless tales of the Punjab’. A considerable effort would be made in this research work to capture the narrative tradition inherent in the IAS.

### 3.6.2 SHARED MEANING – CONSTANT NEGOTIATION & BELONGING:

An in-depth reading of the CoP literature indicates that there exists an ‘appearance of shared meaning’ within CoPs being studied, which entails a sense of belonging to the community (Handley et al, 2006). ‘Shared meaning’ can be defined as ‘shared understanding of their roles in the community and what that means in their lives and in the larger community’. The idea of shared meaning of a community of practice members is defined as a ‘constructed understanding’, where they construct a shared understanding of the role and practice selectively from the myriad maze of information (Wenger, 1991; Brown and Duguid, 1991). Shared meaning of a CoP is constantly negotiated and is not static but a very active dynamic process(Wenger, 1998).

Importantly the shared meaning can be summarized to have the following characteristics:

1.0 Shared understanding of the roles of the individuals in the CoP through Practice.

So one has to actively participate to acquire this meaning.

2.0 Relationships play a very key role here in creating a shared meaning (Handley et al. 2006).

3.0 Shared meaning is contextual and is influenced by the prevailing circumstances which are the forces enabling the formation of CoPs (Wenger & Snyder, 2000).

5.0 The shared interpretation manifested as meaning emerges for the CoPs as a resource for newcomers and is a shared resource for the community members.

### 3.6.3 NEGOTIATED MEANING – PARTICIPATION:

Here Wenger(1998) talks about meaning not in abstract philosophical terms as in meaning of life, but meaning as an experience of daily living, which is shared by a lot of social science scholars and is part of a long tradition (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Some of the profound seminal works by other scholars which include Giddens and his ‘structuration theory’, Bourdieu’s ‘Outline of a theory of Practice’ and Deleuze’s ‘Assemblage theory’ reflects the concept, that the development of human understanding happens through participation in a social world, meaning is acquired in social living, also known as praxis or social practice. In the context of Communities of Practice, meaning is constantly negotiated through participation, the experiential mode of belonging and understanding the world to which one belongs as members of Communities of Practice. What is intriguing then is that the process of negotiation of meaning happens through action,

reflection, absorption, communication and connecting with one another within the Communities of Practice. Historical character of meaning is to be recognized in the process of negotiations, so one inherits a repository of meaning and then build one's own through the process of participation (Wenger, 1998). Relationships play a very key role in the negotiations of meaning but it also changes, one redefines one's relationships and look at old relationships in new light as one acquires new meanings (Hedberg et al, 1990).

#### 3.6.4 NEGOTIATED MEANING – REIFICATION:

Reification – is a process of translating the shared meaning into tangible physical objects (Wenger, 1998). In other words one's entire social experience is shaped into reification of objects, called artifacts. As Wenger (1998) defines there will be artifacts which will be the legacy of a shared meaning which was prevalent in the past for a newcomer into a Community of Practice, where the newcomer will feel and experience the past through the reified object. Wenger's (1998) study explored five examples of apprenticeship like midwives, tailors, quartermasters, meat cutters and non-drinking alcoholics. In all the instances of ongoing CoPs the apprentices were initiated through sharing of 'legacy' artifacts like stories and narratives which played a key role in transferring knowledge and past experiences, and often has been dubbed as 'repositories of accumulated wisdom'(Orr,1990b; Brown & Duguid, 1991). Some of the other forms of artifacts are abstractions, tools, symbols, terms and concepts.

##### 3.6.4.1 Limitations of Artifacts:

Wenger (1998) cautions that artifacts are experiences extended over time and codified and preserved through reification but they do not capture entirely the context of the experience, and more so, the meaning was constituted in another setting. In this research the limitations of artifacts is a very relevant point for the researcher since there are possibilities of mistaken interpretations of what constitutes an artifact which has been passed on to the next generation and is part of the shared repertoire of the CoPs.

#### **3.7 SHARED IDENTITY – EVOLVING AND MERGING:**

The focus on identity in the CoP literature has not emphasized the process of identity-construction in the context of Situated Learning (Handley et al., 2006). Identity in the context of Situated Learning is defined and explored in terms of practice and participation (Wenger, 1998). Sense making within the context of Communities of Practice play a

very key role in identity construction, sense-making of their belonging influencing the concept of the 'self', group and the location; 'who am I', 'who we are' and 'where we are' (Coakes & Smith, 2007; Carbery & Murphy, 2007). It has been observed through several studies that individuals belonging to Communities of Practice can be distinguished by their shared perceptions, actions, and thoughts and there tends to be a strong feeling of self-identity of being situated in the Communities of Practice, and strong identification with Communities of Practice is often encouraged and perceived to be a key success factor for a successful Community of Practice formation (Contu & Willmott, 2005; Pastoors, 2007).

### 3.7.1 SELF-IDENTITY – SITUATIONAL AND RELATIONAL:

Self-identity, as the term defined here by the researcher is based on Giddens(1991), in which the definition of 'Self-identity is conceptualized as a reflexively organized narrative derived from participation in competing discourses and various experiences, productive of a degree of existential continuity and security.' In other words the 'self' is, as it is reflexively understood by the person, emerges from different participation and action in the society. The notion of ontological security arising in the form of a coherent Self-identity (Kinnvall, 2004) is emphasized by Giddens, the security of understanding the 'world is what it appears to be' is an important driving force in self-identity, which provides us a sense of continuity, a sense of self-confidence and self- assurance. One can safely assume that 'our inner security is the residence of a coherent self-identity' (Sigel, 1989).

Social Constructionist theory pioneered by scholars like Harre` (1987), Shotter(1985) and Gergen(2000) locates identity construction in the 'process of becoming', collective influencing the construction of self through interpretations and internalizations of experiences of belonging, engagement and practice in communities. The researcher understands identity as not the intrinsic self, something fixed, static and unmoving but more a process of continual formation and construction, one of 'becoming'. Most importantly this process of becoming is enriched and happens on an ongoing basis through active participation in social practices.

#### 3.7.1.1 Social Identity Theory:

According to Social Identity Theory (SIT), developed by Tajfel & Turner (1979), here the concept of the self, or the definition of self is drawn from affiliations and memberships in social groups and categories' (Terry et al, 1999; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). In the SIT, individuals tend to define themselves and others into various group and social classifications like age, gender, class, religion and other forms of collective memberships. The researcher introduces the concept of 'social identity' of an individual which is different from individual identity and defines the self as socially-constructed a 'construct that mediates the relationship between the self and the broader social structure of groups and categories' (Terry et al, 1999).

#### 3.7.1.2 Self-Categorization/Identification:

Is the process by which members of a group cognitively ascribe typical or prototypical dimensions to themselves which distinguishes them from out-group or people outside the group. These characteristics define the specific in-group members as a separate category (Terry at al, 1999; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). This is reflected in the way the community defines "who we are" and as well "who we are not" and is constantly being modified through relationships and interactions within the group (Loyarte & Rivera, 2007).

#### 3.7.1.3 Self-Enhancement:

Is satisfying the urge or the need to be recognized as member of a particular group, boost their self-esteem and increase their prestige with regards to the out-group members (Thompson, 2005; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Terry at al, 1999). Self-identification is viewed positive in this case to the extent that the individual conceptualizes the 'self' in terms of the prestige drawn from attachment to 'personas' emanating from the group membership (Adler & Adler, 1987; Schneider & Nygren, 1971; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). There is a tendency to favor the in-group members and feel more at ease with perception of less in-group differences against increased perception of differences with out-group members and less connection. This is based on the Minimal Group Paradigm which states that members of a group tend to attach higher self-esteem and favor in-group interaction over out-group members (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Hogg, 1992; Hogg & Abrams, 1998; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Kinnvall, 2004).

### 3.7.2 IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION:

It can be defined as the individual quest for self-definition, coherence, meaning and conceptualizing of ‘self’ as being achieved through the engagement in group narratives and participation in the practice of the community (Grey, 1994; Wenger, 1998; Handley, 2006; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Specifically in this research literature the focus is on the construction of individual identity as members of the CoPs, and here the researcher is talking about Self-Identity as an understanding of the self being part of the collective.

Alvesson & Willmott, (2002) explains that Identity Construction happens through the twin processes:

- (1) Identity Regulation
- (2) Identity Work

#### 3.7.2.1 Identity Regulation:

Is defined as the ‘intentional effects of social practices upon processes of identity construction and reconstruction’ (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). In this process one considers the role of all organizational processes of training, recruitment, induction and discourse in identity formation. Organizational discourse generated through these processes has significant implications for shaping and development of identity. Self-identity influencing process is achieved through identification with the organizationally-inspired discourse, the ‘insides’ are touched by the organizational discourse which employs both language and symbolism (Deetz, 1995; Knights & Willmott, 1989).

#### 3.7.2.2 Role of Symbolisms in Identity Regulation – Artifacts:

Organizations employ symbolisms like languages, symbols, sets of meanings, rituals, sagas, heroes and myths in articulating and communicating the culture all of which have tremendous implication for Self-Identity formation (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Alvesson, 2001). These symbolisms are termed as artifacts in the CoP parlance, the reification of one’s shared meanings with history and legacy being part of it (Wenger, 1998). Evocation of a shared legacy and history is attempted through the use of symbols, memories, myths, stories and a heritage is formulated to provide direction for future actions amongst the members of the Community (Kinnvall, 2004).

In this specific research work it plays a very crucial role in exploring the identity formation of IAS officers since there is an induction into the service through one-year training at the academy in Mussorie, which is a very historical spot embedded with the rich legacies of Indian public administration. Apart from the regular training, IAS being a historical legacy administrative service, there would be an organizational discourse based on its unique evolutionary history and legacy, it would be worth investigating if the ancestral myths, symbolisms and shared legacy does have an impact on the identity formation.

### 3.7.2.3 Identity Work:

Self-identity can be defined as a collection of structured narrations, which needs to be sustained through a process of constant modification and negotiation (Wenger, 1998; Handley et al., 2006; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). This process is known as Identity Work, which is an interpretive activity involving creating, transforming, recreating, maintaining and incorporating the social practices and discourses into the narratives of self-identity. A more formal definition from Alvesson & Willmott (2002) states that, 'people are continuously engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a precarious sense of coherence and distinctiveness'. This explains that one's situated 'Self-Identities' are constantly being constructed and transformed, so one is at work in actively producing their socially-situated 'self-identities'.

### 3.7.3 IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE – INTERPLAY OF COMPLEX FORCES:

In the context of this research on Communities of Practice this would mean constant choice of the extent of participation in the Communities of Practice, and ongoing 'self-identity' construction through sense-making of the alignment of the practice with their current understanding of 'self' (Handley et al., 2006). The members of the CoP decide on the extent of their participation through the negotiation between the organizational steering of identity-regulation and the sense-making of the 'self' as drawn from the current practices and other sources of identities. In other words, identity-construction in a CoP is a complex interplay between the organizational mandate of influencing the individual identity, the choices exercised over the extent of internalization of the organizational identity, sense of 'self' derived from the 'practice' and the several other

streams or sources of identity like habitus (Bourdieu), explained later in the document. Complex interplay of forces of competing identities can be a source of tension when the ‘self’ is not being able to make sense through active participation in the practice since there are other identities which are coming into conflict.

### **3.8 ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION – IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION FOR NEWCOMERS:**

Interestingly the newcomers or entrants do experience insecurity about their role and have lot of anticipation about their status (Ashforth & Mael,1989) and are very keen to acquire a ‘situational definition’. Newcomer’s search for a self-definition brings us back to the previously discussed idea of a ‘social identity’ which form a large part of the ‘situational identity’ (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) which would be developing a sense of ‘who one is’ and in ‘where’ and ‘how’ along with the other question ‘who we are’.

#### **3.8.1 ACQUIRING SELF-DEFINTION AS NEWCOMERS:**

Van Maanen (1979) explains that the conceptualization of self happens through interactions with others and in interpreting their responses located in social experiences and situations. Van Maanen (1979) argues about the two different methods of initiating the newcomer into the Community and also ‘legitimizing’ the newcomer’s identity (Wenger, 1998).

The first one is ‘Investiture’, the process in which the newcomer is initiated into the group through ‘ratification’ of the identity, imparting a new identity, in other words the newcomer is socialized through verbal and non-verbal interactions where they start developing shared understanding and meaning. Here the old preexisting identity is not erased.

The second one is ‘Divestiture’, the process in which the newcomer is assigned a totally new identity aligned with the organizational one, a reconstruction of the previous identity. One of the methods used is the obliteration of the symbols of any previous identity with punishment for any traces of old identity. It also rewards the acceptance and incorporation of the new identity (Van Maanen, 1976; 1978). The internalization of the organizational identity is encouraged as well through glorification of the organizationally situated identity. Some of the examples are military, religious organizations, professional

schools and clans. Divestiture literature also mentions that higher the level of divergence from the society at large of the organization's identity, goals, and individual goal requirements, the greater will be the need for this mode of 'organizationally situated identification' (Van Maanen, 1978).

However both can be termed as part of 'Identity-Regulation' (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002) which is an organizational effort to internalize as social identity the organizational identity. The question which looms large is to what extent the induction program and the training academy is a divestiture in terms of internalizing a new identity for the IAS recruits who come from a diverse spectrum of social origins of language, caste, religion, creed and class. Situated Learning, the original site where Wenger developed the concept of Communities of Practice is lot about the induction of newcomers and how they acquired legitimacy (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

### **3.9 SHARED IDENTITY IN COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE:**

As far as this research work is concerned the conceptual framework of 'Identity Construction' through the twin processes of 'Identity Regulation' and 'Identity Work' will be the reference for studying 'Identity-Formation' within Communities of Practice. The researcher proposes that the members of an 'emergent', 'natural' 'organic' formed Community of Practice construct shared identities through the processes of Identity Regulation and Identity Work which would involve to a large extent the evolution of a shared meaning and shared understanding amongst the Community of Practice members. The researcher will focus on how the visible and manifest identity characteristics are formed through these processes of negotiation between the 'self' and the broader social entity of IAS; here the organization of IAS is referred to as a 'social entity'.

#### **3.9.1 STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF AN IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION – IDENTITY DIMENSIONS FOR INVESTIGATION:**

In this section the researcher will identify the structural elements of identity construction and which can be termed as the 'dimensions of identity' which will elicit further investigation. According to the researcher these dimensions will be along which the identity construction of the individuals belonging to the Community of Practice will be studied and investigated.

(1)Self-definition– this is the basic concept or idea about the self or in other words can be termed as the ‘dominant’ or defining identity (Van Maanen, 1979).

Alvesson & Smith (2002) terms this ‘feelings and ideas about basic identity concerns and qualities’. Through the dominant identity definition one can locate answers to the questions, ‘Who am I?’ and in the context of Communities of Practice ‘Who we are?’ and ‘What we are?’

(2)Sense of Continuity- this is a sense of security of interpreting situations over time and space, imparting a sense of coherence in understanding the ‘world’ and its relationship with the ‘self’.

(3)Distinguishing Factor – is the part of self-identity which defines them distinctly and being different from the others, in this case of CoPs this distinguishing factor is the unique social identity of the group members with respect to individuals who are outside the group.

(4)Direction – a term borrowed from Alvesson & Smith (2002) which defines the nature of judgment or decision one would make based on the individuals sense of appropriateness of a situation. Identity offers a guideline for decision-making in this case through the sense making mechanism (Mitchell et al., 1986). The researcher conceives of the idea of a broader value system, in terms of the desirable and undesirable, being part of ‘self-identity’ construction which would act as a guide compass for navigating when making decisions.

### **3.10 SITUATED LEARNING – THE BIRTH PLACE OF COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE:**

#### **3.10.1 BACKGROUND:**

Situated Learning theory arose against the backdrop of a burgeoning radical critique of the cognitive theories of learning, where knowledge is perceived as an ‘abstract construct’, it questions the pedagogic assumption of a classroom-based teaching where knowledge is transferred, (poured into the heads) to a student with the context playing no role (Lave&Wenger,1991;Handley et al., 2006). Situated Learning can be termed as the point of departure or ‘rupture’ in the domain of learning theory from the cognitive school,

which called for a distinct paradigm shift in one's understanding of 'how we learn?'. Cognitive learning is based on a positivist, rational assumption that knowledge is an 'an abstract object' which represents reality and this is to be acquired through reasoning and description by manipulation of rationalist and symbolic logic with the assistance of a teacher (Gardner, 1987; Wenger, 1991; Handley, 2006). Cognitive theories of learning then conceptualize knowledge as an 'object' which is abstract and that learning takes place in the individual in a decontextualized fashion.

It is at this point of individual experience of a learner that Situated Learning ushers in a new dimension with the contesting of the idea of learning as being solely an individual effort, but also being a socially mediated one, where it is part of a social practice (Lave&Wenger, 1991; Handley, 2006).

### 3.10.2 SITUATED LEARNING – THE CONCEPT:

Situated Learning can be appropriately termed as the birthplace of Communities of Practice; the very concept of CoPs was launched in the context of Situated Learning, which originated as evident from the earlier discussions as an introduction to a new Learning Theory. Situated Learning emphasized the socio-cultural dynamic and the practice involved in learning, the key element being participation in 'social practice' and the influence on identity construction through learning processes with its central focus on the process of participation. To phrase it in simple terms, 'we participate, we learn, we create new meanings shared by others in the CoP and we construct our identities on an ongoing basis'. This was buttressed by the results from an extensive study done by Lave and Wenger (1991) on apprenticeships amongst the different professions covering five examples like midwives, tailors, quartermasters, meat cutters and non-drinking alcoholics.

1.0 Knowledge – in the context of Situated Theory is best appropriated by the term 'Knowledgeability' which is defined as "all the things which actors know tacitly about how to go on in the context of social life without being able to give them discursive expression" (Giddens, 1984) In other words, Knowledge is no longer 'abstract', 'objective', which can be codified and made explicit, residing in the head of the individual but located and actively constructed in social practice (Wenger,1991; Adams & Freeman,2000; Brown,2000).

## 2.0 Learning:

In Situated Learning, the process of learning is a matter of ‘participating’ as an ‘insider’ in a CoP, an active process. During the process of learning the learners do not just receive passively instructions and construct ‘objective’ individual knowledge but rather they learn how to be part of a community, how to ‘function’ in a community (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Lindkvist, 2005). Learners are being ‘acculturated’ rather than educated. Learning also has to be contextual and is important to be able to grasp history and traditions that still exist within a CoP. While participating in the practices of the community the identity is developed and as the learners acquire identities along the way they also become active participants (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Handley et al., 2006).

### 3.10.2.1 Situated Learning – the processes:

Fundamentally the learning process in Situated Learning happens within Communities of Practice and not solely at the individual level, and involves active interactions, sharing, internalizing, storytelling and participation in the practice (Wenger et al., 2002; Brown & Duguid, 1991; Ardichvili et al., 2006). Communities of Practice are forums for such interpersonal exchanges and the process is a reflexive engagement through dialogue involving sense making and creation of meaning from experience. (Cunliffe, 2002; Juriado & Gustaffson, 2007).

So the researcher wishes to propose that the learning activity of Situated Learning happens through the twin processes of:

(1) LPP – Legitimate Peripheral Participation

(2) Storytelling – Sharing of narratives

(Wenger et al., 2002; Hildreth, Kimble & Wright, 2000; Pettonen & Lämsä, 2004; Juriad & Gustaffson, 2007).

It would be relevant to mention that a study conducted by Kohlbacher & Mukai (2007) on the learning communities in Hewlett Packard (Consulting & Integration) in Japan also confirmed the processes of storytelling, conversation, coaching and apprenticeship being enabler for the learning activity amongst the community members.

### **3.11 LEGITIMATE PERIPHERAL PARTICIPATION – ANALYTIC APPROACH TO LEARNING:**

An analytical framework for understanding the model of learning in Situated Learning, where the participation denotes meaningful activity, developing shared meaning and engagement in the practice of the CoPs. Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) traces its conceptualization through the ‘apprenticeship’ model, where a newcomer is endowed legitimacy as they participate more actively in the practice. Participation is the trajectory of the journey of the path traversed by an apprentice from an outsider(newcomer) to that of the insider (master). ‘Peripheral participation’ for newcomers translates into being permitted to a limited extent to actively participate in simple, relatively discrete tasks and build relationships. ‘Full Participation’ implies old timers or experts who have acquired the expertise necessary to execute more complex tasks and have been assigned higher responsibilities, and are located in their participation at the ‘core’ of the CoP. LPP specifies that the process of acquiring ‘Legitimacy’ is not only through learning and being adept at the skills and knowledge but most importantly being active in the socio-cultural practices of the CoP. As the newcomers learn and participate, they acquire more ‘Legitimacy’ and move further towards the centre of the CoP and they progress from performing simple tasks towards becoming experts in the field of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Ardichvilli et al., 2006). Referring to earlier discussions on the socialization of newcomers it’s valuable to mention that this is a process of LPP mode of socialization for newcomers into the CoP.

#### **3.11.1 STORYTELLING – SHARING NARRATIVES:**

The use of storytelling in the process of individual learning within CoPs has been widely acknowledged (Wenger, 1991; Hildreth, Kimble & Wright, 2000; Wenger et al., 2002; Pettonen & Lämsä, 2004; Juriad & Gustaffson, 2007; Kohlbacher & Mukai, 2007). The role of storytelling in the metamorphosis of ‘newcomers’ into active participants, the ‘club of old timers’ is reflected in their extent of participation in the CoPs, where the level of acceptance of the stories indicate the status of the newcomer (Hildreth, Kimble & Wright, 2000 d; Seely Brown & Solomon Gray, 1998).

As the newcomers start participating in the CoP, the challenge is to learn TO talk and not to learn FROM talk, the storytelling imparts a sense of belonging, it’s through sharing of

narratives that newcomers start contributing to the shared repertoire (Lave & Wenger, 1991). When the stories of the newcomers start being accepted as part of the shared resources, i.e. repositories of accumulated knowledge of the CoP then the newcomers are acknowledged as ‘insiders’(Brown & Duguid, 1991). Their stories are not learned in a descriptive fashion but more as tools for interpretation of the past, present and understanding the self-identity (Lave & Wenger, 1991). An interesting ethnographic study conducted by Orr (1990) demonstrated the role of narratives in ‘learning practices’ on a group of photocopy service technicians. Orr (1990) demonstrates that a lot of the troubleshooting, diagnosis and finding solutions were facilitated by sharing of past experiences by more experienced technicians.

In most cases of servicing problems relating to the photocopiers the technicians could not figure a solution by following the manual only but had to tap into separate experiences which through shared narratives enabled them to exchange old experiences and locate a solution (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Hildreth, Kimble & Wright, 2000). Such stories of the technicians became the community’s collective repertoire increasing their own individual understanding of the problem (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Hildreth, Kimble & Wright, 2000).

### **3.12 COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE – LOCOMOTIVE OF INNOVATION:**

#### **3.12.1 INNOVATION – JUST A GOOD IDEA OR NOT:**

In the web of competing definitions on innovation, the most simple one is “an innovation is a new idea”(Van de Ven, 1986; 591). Innovation can be further defined as “the process of bringing new problem-solving ideas into use” (Kanter, 1983; Amabile, 1988; Glynn, 1996). As the researcher observes, the phrase “into use”, emphasizes the applicability for the new idea generated. It has been argued in management literature on innovation that generation of a new idea is inadequate to be termed as ‘innovation’ without any record of implementation or practical significance in terms of influencing the organizational processes of delivery of products and services, bringing novelty to the organization and its suppliers and customers (McFadzean et al., 2005; Glynn, 1996; Tidd, 2001; Coakes & Smith, 2007). The milieu of generation of innovation is usually one of uncertainty, unexpected, non-routine and the process of innovation can be termed as the ‘adaptive response’ (Glynn, 1996). The phrase ‘adaptive response’ is perceived to be a critical one

by the researcher, who is proposing that Communities of Practice might be formed around the need for adapting and responding to the changing world for the IAS. Would it be possible that the formation of Communities of Practice driven by the need to adapt to changed scenarios turn out to be the engines of innovation?

### 3.12.2 COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE – INCUBATOR OF IDEAS:

It has been widely accepted that CoPs, because of their interpretive nature, they facilitate knowledge sharing, generation of new ideas and diffusion of the same (Paul & Duguid, 1991; Wenger & Snyder, 2000; Wenger et al., 2002; Cross et al., 2001; Coakes & Clark, 2005). Daft and Weick (1984) in their discussion on ‘interpretive innovation’ perceive the community within organizations as the key to understanding innovating practice. They describe the ‘enacting organization’ process which is constantly innovating as below:

“These organizations construct their own environments. They gather information by trying new behaviors and seeing what happens. They experiment, test, and simulate, and they ignore precedent, rules and traditional expectations” (Daft & Weick, p288).

CoPs, which can be perceived as ‘enacting organizations’ through their fluid, non-canonical, refreshing worldview which generate ‘spontaneously occurring’ experiments in practice in which they are engaged (Brown & Duguid, 1991). These processes of ‘stepping out’ of the conventional, mainstream organizational canonical practices drive innovation by generating new practices (Hedberg, Nystrom & Starbuck, 1976; Schein, 1990).

The researcher introduces the idea of Communities of Practice being the incubators of ideas which translate into innovation through the modification and introduction of newer practices (Coakes & Smith, 2007). It is therefore argued that Communities of Practice are one of the supporting organizational forms for innovation. A study on Communities of Practice facilitating innovation by development of innovative ideas through learning of the community was conducted by Soekijad et al., (2004) in the field of multiple space use at industrial estates in Netherlands through formation of inter-organizational CoPs. The findings clearly indicate that the emergence and generation of new practices for developing industrial estates through the participation in Communities of Practice was highly effective.

### 3.12.3 COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE IN INNOVATION - (CoInvs):

This particular research will use the idea developed by Coakes & Smith (2007) of CoInvs, a form of Community of Practice which are 'specifically dedicated to the support of innovation'. This is a new concept developed by Coakes & Smith (2007) in this paper on Communities of Practice and Innovation and the concept is that Communities of Practice steering innovation are formed around pioneers of innovation, individuals who 'champion innovation' through the organization. CoInvs will be the safe havens for nurturing, encouraging and disseminating innovation and are the repositories of knowledge for the entire organization. The core concept is of 'Innovation Champion' (Glynn, 1996) who are pivotal to the success of innovation and have the social skills, experience and expertise to translate the innovation into a change in 'work practices'. However this research makes a departure from Coakes & Smith (2007) methodology who proposes the mapping of social networks of 'influential individuals' with the 'Network visualization and analysis (NVA) (TLA, 2006; Smith, 2005a) technique. In this particular research work the researcher will work the reverse way through identifying the processes of innovation diffusion which is the processes of communication through 'certain communication channels over time among the members of a social system' (Rogers, 1995).

In case of this particular research this innovation diffusion process will be studied around the identified CoPs within the IAS community in Karnataka. The case-site would be pertaining to one of the modern deliverables as part of the public administration like energy, environment, industry or urban planning. The rationale being that it would be expected that IAS officers would form CoPs to offer innovative solutions in these new domains which would require cutting-edge technologies and know-how. Comparatively with regards to the erstwhile functions performed by the ICS these departments are new and hence the level of innovation is expected to be high. The research intends to study the implementation in terms of where the innovation is actually converted into action. The focus will be to detect and identify the traces of a CoInv in the CoPs being studied, where the CoP will provide safe nurturing places for creative ideas as manifested through candid exchanges of ideas and thoughts stimulating learning opportunities.

### **3.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY:**

This chapter started with the coverage discussion and analysis of the landscape of the research literature on CoPs and their limitations. The current research literature on CoPs is still not definitive and still evolving with the early works dominating the scenario like those of the canonical works, and most of the current research literature heavily relies on these canonical works. The purpose of the chapter was to devise and develop a succinct, working definition of CoP, the elements of CoP and the applications. It was clear that prior to application of the idea of CoPs in any research context it was important to develop a clear conceptual framework. Communities of Practice was delineated into two elements, the Community dimension and the Practice dimension which were then well-defined. The 'birthplace of CoPs', the Situated Learning was discussed with respect to the different case-studies and the attributes of the contextual factors influencing the learning process. Community implies shared meaning, identity and understanding and is part of the existence of the broader Communities of Practice. Practice in the context of CoPs implies for this particular study Situated Learning and innovation. This literature review will assist in developing a conceptual framework for conducting this particular research study.

## **4.0 DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK – RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

### **4.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION:**

The current chapter drawing on the literature review on CoPs, formation of CoPs, the Practice of innovation and learning and the CoP-facilitated processes of innovation and learning investigates the ‘gaps’ in theoretical perspectives. The researcher in this chapter aims to formulate and develop a conceptual framework for the CoP-formation and the CoP-facilitated processes of innovation and learning. The developed conceptual framework will provide a basis for fine-tuning the broad research questions stated at the onset of the thesis to sharper detailed questions enabling as a guide for conducting the research. Detailed research questions were effective in narrowing the focus of the research process including the case-studies. Importantly, distinct conceptual frameworks were derived from the theoretical framework of CoPs for structuring case-study research. Hence the conceptual framework was meant for the broader research on CoPs and there are distinct and separate conceptual frameworks developed for the individual case-studies. Case-studies concentrated on the Practice dimension of the CoP, namely learning and innovation.

### **4.2 ARCHITECTURE OF COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE – 3 KEY STRUCTURES:**

Most of the dominant literature dwells on the benefits, creation and nature of CoPs but it is only few works which defines the fundamental components of CoPs.

(Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002) described CoPs along three fundamental elements:

- 1) DOMAIN
- 2) COMMUNITY
- 3) PRACTICE

This was a very important step for guidance of the research process given the nebulous nature of the definition of CoP-formation. Here the researcher will expand on the key

definitions of all the above three elements and will present a snapshot of its relevance in this particular research work for the organization under scanner; the IAS.

### 1.0 DOMAIN:

Is the structural element which creates common ground, which is knowledge, beliefs and assumptions that are shared between people (Clark1996), or domain knowledge (Nardi & Miller,1991) and can be called as the very ‘force which knits the community together’ and is the raison d’etre of the community. Domain in a CoP is ‘shared knowledge’ which provides the legitimacy of the group and distinguishes it from a mere social network which is engaged in cozy interpersonal relationships and friendships (O’Donnell, Porter, McGuire, Garavan, Heffernan & Cleary, 2003; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). Domain is what provides the coherence and identity of the group, the very purpose and objective of their interactions. Jorgensen & Lauridsen (2005) defines ‘competence’ in a CoP context as ‘domain-specific knowledge’. The researcher proposes that the domain of a CoP is where the researcher can locate the notion of productive and meaningful conversations and is a distinguishing criterion of CoPs from other forms of organizations.

### 2.0 COMMUNITY:

Is what really explains CoPs, a coalescence consisting of practitioners embedded in a social structure, the Community. Community element is critical to the deepening of the knowledge structure within the CoPs and is prudent to consider the excellent description provided by Etzioni (1996), ‘a community requires a commitment to a set of shared values, norms and meanings, and a shared history and identity – in short a shared culture’. Etzioni (1996) provides us the frame of reference for discussions and inquiry into what constitutes a ‘Community’ and what exactly are the ingredients of it. In the current case of ‘emergent Communities of Practice’ there is ‘an implicit assumption of an existing level of trust’ between the members to be able to come together or ‘assemble around the practice’ therefore requiring no need for inculcation of trust. Though CoPs come in different sizes there is a recommended optimal size of about 20 members since larger size would inhibit the interpersonal communication (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). However the researcher will be alert to any ‘surprise’ issues of trust arising in the further research work.

### 3.0 PRACTICE:

It would be fair to say this is the ‘propelling force’ which propels the Community forward and keeps alive the interest of its members, engages the interests of the members and are the shared resources of the Community. (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002) defines it as a ‘set of frameworks, ideas, tools, information, styles, language, stories and documents’ which is accessible and owned by the Community. This is the contribution of the community towards the domain knowledge.

For this specific research, the line of thinking adopted is of restricting the definition of ‘practice’ to ‘observable activity’ (Handley, 2006) which is tangible and not the entire spectrum of relationships and meanings which such activity may be enriched with. The researcher makes a clear distinction between ‘Participation’ and ‘Practice’ with Participation being enriched with meanings and relationships. So for this research ‘Practice’ is confined to the activities of Learning and Innovation. Contextualizing the CoPs in this research on IAS officers, the researcher defines the attributes or parameters relating to each of the 3 key elements of the architecture of CoP. The researcher will investigate the identified attributes or parameters through the research process including the case-studies.

#### ELEMENTS OF CoP – ATTRIBUTES:

ELEMENTS OF CoP	ATTRIBUTES
Domain	Shared interest Civil Service/Public Administration
Community	Shared Meaning, Shared Understanding and Shared Identity
Practice	Processes of Innovation and Learning

**Table 5- Elements of CoP and the attributes - developed by the researcher**

The researcher has considered shared Domain interest in Public Administration or Civil Service as a key element of the data collection process throughout the entire research process including the interviews and triangulation of literary and textual data. Hence this

has not been treated as a separate category in either the pilot-studies or the case-studies which ensued.

Community attributes of shared meaning, shared understanding and shared identity are distinctly investigated in the pilot-study stage. Practice attributes of innovation and learning are distinctly investigated in the two distinct case-studies of Karnataka and West Bengal cadre.

#### **4.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR CASE-STUDIES:**

In order to identify, capture and record the social phenomena of CoPs and their facilitation of innovation and learning it was necessitated to develop distinct conceptual frameworks for both the case-studies. The 2 distinct case-study conceptual frameworks are discussed below separately.

##### **4.3.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK – CASE-STUDY ON CoP-FACILITATED LEARNING – ‘SITUATED LEARNING’:**

The first case-study conducted was towards investigating, capturing and recording the process of CoP-facilitated learning and its mechanisms. This mode of learning facilitated by CoPs has been defined as Situated Learning, the site of CoP-formation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The first step towards developing the conceptual framework was to identify the mechanisms involved in the phenomenon of Situated Learning. Drawing from the research literature on Situated Learning the 2 distinct mechanisms identified:

1.0 LPP- Legitimate Peripheral Participation

2.0 Story-telling – sharing of stories and anecdotes

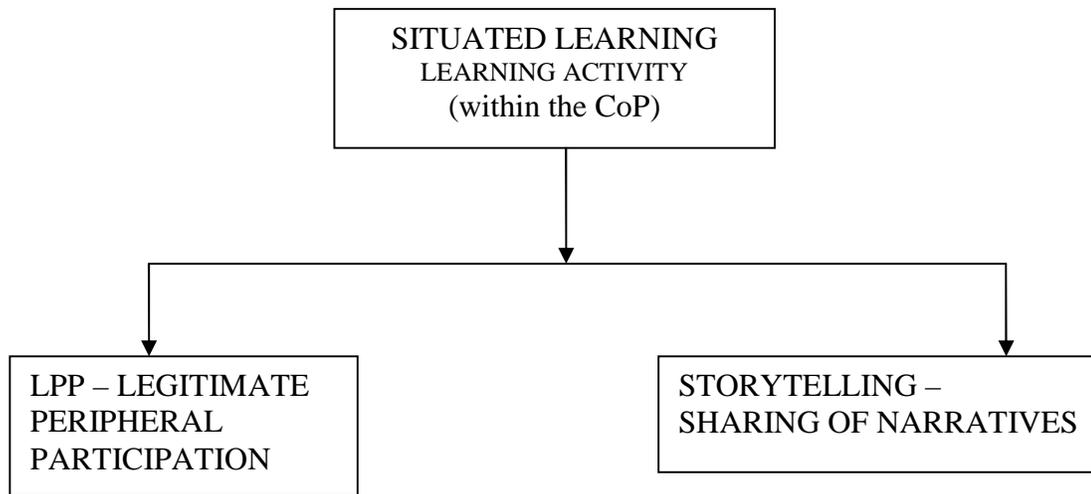
These mechanisms were primarily derived from the pioneering work of Lave & Wenger (1991). The researcher has deployed the work of Situated Learning by Lave & Wenger (1991) as the canonical work, the template against which the qualitative data would be interpreted. It would be prudent to explain and elaborate the rationale for holding the work by Lave & Wenger (1991) on Situated Learning in this particular research for conducting the case-study.

#### 4.3.1.1 Rationale for Adopting the Situated Learning Framework of Lave & Wenger (1991):

There were three challenges for this particular research which had to be tackled, first the amorphous nature of CoPs, second the wide, nascent research literature on CoPs and third the complex institution of IAS being studied with its complex legacy, tradition and insularity in terms of access. The researcher wishes to state in personal capacity that the research literature on CoP appears ambiguous and vague in nature without any perceptible clarity of definitions of terms and meanings. Clarity of definitions and meanings of terms had to be obtained through a judicious process of analysis of the research literature. Against that backdrop the work of Lave & Wenger (1991) was refreshing in its clarity and simplicity of thought and ideas, and it is here in their work on Situated Learning that they proposed the concept of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP).

LPP provided for the researcher an excellent technique for investigating, studying, capturing and recording the process of CoP-facilitated learning amongst the IAS officers. The work of Lave & Wenger, 1991 on Situated Learning was case-study method based with interesting independent case-studies on groups like tailors, midwives, quarter-masters and alcoholics anonymous in different geographical settings. This imparted a direction and guidance to this particular research method which was based on the case-study method focusing on the processes of CoP-facilitated learning, i.e. Situated Learning.

The conceptual framework is depicted as below:



The processes of learning within the CoP have been identified in the conceptual literature as SITUATED LEARNING, defined basically as learning which is located and rooted in a social reality. LPP, “legitimate peripheral participation” provides a framework for understanding learning and how newcomers earn and learn their way into a CoP.

According to this framework, learning is an active and contextual social practice where the meaning is constantly negotiated between the learner and the external world involving social relations between the individuals. This concept has been elaborated in earlier chapters with regards to the theoretical dimensions. Though storytelling is often seen to be a part of LPP process but in this specific case the researcher has studied the process of story-telling separately in this specific case-study analysis.

The following are the reasons for this distinct position offered:

- Here in case of IAS officers the stories or narratives reflect the deeper tradition and legacy of the civil services. One of the often mentioned fact in terms of the IAS collective is the continuity with the old ICS-tradition and legacy and its role in shaping the minds of the young recruits.

- The processes by which stories as a repository of knowledge is passed on through generations is a way too significant theme in management learning literature to be subsumed under the overarching subject of LPP. This particular research wishes to explore separately along methodological lines the powerful role of storytelling or sharing of narratives in the learning process.
  
- In LPP sharing of stories is seen as part of the processes of participation and initiation but this specific case-study research intends to treat the process with individual distinct attention since the process has a distinct methodology for learning.

Based on the conceptual framework the expected themes have been earmarked against which the researcher would be interpreting the case-study data, which is primarily the interview data.

4.3.1.2 Expected themes for Case-Analysis:

The expected themes which were emergent from the conceptual framework has been stated below. Here the researcher delineates the two ‘dominant’ aspects of the conceptual framework applied for the interpretation of the case-study data, i.e. Story-Telling and LPP(Legitimate Peripheral Participation).

SITUATED LEARNING Learning Activity (within the CoP)	
Story-Telling or Sharing of Narratives	Legitimate Peripheral Participation
1.0 Periphery – ‘Listening to Stories’ – Learning ‘From Talk’ 2.0 Core – ‘Sharing Stories’ – Learning ‘To Talk’ 3.0 Belonging – Stories as part of Identity-Formation	1. ‘Social World’ 1.1 Problem-Solving abilities – “SCAFFOLDING” 2. Participation 2.1 Human Knowing through Participation 2.2 Identity Formation through Participation

**Table 6 – Expected themes for Case Analysis – developed by the researcher**

These expected themes are drawn from the research literature on Situated Learning and LPP. Here the researcher delineated the two ‘dominant’ aspects of the conceptual framework applied for the interpretation of the research data. The categories and sub-categories within the expected themes is mentioned briefly as below:

1.0 Story-telling or Sharing of Narratives: From ‘Listening to Stories’ to ‘Telling Stories’ – Periphery to Core:

- (1) Early Years – Powerful Role of Story-telling in Learning
- (2) Nature of Learning from stories
- (3) Sense of Belonging – Creating and Fostering through stories
- (4) Social World – Exchange of Stories
- (5) Stories and Lessons Learned – Codes of Conduct
- (6) Competitive Spirit Amongst Peer or Fellow IAS officers
- (7) Story-telling between Seniors and Juniors
- (8) Information-rich stories of Seniors – Learning Value
- (9) Learning What?? – Limited Role in enabling Performing Tasks and Responsibilities
- (10) Gender Dimension

2.0 Legitimate Peripheral Participation - LPP:

Social World:

1. ‘SCAFFOLDING’ - Assisting in Problem-Solving Abilities
  - a. Standing by your junior – “Espirit de Corps”
  - b. Skills and Knowledge for execution – “Hard” ‘SCAFFOLDING’

Participation:

1. Human Knowing through Participation
2. Identity-formation through Participation

4.3.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK – CASE-STUDY ON CoP-FACILITATED INNOVATION (CoInv):

The second case-study was conducted towards investigating, capturing and recording the process of CoP-facilitated innovation and its mechanisms. Here the conceptual

framework was restricted to the CoP-facilitated mechanism involved in the phenomena of diffusion of innovation. The researcher adopted the idea of investigation of the process of diffusion of innovation and not the origin or the source of innovation, i.e. innovators. This particular research conceptual framework deploys the idea of CoInvs, form of CoPs which are ‘specifically dedicated to the support of innovation’ Coakes & Smith (2007). For the current research the concept of Innovation as “a new idea”(Van de Ven, 1986; 591) has been extended to being “the process of bringing new problem-solving ideas into use” (Kanter, 1983; Amabile, 1988; Glynn, 1996). The researcher emphasizes that the phrase “into use” denotes applicability for the new idea generated. In other words the definition of innovation as a new idea implemented in practice is adopted by the researcher for these specific case-study investigations. In that respect the new ideas which have been translated into reality through new practices is considered as an innovation.

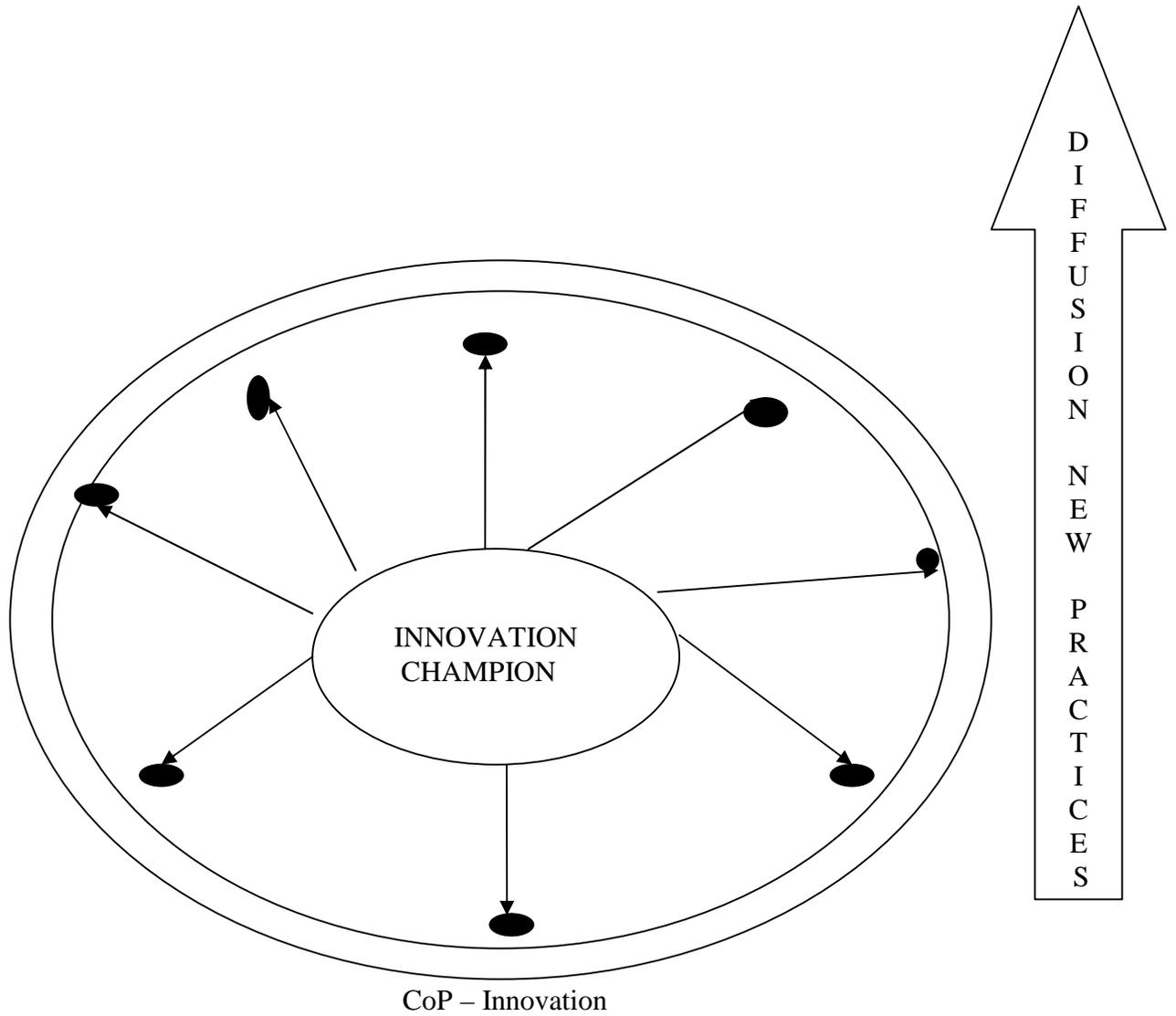
#### 4.3.2.1 Communities of Practice – Incubator of Ideas:

The researcher introduces the idea of Communities of Practice being the incubators of ideas which translate into innovation through modification of existing practices and introduction of newer practices (Coakes & Smith, 2007). It has therefore been argued that CoPs are one of the vehicles for facilitating and empowering innovation. This particular research conceptual framework deploys the idea developed by CoInvs, a form of Community of Practice which are ‘specifically dedicated to the support of innovation’ (Coakes & Smith (2007). The concept is that of Communities of Practice steering innovation are formed around pioneers of innovation, individuals who ‘champion innovation’ through the organization.

CoInvs emerge as the safe havens for nurturing, encouraging and disseminating innovation and is the repository of knowledge for the entire organization. These CoInvs facilitate diffusion of new practices based on the ideas and knowledge developed within the CoPs through the organization. Here the CoInvs are formed around an individual ‘Innovation Champion’ (Glynn, 1996) who are pivotal to the success of innovation and have the social skills, experience and expertise to translate the innovation into a change in ‘work practices’. ‘Innovation Champion’ will not be studied in any detail or proffered attention since this particular research is focused on the process of diffusion of innovation.

In this specific case-study the researcher will track the process of innovation diffusion which is the process of communication through ‘certain communication channels over time among the members of a social system’ (Rogers, 1995).

A graphic of the conceptual framework is depicted below:



● - member of CoP – Innovation Network

**Figure 4 - CoINV - COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE – INNOVATION**

#### **4.4 ‘THEORETICAL GAPS’ IN COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE THEORY – POTENTIAL RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION:**

The current chapter reviewed the gaps in the theoretical space in the domain of CoPs, formation of CoPs and its associated processes of CoP-facilitated innovation and learning. The mechanism of CoP-facilitated learning i.e Situated Learning is an inadequately researched area and deserves attention particularly with respect to the socio-cultural dimensions.

In a recent seminal paper termed ‘Limits to Communities of Practice’, Joanne Roberts (2006) sketches out the potential directions for further research in the domain of CoP theory. There has been a dearth of rigorous efforts towards exploring and explaining the contextual conditions of CoP-formation and the associated practices like learning and innovation. Contextual conditions pertaining both to the broader socio-cultural dimension and the organizational dimension deserve further research exploration. This research aims to contribute theoretically by integrating its findings in the existing theory ‘gaps’ in CoP literature. Importantly this specific research context is considered in identifying the broad 3 research gaps as stated below:

1.0 Socio-Cultural Context

2.0 Organizational Context

3.0 Communities of Innovation – CoPs steering innovation

These 3 ‘theoretical gaps’ have been explained below:

##### 1. Socio-Cultural Context:

“Firstly, given that the broad socio-cultural environment will impact on the success of the community of practice as an approach to knowledge management, research needs to take account of this”(Roberts, 2006). In this specific research context, the study is being conducted both in the regions of Karnataka and West Bengal in India, each with its distinct administrative cultures and histories. West Bengal is a Presidency cadre, i.e. parts of India under the direct British rule region which were ruled directly by the ICS officers. Karnataka is an erstwhile Princely state without any direct rule by ICS officers. So it is expected that this research will

contribute to deeper understanding of the influence of socio-cultural milieu on the formation of CoPs and the processes of learning and innovation.

2. Organizational Context:

“A second area for research concerns the organizational context” (Roberts, 2006). The interaction and interface of CoPs with the formal structure of an organization plays an important area of investigation. This will assist in understanding the kind of organizational structures which will play a supportive in learning and innovation. This research will contribute to the current literature on the organizational context of IAS and their facilitation or hindrance in the mechanisms of learning and innovation. The organizational context here is an intriguing one with respect to the political milieu of power struggle between different political interest groups particularly at the Secretariat level.

3. Communities of Innovation – CoPs steering innovation:

The research will contribute in a significant way towards practical application of the concept introduced by Coakes & Smith (2007) CoInvs, (Communities of Practice in innovation) which is CoPs nurturing and steering innovation in organizations. This particular research through its study of innovation amongst the IAS officers will contribute substantially towards understanding of the social process of innovation and implementation of the conceptual framework of CoInvs.

It would be prudent to summarize the contextual aspects of the theoretical gaps relevant to this specific research study and the potential research contribution.

CONTEXTUAL CONDITIONS	POTENTIAL RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION
Socio-Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Karnataka an erstwhile Princely state with its own administrative traditions and legacies.</li> <li>- West Bengal a formerly Presidency region with Kolkata being the capital of India, governed directly under the British rule.</li> <li>- Linguistic and cultural traditions like the voluminous literary works available in local language in West Bengal.</li> </ul>
Organizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hierarchical structured administrative set-up like most bureaucracies.</li> <li>- District Administration remote from the State Capital with its own structures.</li> </ul>
Communities of Innovation – CoPs steering innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generation of new ideas within the framework of CoPs.</li> <li>- CoPs facilitating innovation, the implementation of new ideas as practices.</li> <li>- Existence of innovation without CoPs where new ideas are top-down command with consensual implementation.</li> </ul>

**Table 7 – Contextual Conditions for the Research – developed by the researcher**

#### **4.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

The research questions for this particular research have been developed from the conceptual framework and provides a direction for navigating of the research and provides research focus for interpretation of the data.

According to (Miles and Huberman, 1994), 'It's a direct step from conceptual framework to research questions.' Here the researcher reflected on the research goals and objectives broadly, the identification of a tangible CoP within a complex organization with its distinct historical legacy and tradition occupying a pivotal position in the Indian society. The conceptual framework assisted in delineating the key important parameters which need to be studied and the processes and mechanisms which need to be investigated, captured and recorded in the research process. The conceptual framework restricted the key relevant issues to be investigated and hence sharpened the focus of the research questions (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Earlier in the thesis a chapter identified the broad research question based on the goals and objectives:

**'Does the IAS as an entity form Communities of Practice and facilitate Learning and Innovation?'** Subsequent conceptual framework provides the direction of the research question sharper from the broad one to along two dimensions of Community and Practice; 'Community' being defined as one with its shared meaning, identity, understanding and 'Practice' being defined as the processes of learning and innovation. Innovation is defined as introduction of new practices in the conducting of public administration. Learning is acquisition of skills and knowledge necessary to discharge the tasks and responsibilities of an IAS officer through participation in CoPs.

The research questions can be classified into three distinct sets of research focus:

1. Community-formation.
2. Practice – Learning within the framework of CoPs.
3. Practice - Innovation within the framework of CoPs.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO COMMUNITY-FORMATION:

- (1) How does the process of natural formation of Communities of Practice take place within the IAS entity in the Karnataka and West Bengal cadre?
  - a. Do they form Communities at all? Are there Communities of Practice with shared meaning, identity and understanding?
  - b. Is the concept of Community of Practice relevant at all for the IAS?
  - c. What do they have as shared meaning?
  - d. What do they have as shared identity?
  - e. What do they have as shared understanding?

### PRACTICE – LEARNING WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF CoPs:

- (2) If they do form Communities of Practice then how does that steer learning within the IAS?
  - a. How does the IAS community engage in the learning process?
  - b. How does the new recruit into the IAS community participate in the learning process?
  - c. Is there a ‘collective learning’ where the IAS shares stories and exchange experiences? Or most of the learning is individual and if so to what extent?
  - d. To what extent story-telling and sharing of narratives play a role in facilitating learning processes amongst IAS officers?
  - e. What is the role played by senior IAS officers in inducting the newcomers into the CoPs?
  - f. How do the senior IAS officers impart their knowledge and skills to the newcomers within the framework of the CoPs?

### PRACTICE – INNOVATION WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF CoPs:

- g. How does one identify innovation as new practices in the administration?
- h. What is the process of innovation diffusion through the IAS community and the larger organization?
- i. How does the Communities of Practice encourage and steer innovation in practices of administration?
- j. How are Communities of Practice formed around an innovative idea?

#### **4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY:**

This chapter developed conceptual framework for conducting the case-studies in both the West Bengal and Karnataka cadre IAS officers. The conceptual framework was developed based on the literature review of the extant contemporary literature on CoPs. Potential contributions of this research to the theoretical work of Communities of Practice were identified through consideration of ‘theoretical gaps’ in the contemporary research literature on CoPs. The gaps were primarily in the context of formation of CoPs and their influence on the functioning of the CoPs. As discussed CoPs are a contextual phenomenon and any consideration of the contexts can make a significant contribution to the existing body of the research literature. Further research questions were developed into finer and specific ones with the consideration of the conceptual framework.

## **5.0 RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY:**

### **5.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION:**

This chapter presents a description and discussion of the research design, research methodology and data collection methods deployed in the study to investigate answers to the research goals and objectives. The objective of this chapter is to provide an account and a rationale for the research methodology, the stages of conducting research, research philosophy, research approach, research epistemology and data collection methods deployed by the researcher. The doctoral dissertations of Walker (2008), Ritchie (2010) and Scott (2005) provided direction in terms of the references and the contemporary discussions concerning qualitative, case-study based research methodology.

### **5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN:**

Research design is the “logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions(Yin,2003).” Research design is the road-map for the research process, the pursuit of answers to the initial research questions which are arrived at through conclusions from the research. The design should include the steps taken for collection and analysis of relevant data. Research design has been defined as a plan that:

“guides the investigator in the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting observations. It is a logical model of proof that allows the researcher to draw inferences concerning causal relations among the variables under investigation (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992).

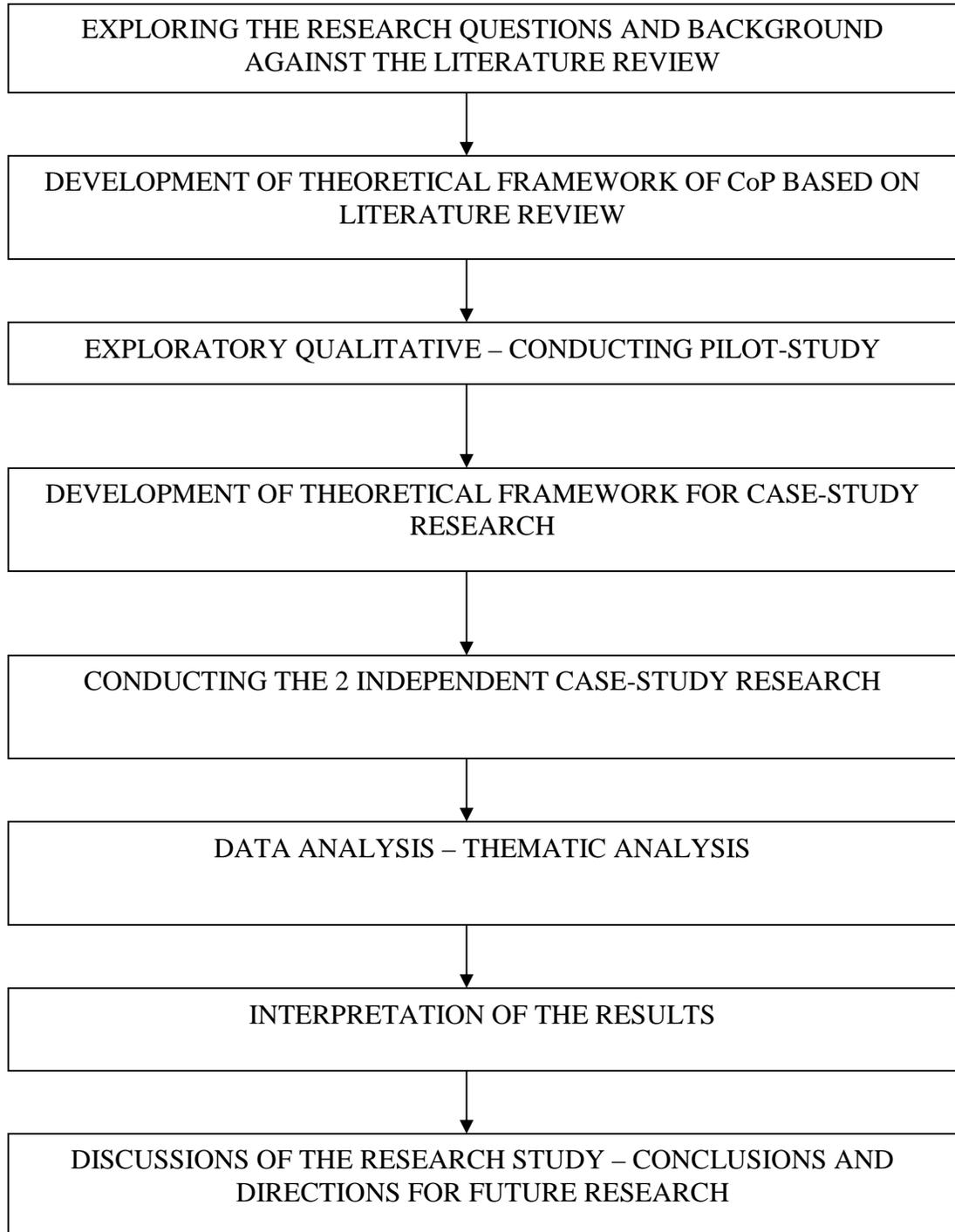
Qualitative research is suitable for exploring abstracts concepts, operational definitions, social phenomena and their meanings as constructed by actors, organizational processes and exploring new relationships (Cassell & Symon, 1994; Weick, 1996; Bryman, 2004). In light of the above definition, the researcher is studying a social phenomena embedded in an organizational process where the researcher is attempting at sense-making of the studied phenomena (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). The research strategy is qualitative, exploratory, descriptive, inductive, field-work based, case-study-based, ethnographic and aimed at theory building with theoretical framework acting like a theoretical lens towards interpreting and understanding the findings. This particular research is inductive in terms

of developing theory of CoPs which are still evolving (Lindkvist, 2005) and their role in facilitating learning and innovation. In broad epistemological terms the research philosophy is interpretivist with an ontological construct of a theoretical framework derived from literature review.

The researcher wishes to emphasize the very pivotal and significant role of the theoretical framework discussed in earlier chapter in the formulation of research design. Theoretical framework will assist in sharpening the process of capturing, interpreting and recording the data collected towards the research purpose.

Case-study method of conducting research have been adopted since the researcher is investigating a contemporary social phenomena within its real life context and there is no clear evident boundaries between phenomenon and context (Yin,1984). In the next few sections the researcher discusses the research design and its elements in detail, including the research philosophy, research approach, research epistemology, research process like selection of units of analysis and the steps followed and data collection and analysis.

The overall depiction of the research process is as below:



**Figure 5 - Research Process - developed by the researcher**

### **5.3 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY – SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM:**

The fundamental approach of this research philosophy is that living reality is socially constructed by the actors, individuals engaged in it and is not objective nor external to the actors. Reality as socially constructed is manifest when people make sense of their living world experiences through language (Berger & Luckman, 1966).

According to Constructivism there is no absolute truth to be obtained about living reality using independent and neutral criteria which is relativist in nature (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). Socially constructed reality is manifest when people make sense of their living world experiences through language (Berger & Luckman, 1966).

The researcher proposes that this philosophy of research is appropriate and relevant for studying human behaviour and understanding pertaining to a social phenomena. In this specific research the focus is on the formation of CoPs with shared attributes of meaning, identity, understanding and the subsequent facilitation of the processes of learning and innovation within the CoPs. Situated Learning within the context of a CoP assumes knowledge of the world or reality, in this case the practice is constructed through human understanding, interpretation and negotiation and is constantly evolving. This notion of knowledge creation within a social context blends in neatly with the social constructivist philosophy. The formation of CoP is a socially created phenomena and the mechanism of learning is an individual subjective perspective, the researcher is attempting to capture and record the individual narratives about their learning experiences. In case of innovation though an independent criteria was deployed for identifying innovative practices but the focus was on the process of implementing that innovation through the individual lens or perspective. Against this research objective Social Constructivism seems to be an apt route to explore the research questions.

The researcher wishes to emphatically state the often quoted limitation of the constructivism method of having no independent existence and acquires a form only with cognition (Johnson and Duberley, 2000) did not affect this research process. This is since the objective of the research study is not to verify and validate if the individuals did learn or not or to what extent they learnt within the CoP but the way individual respondents

perceived their learning processes. The same holds true for the implementation of innovation process. The entire position of the researcher is what the individual respondents who were members of the CoP had to recount and say about their experiences of belonging, interacting, learning and functioning within the CoPs while implementing innovative practices.

#### **5.4 RESEARCH APPROACH – ETHNOGRAPHY:**

Ethnography as a field of study located within the tradition of anthropology seeks and attempts to understand the social processes like behaviour which occur within social entities like groups, organizations and communities. In the words of Hammersley (1985): "The task [of ethnographers] is to document the culture - the perspectives and practices - of the people in these settings. The aim is to 'get inside' the way each group of people sees the world."

The researcher wishes to propose that precisely when one is studying CoPs and their facilitated processes of Situated Learning and innovation this dimension of 'get inside' assumes importance, here the entire research efforts is to capture and understand the way the participants form CoPs and learn and interact within them amongst the members.

The researcher wishes to emphasize that the notion of 'settings' which ethnography defines as a dimension to be considered seriously is very significant in this specific research. IAS officers exist and operate within very specific settings, their remote district postings being one example which is not commonplace and deserves special attention with respect to the influence it exercises on their social practice. Indeed as discussed in later chapters the 'setting' did influence enormously the CoP-formation and the associated practices of learning and innovation. Hence ethnography was selected as a research approach for this research study since the intent is on studying communities and social groups, in this specific instance the IAS officers. It would be prudent to mention an extract about the definition of ethnography:

'A strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them; a tendency to work primarily with 'unstructured data', that is data that have not been coded at the point of data collection in terms of a

closed set of analytical categories; investigation of a small number of cases, perhaps just one case, in detail; analysis of data that involves explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions, the product of which mainly takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations' (Hammersley & Atkinson 1998).

The two primary conditions for satisfying the label of ethnographic research are:

1.0 The use of close-up, detailed observation of the natural world by the investigator.

2.0 The attempt to avoid prior commitment to any theoretical model.

(Jacob, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 2005; Stake, 1983; Van Maanen, Dabbs & Faulkner, 1982).

In this case the second point is not adhered to since the researcher developed a prior theoretical model through the conceptual framework based on the literature review.

The above definition lucidly captures the rationale for adopting an ethnographic method for conducting the research which can be summarized as below:

- exploring the nature of social phenomena, in this case being CoP-based Situated Learning.
- there were no hypothesis or testing of it contemplated.
- data collected were 'unstructured' in the form of recorded interviews.
- no analytical categories were deployed.
- the number of cases considered being just adequate.

However the research findings extended through triangulation beyond verbal descriptions and offered plausible explanations for the capturing of the interpretation of meanings and understandings of human actions. Ethnographic research method accounted for the reflexive nature of social research which influenced the understanding and recording of the social phenomena under consideration or study. This aspect of ethnographic research has a shortcoming in the form of an over-identification of the researcher with the respondents thus diluting their ability to think reflexively with regards to the conducting of the research and most importantly the findings. The researcher was vigilant with regards to this potential fallacy while conducting the research and ensured that 'being one of them' as the IAS officers did not happen. Most importantly the researcher though

belonging in some ways to the social world of IAS officers, sharing some of their ideas and concepts was safely removed from their social milieu through his professional experience and exposure in foreign shores.

It would be prudent to summarize the key aspects of the social constructivism comparing with its rival philosophy positivism in a tabular format:

CRITERIA	POSITIVISM	SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM
The observer	Must be independent	Is part of what is being observed
Human interests	Should be irrelevant	Are the main drivers of science
Explanations	Must demonstrate causality	Aim to increase general understanding of the situation
Research progresses through	Hypothesis and deductions	Gathering rich data from which ideas are induced
Concepts	Need to be operationalised so they can be measures	Should incorporate stakeholder perspectives
Units of analysis	Should be reduced to the simplest terms	May include the complexity of 'whole' situations
Generalisation through	Statistical probability	Theoretical abstraction
Sampling requires	Large numbers selected randomly	Small numbers of cases chosen for specific reasons

**Table 8 - Comparing Management Research Approaches. Source: after Easterby-Smith et al**

### **5.5 RESEARCH EPISTEMOLOGY – INTERPRETIVISM:**

Interpretivism as an epistemology is best suited where the research intends to describe, capture, interpret, comprehend, analyse and record the social world as lived and experienced by the participants from their perspective (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This particular research with regards to CoP-formation and their facilitation of the processes of learning and innovation entirely focuses on how the participants, here in this case the IAS officers understand and interpret that living social reality, the experience of being a member of a CoP of IAS officers, and their description of the learning processes. As the researcher posed the question; the process by which a fresh recruit IAS officer evolve into being a full-fledged Administrator within the span of a decade, and this process needs to be captured, recorded and analysed in their very own words. Against this background of the research objective interpretivism emerged as a favourite epistemology. Interpretivism

allows the researcher to explore the processes of negotiation between the individuals, here IAS officers, engaged in a CoP to impart meanings and interpretation to their social actions, here defined as the practice in CoP and the contextual social situation.

‘[Interpretivism] requires an understanding of the social world which people have constructed and which they reproduce through their continuing activities [ ... ] people are constantly involved in interpreting their world – social situations, other people's behaviour, their own behaviour’ (Blaikie 1993:36).

In conclusion, the emphasis and focus on the individual participant interpretation and understanding of their lived social world, the related experiences, the social relations, the social actions and the context qualifies interpretivism as an attractive foundation for conducting the research study.

‘The social researcher enters the everyday social world in order to grasp the socially constructed meanings, and then reconstructs these meanings into social scientific language’ (Blaikie 1993:96).

The second important aspect or dimension of interpretivism is the acknowledgement of the role of the researcher in understanding their relationship with and belonging to the social world they embark on studying, in this case the IAS officers forming CoPs. In the case of the West Bengal cadre this was an important consideration for the researcher who enjoyed and shared a certain amiable relationship with the social world of the interviewed respondents, i.e. IAS officers belonging to West Bengal cadre. This has been discussed at length in a separate chapter on IAS officers belonging to West Bengal cadre case-study. Adopting an interpretivist epistemology mandates discussion about the reflexive relation the researcher shares with the respondents, i.e. the interviewees drawn from the IAS officers belonging to West Bengal cadre.

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Form of research question</i>	<i>Requires control over behavioural events?</i>	<i>Focuses on contemporary events?</i>
Experiment	how, why	yes	yes
Survey	who what, where, how many, how much	no	yes
Archival analysis	who what, where, how many, how much	no	yes/no
History	how, why	no	no
Case study	how, why	no	yes

**Figure 6 - Relevant Situations for Different Research Strategies – Source: Cosmos**

**5.6 RESEARCH METHOD – CASE-STUDY BASED RESEARCH:**

Case-study is considered as a research strategy for investigation of qualitative data, which can be defined as ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context’ when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 1994).

According to Yin(2003):

A case study is an empirical inquiry that

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

The case-study inquiry

- copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
- relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result
- benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis

Case study as a research strategy is used in many situations to contribute to one’s knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political and related phenomena (Yin, 2003). The rationale for the researcher for deploying case-study method is the possibility to explore and account for contextual conditions which is highly pertinent for the study of the phenomena here.

Case studies have been powerful tool in theory building, to develop constructs around the empirical work to enhance one's understanding of the concept of CoP. (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003; Hartley, 2004) There is a need for selecting case-study method when there is a need for 'understanding the social phenomena' because the method allows the researcher to 'retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events' (Yin, 2003). The unique strength of the case-study is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations – main sources of evidence for this research study – interviews of the persons involved in the events (Yin, 2003). According to Kohlbacher & Mukai (2007) case-study method is preferred strategy when one is attempting to answer the questions 'how' and 'why' has no influence over the events being studied and the research concentration is on a 'contemporary phenomenon within real-life context'.

Here the researcher is studying the phenomena of CoP formation within the real life context of a complex organizational entity. There are significant contextual dimensions of the formation of CoP and their facilitation of practices like learning and innovation, which the context being here the socio-cultural milieu of the Indian administrative and political structures in which the IAS officers operate. For instance one of the important context here would be the challenges of district administration confronting the IAS officers in their early years of posting like law and order.

Most of the current research work done on observing the phenomena of CoPs has been qualitative in nature and case-study based. Some of the recent case-study based approaches on CoP research are Thompson (2005) on the structural and epistemic components of CoP, Mittendorf et al., (2006) on learning in CoPs, Pastoors (2007) and Kohlbacher & Mukai (2007) on the emergence of CoPs within organizational contexts.

According to Yin(2003a:1) the criteria for adopting case-study based research: 'The case study is but one of several ways of doing social science research. Other ways include experiments, surveys, histories and the analysis of archival information.

Each strategy has peculiar advantages and disadvantages, depending on three conditions:

- (a) the type of research question,
- (b) the control an investigator has over actual behavioural events, and
- (c) the focus on contemporary as opposed to historical phenomena.,

Against the above definition this specific research has the following apt conditions for conducting case-study research:

- 1.0 The research question is explanatory and descriptive trying to capture the social phenomena with an accurate description.
- 2.0 In this research, the investigator or the researcher has no control over actual events which occur in an external environment.
- 3.0 The phenomena which is under investigation are contemporary rather than historical.

This explains the rationale for adopting the case-study research methodology for investigating CoP-formation and the facilitation of the associated processes of learning and innovation.

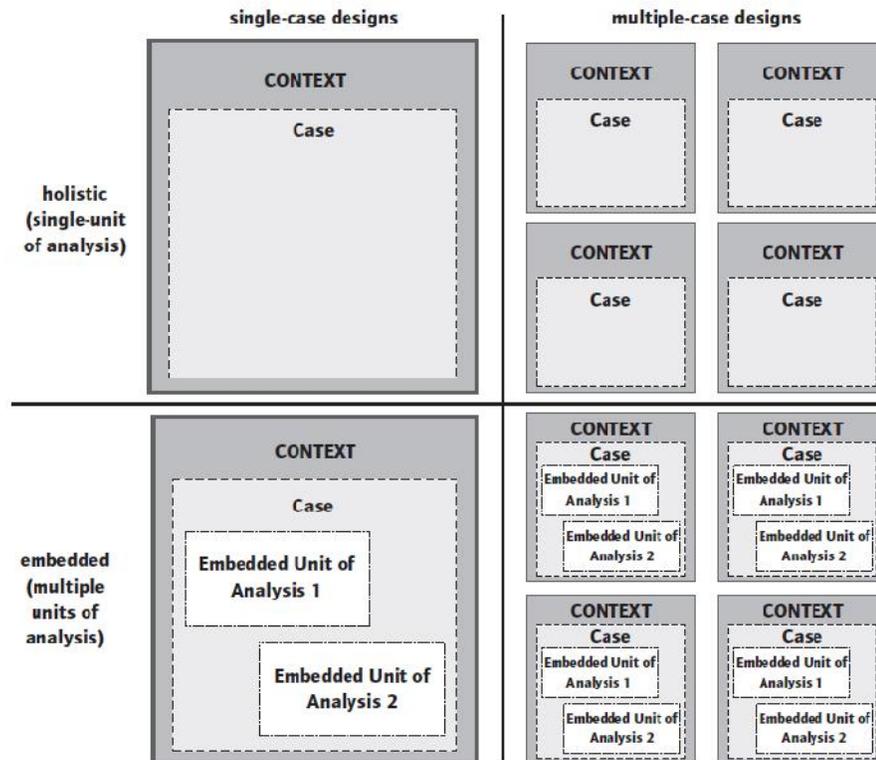


Figure 2.4 Basic Types of Designs for Case Studies  
 SOURCE: COSMOS Corporation.

**Figure 7 – Basic Types of Designs for Case Studies – Source: Cosmos Corporation**

**5.6.1 ETHNOGRPAHY AND CASE-STUDY METHOD:**

It would be important to clarify that the adoption of ethnographic method does not contradict the case-study research methodology. Not all ethnographic research qualify as case-studies (Yin,2003). In this particular research the ethnographic research does qualify as a case-study.

One of the conditions for qualifying as ethnographic research is the absence of a prior theoretical model (Jacob, 197,1989;Lincoln & Guba, 2005; Stake, 1983; Van Maanen, Dabbs & Faulkner, 1982) which is not the case for this particular research study since there is a conceptual framework serving as a theoretical model.

**5.6.2 CATEGORY OF CASE-STUDY SELECTED:**

Yin (1984) identifies the three broad categories of case studies, exploratory, descriptive, holistic and explanatory. Exploratory case studies explore phenomenon which evinces the

interest of the researcher in the data, and this general line of inquiry initiate the process of further investigation of the social phenomenon being studied.

Here in this specific research there were 2 categories of case-studies selected, one for the pilot-study of the first phase and for the final case-study of the second phase.

#### 1.0 PILOT-STUDY – FIRST PHASE:

A pilot study is considered as an example of an exploratory case study (Yin, 1984; McDonough and McDonough, 1997). In this research the first part of the research study was exploratory with the pilot study being done on the population of IAS officers to ascertain if there existed a Community, as defined in the CoP, with the inputs of the theoretical framework. However contrary to the exact definition and nature of exploratory case-studies the final research questions and hypotheses were not proposed post the study but were prepared prior to the pilot stage. The pilot-case was the prelude to final data collection stage. In this regard, the pilot case was ‘formative’ to refine the data collection plans with regards to developing and fine-tuning relevant lines of inquiry (Yin, 2003). It is important to add in case of this specific research, the pilot-study provided ‘conceptual clarification’ with regards to the research design (Yin, 2003). The ‘conceptual clarification’ was with respect to the existence of a CoP with regards to a Community as in the CoP, in terms of shared meaning, identity and understanding.

#### 2.0 DESCRIPTIVE & INSTRUMENTAL CASE-STUDY– SECOND & FINAL PHASE:

In the second stage of this particular research, the case-study research, the case studies were descriptive in nature, objective being to accurately and relevantly describe the social phenomena being studied. Both the case-studies focused on capturing and recording the CoP-facilitated processes of learning, i.e., Situated Learning and CoP-facilitated processes of innovation.

McDonough and McDonough (1997) suggest that descriptive case studies may be in a narrative form. In order to enhance the quality of the descriptive case study, the researcher proceeded with a descriptive theory based on the literature review to support the description of the phenomenon.

This specific case-study research can be termed as instrumental (Stake,1995) with the case-study research being embarked upon for a general understanding of the social phenomenon rather than the specific case. An instrumental case-study is developed to promote an understanding of specific issues. Hence this particular case-study research can be defined as a blend of exploratory and descriptive and being instrumental in nature.

### 5.6.3 SELECTION OF CASES:

Stake (1995) points out that Case Study research is not sampling research. Multiple case study design depends on replication logic, not sampling logic or theoretical sampling rather than random sampling (Bourgeois and Eisenhardt, 1988). The aim is not to provide statistical significance but to identify significant cases, those from which learning can be maximised, rather than identify the typical. These theoretically useful cases are identified by historical and contextual influences that make their practice distinct and from which it is planned to identify the causes of that uniqueness. Therefore the choice of cases here is theoretical not literal, in other words the cases are anticipated to provide contrasting results, but for predictable reasons.

Researchers both Stake(1995), Yin(2003a) have defined Case study research as not sampling research. The design of the case-study is governed by the replication logic and not sampling logic (Yin, 2003b, Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Objective of selecting cases should be those from which learning can be maximised during the period of study. These cases are theoretically rich and defined by contextual conditions which impart their distinctiveness.

In case of this research two distinct case-sites were selected for the research investigation; Karnataka and West Bengal. Here a case-site is defined as the IAS cadre belonging to a particular state. The researcher wishes to mention that the broader collective of IAS was the larger case-site and information and knowledge about the IAS in general did provide rich inputs to the study. The sample selection in this particular research was guided by the logic of purposeful sampling which as Patton (2002) states is selection of those samples that are ‘information-rich cases’, defined as ‘ those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry.’

However the researcher intended to draw a boundary for a focused and accurate description of the social reality of CoP-facilitated learning,i.e. Situated Learning and innovation and hence the opting for specific state cadres of IAS officers. The rich rationale for selecting West Bengal cadre has been explained in detail in a separate chapter.

However it would be prudent to briefly state the rationale for selection of cases:

CASE	REGION – INDIAN STATE	REASON FOR SELECTION
CASE – 1 CoP- facilitated Innovation	Karnataka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Erstwhile princely state of Mysore hence the administrative structure is influenced by the governance culture of a typical princely state with royal palace being the seat of power.</li> <li>- Geographically large area with around 30 districts.</li> <li>- Capital city of Bangalore being a major urban commercial city.</li> <li>- Personal familiarity of the researcher with the state and the IAS collective.</li> </ul>
CASE – 2 CoP- facilitated Learning	West Bengal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Region was erstwhile Bengal presidency hence the administrative structure is influenced by the governance culture of ICS officers.</li> <li>- Capital city of Kolkata(formerly Calcutta) was the capital of British India till 1911.</li> <li>- Legacy of implementation of progressive social reforms like land and welfare reforms.</li> <li>- Historical legacy and tradition of distinguished ICS officers.</li> <li>- The researcher grew up in Kolkata and speaks the local language of Bengali.</li> <li>- Personal familiarity with the state and the IAS collective of the researcher.</li> </ul>

**Table 9 - Rationale for Selection of Cases – developed by researcher**

#### 5.6.4 GENERALIZATION FROM CASE-STUDY RESEARCH:

Ethnographic research is criticized for not being prone to generalization to dissimilar contexts (Flick, 2002). The researcher shares the opinion of Lincoln & Guba (2005) which argues that generalization as a concept is too closely aligned to the use of statistical extrapolation to be effectively applied to qualitative research but rather the notion of 'transferability'. With respect to this particular research, given the complexity of the organization of IAS officers due to its historical legacy and the organizational characteristics of being a highly structured bureaucracy operating in a specific political environment of that of a relatively young democratic nation and pluralistic democracy; the idea of generalization to other contexts did not attract attention. The researcher was more keen and intent on understanding, capturing, interpreting and recording the identified social phenomena. According to Yin (1994), generalisation of results from case studies, single or multiple designs, extends to theory rather than on populations. In the case of the researcher, efforts were to convey generalisation of the context primarily with regards to the formation of CoPs and CoP-facilitated processes of learning and innovation.

However in order to better convey the relevance of the research findings the researcher employed the technique of 'thick description' (Denzin,1989) of the study context in both the case studies in a separate chapter. This would offer the 'transferability' of the research findings in other settings. The idea was to offer the sense of 'being there' in the research setting which would enable future reflection on reading of the specific research findings the relevance of the work in other organizational settings. It would be appropriate to refer to Geertz(1988:16) with respect to this technique:

'Ethnographers need to convince us [...] not merely that they themselves have truly 'been there' but [...] that we had been there we should have seen what they saw, felt what they felt, concluded what they concluded.'

In the specific instance of this particular research the 'thick description' of West Bengal cadre dwelt on the context of a legacy institution with a history of imperial glory responsible for public administration against the backdrop of a hostile political and social environment, perpetually conflicting groups and communities and a natural disaster-prone geography. It would be prudent to refer to an instance where CoPs were formed by

individuals facing dangerous or grave situations like political violence, religious riots, natural disasters with the potential of endangering personal lives; here this particular research demonstrates the support structures which evolve under such volatile circumstances between the senior and junior members of a CoP apart from the other conditions.

#### 5.6.5 CASE-STUDY QUALITY VALIDITY:

Case Study has been subject to criticisms relating to internal validity, construct validity, reliability and external validity. These criticisms have been addressed by a variety of techniques to improve the quality of case studies (Yin, 1994; Eisenhardt, 1989). Yin (1994) developed four tests to ensure quality within the Case Study and has been explained in a tabulated format with the adequate steps taken by the researcher.

TESTS	PURPOSE	METHOD	APPLICATION
Construct Validity	Establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple sources of Evidence</li> <li>• Chain of evidence</li> <li>• Interview and documentary evidence</li> </ul>	Interview and documentary evidence Triangulation
Internal Validity	Establishing causal relationships or explanations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pattern matching</li> <li>• Explanation building</li> </ul>	Both these tactics have been applied as part of the analysis of the data
External Validity	Establishing the domain to which a study's findings can be generalised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replication logic in multiple case studies</li> </ul>	Multiple cases and 'thick description' describing the context
Reliability	Demonstrating that the operations of the study can be replicated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use case study protocol</li> <li>• Develop case study protocol</li> </ul>	A structured and methodical approach to case-study

**Table 10 - Application of Case Study Quality Test. Source: Yin, 1994.**

### 5.6.6 TRIANGULATION:

Triangulation is one of the method which increases the validity of an ethnographic study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Triangulation has been integrated into the study to enhance the validity of the ethnographic case-study. The type of triangulation deployed in this particular case-study research is data triangulation, amongst all the four identified types of triangulation (Denzin,1978).

This method involves relying on different sources of data to investigate the social phenomena under study. In case of this particular case-study research the primary source of data were the semi-structured interviews. The additional sources of data for triangulation were literary and textual material like biographies, memoirs, journals, diaries and media articles. Triangulation has been explained in details in another separate section.

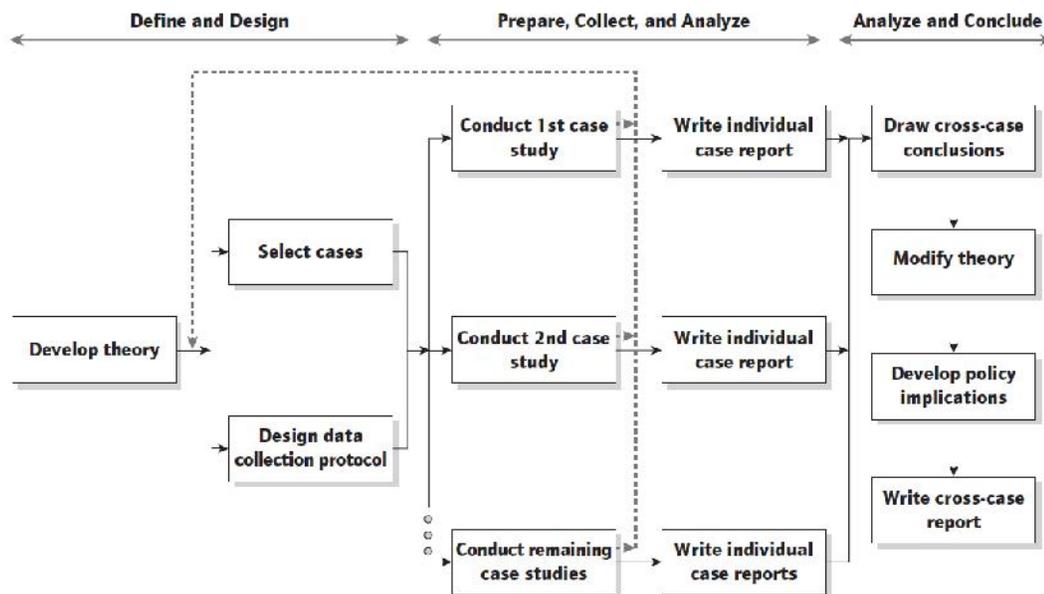


Figure 2.5 Case Study Method  
SOURCE: COSMOS Corporation.

**Figure 8 – Case Study Method – Source: Cosmos Corporation**

### 5.7 DATA SELECTION – UNITS OF ANALYSIS:

The unit of analysis was defined by Bryman and Bell (2003) and Kassirjian (1977) as significant actors, words, subjects, themes, dispositions, paragraphs, meanings, theoretical constructs, characters or anything that constitutes an entity that can be seen as having own

existence, a unified meaning and boundaries. In the context of this particular research on IAS officers and their formation of CoPs, CoP-facilitated learning and innovation mechanisms, the analysis placed the spotlight on the individuals rather than anything else. Hence the units of analysis selected were IAS officers trained through the Mussorie Academy and selected by the Union Public Services Commission(UPSC) examinations as the units of analysis. Significantly this was important to define since there were state civil service officers who were promoted to the ranks of the IAS after a certain period of years in civil service who were excluded from the study. This particular research early on set the 'boundaries' in the conducting of the research, and these were the cadres. For purposes of this research the two cadres explored are Karnataka and West Bengal IAS officers.

## **5.8 PROCESS OUTLINE OF CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH – MULTI-STAGE (2-STAGE):**

According to the researcher the most predominant challenge of this particular research study was to develop a functional theoretical framework with clear, well-defined, assignable criteria for identifying Communities of Practice(CoP) along with both the dimensions of Communities of Practice: Community and Practice. The contemporary research literature on CoPs did not offer clarity in their conceptual framework of the CoP. Conceptual framework was designed and developed by the researcher based on the literature view which provided the direction of the research. The emphasis of the researcher was to offer clear, well-defined indicators of the existence of a CoP, to ensure there is comprehensive understanding of what exactly is meant by existence of a CoP amongst IAS officers. Extending this search for clarity the Practice element of the CoP needed sharp definition in terms of Situated Learning and Innovation, the processes and mechanisms tacit in the evolution of the Practice.

Subsequent to the conceptual clarity the researcher delineated the research study into two broadly separate stages:

STAGES OF RESEARCH	DIMENSIONS OF CoP UNDER INVESTIGATION	INDICATORS OF THE DIMENSIONS OF THE CoP
STAGE - 1	Community	Shared understanding, Shared meaning, Shared identity
STAGE – 2	Practice	Learning, Innovation

**Table – 11– Dimensions of CoP – developed by the researcher**

This influenced the conducting of the case-study research and was executed in three phases; a pilot-study and then 2 independent case-studies. Initial pilot-study was conducted with the objective of ascertaining if there was an existence of a CoP amongst the IAS officers based on the conceptual framework. As defined by the researcher the pilot study was to locate ‘traces’ of existence of a CoP. The multiple stages of the study is broadly explained in a tabulated format.

STAGES OF RESEARCH	TYPE OF RESEARCH STUDY CONDUCTED	RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
STAGE 1	Pilot-Study	the preliminary one to locate traces of a CoP in terms of shared meanings, identity and understanding.
STAGE 2	Case- Study – 1 (West Bengal IAS cadre)	CoP-facilitated Learning – Situated Learning
	Case- Study – 2 (Karnataka IAS cadre)	CoP-facilitated Innovation

**Table – 11a – Stages of Research details – developed by the researcher**

The results of the pilot-study is enclosed in a separate section in this chapter. This particular research study was conducted in two parts, part-1 as preliminary and part-2 as the concluding case-studies.

### **5.9 PILOT-STUDY RESULTS – ASCERTAINING EXISTENCE OF A CoP:**

Initial pilot study was conducted with Karnataka and West Bengal cadre IAS officers deploying interview techniques. Life-histories were the methodology of data collection which has been explained in the research methodology section. The sample selection by the logic of purposeful sampling which Patton (2002) states as those samples that are ‘information-rich cases’, defined as ‘those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry.’ The issue of central importance being the shared attributes of identity, meaning and understanding implied the inclusion of IAS officers across the generations. This would reflect the stability and authenticity of the attributes across the entire official spectrum of senior and junior IAS officers along with the inter-generational dimension. The pilot study was based on 6 recorded elicited interviews of West Bengal and Karnataka cadre each, the sample including retired IAS officers, senior IAS officers and junior fresh recruit IAS officers. The study included 25 non-recorded elicited interviews which were transcribed along with the recorded ones.

All the data collected were transcribed and subject to coding analysis. This information was then decoded according to the parameters of shared meaning, identity and understanding which related empirical evidence to theoretical characteristics drawn from the theoretical framework developed for this particular research study.

The initial results and analysis are explained in a detailed tabular format (please see attached Annexure 2).

The preliminary Pilot study indicates clearly the following across the generation of IAS officers spanning 40 years:

CoP CHARACTERISTICS	INDICATION FROM DATA
Shared meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Role of civil servant in public life and its significance</li> <li>- ‘Charm’ of being in public life</li> <li>- Important member in the family and community</li> <li>- Solutions to assist the citizens which is not just ‘doing a job’</li> </ul>
Shared identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Part of the key decision making structure</li> <li>- First posting and the academy has transformative effect</li> <li>- Belonging is influenced by the cadre to which the IAS is assigned</li> </ul>
Shared Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Legacy and tradition of the IAS dating back to the days ICS</li> <li>- Being the ‘Burrasahib’ the trappings of power and prestige</li> <li>- ‘Service before self’ and distributing justice to the needy and poor</li> <li>- Future challenges of working with the Civil society and citizen’s groups – a broader base of stakeholders</li> <li>- Camaraderie with fellow IAS officers belonging to the same cadre</li> </ul>

**Table 12 – Results of the Initial Pilot Study – developed by the researcher**

Clearly the initial research with the pilot-study indicated the traces of a CoP with its criteria of 'Shared Meaning', 'Shared Identity' and 'Shared Understanding' through active participation in the CoPs of IAS officers.

## **5.10 DATA COLLECTION:**

This section describes the methods deployed to collect the data for the qualitative research into CoP-formation and the facilitating of innovation and learning through CoPs. In this particular research the data collection happened in dual stages, initially the pilot-study and then subsequently the 2 case-studies of West Bengal and Karnataka cadre.

### **5.10.1 DATA COLLECTION – DUAL STAGE:**

The research methodology for this particular research of data collection has been a combination of life histories, with semi-structured interviews for the pilot-study, and semi-structured interviews with triangulation methods for the case-study based investigation into the formation of natural CoPs within the IAS community in West Bengal and Karnataka cadres and the shared practices of learning and innovation.

The data collection was conducted in two stages:

1.0 First stage-Pilot Study - being the preliminary one to locate traces of a community of shared meanings, identity and understanding. Here the primary form of data collection is life histories with semi-structured interviews. There was no triangulation deployed for this stage of data collection.

2.0 Second stage-Case-Studies - being an in-depth investigation of the phenomena of formation of Communities of Practice and the facilitated processes of ‘innovation’ and ‘learning’. Here the primary form of data collection is semi-structured interviews with triangulation methods deployed from multiple sources of data like biographies and journals. For both the case-studies of the West Bengal and Karnataka cadre the data collection methods were similar; semi-structured interviews with triangulation methods with the resources of literary and textual material.

The methodology of data collection for this particular research has been a combination of life-histories for the pilot-study and semi-structured interviews with triangulation methods for the case-studies.

**DATA COLLECTION MATRIX – MULTI-STAGE RESEARCH:**

Data Collected	Initial Pilot-Study	Case-Study - 1 CoP-based Learning in West Bengal cadre	Case-Study – 2 CoP-based innovation in Karnataka cadre
Participant Observation	Minimal with participation in conversations amongst IAS officers	Minimal with observation of gestures if any significant ones	Significant with regards to capturing the reluctance and reticence of IAS officers, playing a significant role in data capturing
Interviews	Individual semi-structured with 6 recorded and 25 non-recorded elicited interviews.	12 recorded elicited interviews with 10 non-recorded elicited interviews.	4 elicited interviews with 1 recorded interview.
Triangulation – literary and textual material	Biographies, Autobiographies, Memoirs Media articles on both ICS and IAS officers	Biographies, Autobiographies, Memoirs, District Diaries, Journals, Media articles on West Bengal cadre IAS officers	Biographies, Autobiographies, Memoirs Media articles on IAS officers

**Table 13 – Data Collection Matrix – Developed by the researcher**

### 5.10.2 ACCESS ISSUES & OBSERVATIONS:

The issues of access with regards to data collection has been discussed separately in the chapter on Elites Research. The researcher wishes to state that the issues of access were relevant only in the instance of the case-study where the notions of elites emerged and this is applicable only specific to the West Bengal cadre. Obtaining access and the associated obstacles in a typical elite research did not arise in the case of Karnataka cadre. Access difficulties did not affect the research at the pilot-study stage either for both the cadres. Hence the issues of access discussions were only confined to the West Bengal cadre where the traces of elite groups were discernible, and in this particular research only access issues pertaining to elite research is widely discussed. This discussion is in a separate chapter on Elites Research along with the strategies deployed for gaining access. Data collection was pursued during the period April 2010 to June 2011. The West Bengal cadre IAS officers CoP case-study data collection happened during the crucial period of historic elections to the regional assembly as discussed in detail in a separate chapter.

### **5.11 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION:**

Here the different methods of data collection are discussed and described in separate sections.

The different methods were primarily:

1.0 Life Histories – at the pilot-study stage

2.0 Semi-Structured Interviews – at the case-study stage

3.0 Triangulation – literary and textual material

#### 5.11.1 LIFE-HISTORIES:

This method was deployed at the pilot-study stage to ascertain if there were existing CoPs within IAS officers as a collective. According to the researcher this stage was important for identifying the 3 distinct criteria to qualify as a CoP for a group of individuals, shared meaning, shared identity and shared understanding, and was very crucial for progress of the research. The researcher denied the social bonhomie and regular interactions amongst

IAS officers with discussions about shared domain practice as a qualifier for CoP-formation.

Life histories can be defined as ‘an internalized narrative integration of past, present and anticipated future which provides lives with a sense of unity and purpose’ (McAdams, 1989) or ‘expresses our sense of self’ and ‘touch on the widest social construction’ (Linde, 1993) so it’s a very effective method to understand ‘how we negotiate our memberships in groups, social networks and make sense of the social reality’ (Musson, 2004).

Here in this particular research it provides an understanding of wider context of social, organizational, institutional reality of belonging to the IAS (Bertuax, 1981). They also provide an insight into the change processes happening in the social context of CoPs. Please see attached **Annexure 1** for an explanatory matrix on the structure of the interviews.

#### 5.11.2 INTERVIEWING:

The technique of interviewing has emerged as a widely accepted and advocated method of data generation in social sciences research (Atkinson & Silverman 1997; Brenner 1981; Briggs 1986; Mishler 1986). Interviewing as a method has the advantages of being inexpensive, flexible and can be conducted in a relatively short span of time, the speed factor (Dingwall 1997; Rapley 2001).

In qualitative research interview method is a means to elicit data which provides information about the understanding of the meanings drawn by the participants of their lived experiences. As has been stated by Silverman (1973), interview as a resource for conducting research is grounded in the natural attitude or ontological realism, which affirms that the data captures some aspects of the respondents life-experiences outside the interview. Entire process of conducting interview has often been critiqued for its inherent limitations to being means to elicit accurate information about external reality; that is external to the interview setting, which is situated in the social context and the entire interaction is dually constructed by the respondent and the interviewer.

However interviews do provide a valuable resource for insight into a reality external to this setting (Hammersley 2003) and that ‘some aspects of the respondent’s reality can be glimpsed through the accounts: the selection of details, the choice of ‘facts’ in the narrative, perhaps’ (Dingwall 1997, p. 60).

Drawing from the varied research literature on interviewing methods the researcher feels interviewing techniques as being relevant and appropriate technique in this particular research on CoP-based learning and innovation among IAS officers. The accent of the interviewing method is not the exact confirmation of the external reality but more the respondent’s making of sense and interpretation of the reality of their lives as IAS officers.

The interviewing method is convergent with the nature of research questions of this particular research study, which is more in the form of ‘how’ and ‘why’ and is able to offer contextual comprehension of the broader research question (Yin, 2003).

#### 5.11.3 STRUCTURE OF INTERVIEW – SEMI-STRUCTURED:

Semi-structured interview questions were deployed for this particular research with a guideline providing the objectives of the interview session which provided the direction. Semi-structured interviews are more flexible and open when compared to the heavily structured interview or other standardized research methods (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2000; Bryman and Bell, 2003).

The semi-structured interviews needs to be constantly modified in ‘a careful and theorized way’ (Wengraf, 2001) based on the theoretical framework developed for this particular research to capture the accurate and most relevant data. Semi-structured interviews have been termed to be the closest approximation to naturalistic conversation (Wooffitt & Widdicombe, 2006).

The researcher constantly referred to the broad guideline with open-ended questions developed for the data collection during the interview process which ensured that all the relevant and significant research questions were addressed by the respondent.

This according to the researcher provided direction to the interview and did not allow the conversation between the researcher and the interviewee to get distracted and go helter-skelter given the nature of broad conversation there was real danger of going adrift with nostalgia and interesting tales.

The interviews were conducted with a flexible sequencing of questions depending on the individual nature of the respondents with some key prompts or ‘triggers’ as termed by the researcher (discussed in a separate section) and most interestingly picking up threads which were raised by the interviewee unexpectedly during the interview process (Smith 1995).

#### 5.11.4 NUMBER OF INTERVIEWEES SELECTED - SATURATION:

The researcher adapted the notion of theoretical saturation as part of the research strategy, where interviews were not further conducted when they failed to generate new themes or information and this is considered to be a key point in determining the extent of data collection (Glaser, 1992). This point of saturation is when the data collection needs to be discontinued and is considered appropriate in qualitative exploratory research.

#### 5.11.5 INTERVIEW DATA RELIABILITY:

The nature of data generated by interviews have been often subject to criticism given the inexact and fluid nature of knowledge generated by the process influenced by several external factors like researcher influencing the process. One of the criticisms being that of the influence of the researcher on the interview process in turn affecting the reliability of the data generated (Mishler, 1986; Oakley, 1981).

In order to ensure capturing and securing reliable data generated from interviews the researcher adopted the recommendations of Kvale (1996) which have been summarized below.

The pursuit of reliability here is not the singular and absolute “truth” but a plausible and reliable interpretation of the phenomena under study by the respondents compared to other plausible interpretations (Mischler, 1986).

Kvale (1996) has summarized some of the ‘best practices’ recommended in assessing the quality of an interview:

1. The extent of spontaneous, rich, specific, and relevant answers from the interviewee.
2. The shorter the interviewer’s questions and the longer the subjects’ answers, the better.
3. The degree to which the interviewer follows up and clarifies the meanings of the relevant aspects of the answers.
4. The ideal interview is to a large extent interpreted throughout the interview.
5. The interviewer attempts to verify his or her interpretations of the subjects’ answers in the course of the interview.
6. The interview is ‘self-communicating’ – it is a story contained in itself that hardly requires much extra descriptions and explanations.

#### 5.11.6 TYPE OF INTERVIEWING:

In this section the kind and type of interviewing selected and applied is defined along with a brief description. Kind of interviewing which has been adopted for this particular research is Romantic Interviewing.

##### 5.11.6.1 Romantic Interviewing:

Alvesson(2003) proposes a ‘romantic’ conception of interviewing in which the interviewer is candid about the interest and inclination in the research topic, and will be forthcoming to express that interest and enthusiasm within the interview setting in the conversation with the interviewee.

In contrast to the neo-positivist conception of the interview, when used for the purposes of social research, the interviewer-interviewee relationship in the romantic interview is one in which genuine rapport and confidence is established by the interviewer in order to generate the kind of conversation that is intimate and self-revealing. This rapport and confidence in turn generates valuable conversation where the interviewee expresses self-revealing themes. In the romantic interviewing researcher or interviewer will engage and

make efforts to build the empathy and affable, friendly confident relationship with the interviewee. The objective being to generate data which will reflect profound interpretations of the participant's living reality based on the candid exchanges about self-revealing themes and their private conversations.

In the opinion of the researcher this methodology of interviewing finely converges with the nature of interviews conducted with the respondents, i.e. the IAS officers, where there was a dire need to engage and record conversations about their selves and actions in their lives which were not necessarily public information. As a matter of fact, for the researcher this approach did succeed, and the interviewees discussed and revealed some very sensitive themes with regards to actions in their years as an administrator, for instance the cases where they had to order police firing or the tussles with political bosses. On most occasions for the IAS officers these kinds of sensitive information would have been concealed from recorded interviews.

#### 5.11.7 ROLE OF THE INTERVIEWER – THE RESEARCHER:

A significant element of data analysis for romantic conception of interviewing is the role and influence of the researcher, their establishing of rapport with the participants and the process of generating interview data and relationship to the participants of the research study. Relationship with the participants or interviewees is of crucial importance in the context of this specific research where the 'elite' perspective emerged as a factor for consideration in one of the case-study, i.e. the West Bengal cadre IAS officers.

In the context of 'elite' research the presumed asymmetrical relationship between the researcher and the participant influences the process and quality of data collection enormously and this has been covered in a separate chapter on elite research. In the romantic conception of interview the target is not the access of the 'real self' but 'locally produced subject' in relation to the interviewer. Researchers are responsible for documentation of 'the way in which accounts 'are part of the world they describe' (Silverman, 2001).

According to the researcher this dimension of the romantic concept of interviewing played out a central role in one of the case-study; the one on the West Bengal cadre IAS officers, which had to take 'elite research' perspective into consideration. In case of the initial pilot-study and the case-study on Karnataka IAS officers the role and influence of the researcher was minimal though the nature of interviews conducted were romantic. Apart from establishing a friendly rapport and relationship of confidence there was no real role of the researcher in conducting the case-study.

The possible influence of the researcher on the research process with an 'insider' status has been acknowledged and the factors which created 'a safe distance' from the researched have been discussed below in a separate section.

#### 5.11.8 INSIDER STATUS OF THE RESEARCHER – SHARED SOCIAL WORLD:

The researcher wishes to acknowledge the shared social and cultural world with the respondents, particularly the West Bengal cadre IAS officers. This world has been defined as the Anglophone India predominant among the upper-middle class sections of society. However it is important to state that the researcher was not a complete 'insider' and the 'safe distance' factors needs to be explained. This needs to be stated clearly to limit the possible over-identification of the researcher with the respondents.

According to Hammersley & Atkinson(1995):

'There must always remain some part held back, some social and intellectual 'distance'. For it is in the space created by this distance that the analytical work of the ethnographer gets done.'

With respect to the researcher and the respondents the following factors created the 'safe distance':

1.0 The researcher is not an IAS officer belonging to any of the cadres.

2.0 The researcher was returning to West Bengal after nearly a span of one and a half decade.

- 3.0 The researcher is educationally from a business school background with little knowledge of public administration.
- 4.0 The researcher did not work or engage with any governmental organization in India, so unfamiliar with the language of Indian government officials.
- 5.0 The researcher interacted with some of the IAS officers during his teenage years which was a good 2 decades earlier.
- 6.0 The researcher was not a member of any of the clubs where the interviews were conducted.

The researcher wishes to state that most of the respondents did not perceive him as an 'insider' but more a returning young man affiliated to a reputed British business school. It is important to state that the shared social and cultural world of Anglophone India did facilitate the research process through development of amicable relationships and trust. Triangulation of data from different sources, like textual and literary material added to the validity of the case-study data collected from fieldwork. Particularly the district dairies, journals some of which were organized neatly and the memoirs and biographies assisted in checking the validity of the information obtained from respondent interviews which could be subjective.

For instance the formation of a CoP to address a political violence in a particular district in a certain year narrated by a particular respondent being interviewed could be read about in the memoirs of another IAS officer narrating the same incident.

#### 5.11.9 PROCESSES OF DATA COLLECTION – FIELD REPORTS:

According to the researcher the processes involved for the data collection is quite contextual, in the sense that data collection for each case-study was specific and particular in nature. This would have made the broad general discussion in this section inadequate in terms of making sense in terms of capturing the process. Data collection processes like conducting interviews, selecting interviewees have been discussed separately for each of the case-studies as it related to them. Particular mention should be made of the West Bengal IAS cadre where elite dimensions of research emerged which needed to be accounted for while discussing the processes of data collection like conducting interviews, where the researcher had to consider special interviewing techniques for elites.

### **5.12 TRIANGULATION – LITERARY AND TEXTUAL MATERIAL:**

The researcher did not rely entirely on a single research tool and involved triangulation. Triangulation is a research technique where the researcher draws on different sources of data, compares different methods and research perspectives to generate a more reliable set of findings (Denzin,1978). Triangulation is necessitated by the potential fallacy of relying on only single source of data for the research, particularly in case of qualitative ones. Fieldwork for the case-study research is strengthened by “triangulation” and enhances the validity of the research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

In the case of this particular research it was obtaining information from multiple sources. The objective of triangulation being to provide a richer insight into the data obtained from one source, in the case of this particular research the interviews, with other sources of information, and seek if there is a convergence between the findings. In the process of triangulation the researcher assumes the key role of information gathering where the researcher ‘utilizes observations made through an extended period of time, from multiple sources of data, and implying multiple techniques for finding out, for cross checking, or for ferreting out varying perspectives on complex issues and events’ (Wolcott, 1988, p 192).

The strategies most common in ethnography are participant-observation, interviewing, and the collection and analysis of written and non-written sources (Berg, 1989; Bogdan & Bilken, 1982; Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, Sechrest & Grove, 1981).

In case of the researcher the triangulation was within research strategies (Bryman and Bell, 2003), in this case it was qualitative and the different sources of information deployed is enumerated below. Emerging concepts and categories will be interpreted against the conceptual framework similar to the treatment of the interview transcripts. Apart from semi-structured interviews the sources of data for this particular research were:

1.0 District Diaries – penned by IAS officers in their early years of posting

2.0 Administrative Journals – published on the basis of reports of IAS officers

- 3.0 Autobiographies – of retired IAS officers
- 4.0 Biographies – of retired IAS officers
- 5.0 Newspaper and Magazine articles
- 6.0 Participant-Observation – limited extent

In the Indian civil service, both the erstwhile ICS and the contemporary IAS, there is a cherished tradition of writing memoirs and autobiographies and the district diaries and journals are widely available. District dairies and journals are popular within the West Bengal cadre and this has been treated separately in the section on West Bengal cadre. This provided to the researcher a rich source of data sources for triangulation. In case of this particular research, the interview data was buttressed by the documents of district diaries, biographies, memoirs, media articles and media interviews. These documents surely assisted to ascertain whether there existed a Community of Practice and an ‘apprentice’ LPP (Legitimate Peripheral Participation) model of induction of young recruits into the core of IAS.

#### 5.12.1 PARTICIPANT-OBSERVATION:

‘is a special mode of observation in which you are not merely a passive observer(Yin, 2003).’ In this specific research the researcher did play an active as a participant-observer with respect to observing behaviour of IAS officers during the interviews, engaging in conversations with them and interacting with them on social occasions. For instance, the reticence to answer questions or the inhibited ‘body-language’ when speaking about projects at the Secretariat level which indicated the differences in the nature of CoP-formation at both the District and Secretariat level. One of the observations of the researcher captured were the intra-elite conversations, i.e. the conversations between the junior and senior IAS officers.

### **5.13 DATA ANALYSIS:**

This section will discuss and elaborate the techniques and approach adopted to analyse the data collected from the interviews in both the case studies of Karnataka and West Bengal IAS cadre. In this particular research there has been a distinct separation maintained between the data collection and data analysis to the extent possible. In case of West Bengal cadre only after the completion of first round of interviews the comprehension of data collected started in terms of understanding the interview data against the context of the theoretical framework.

#### **5.13.1 DATA RETRIEVAL:**

The interviews were transcribed ad verbatim and typed out as transcripts and electronically stored in the form of files in computer. Tapes were stored and often played during the process of transcribing. The names of the respondents were referred by their year of joining the IAS, which is known as the batch. For instance if a gentleman or a lady officer of the West Bengal cadre joined IAS in the year 1974 then the respondent or interviewee was referred to as (IAS;1974) in the particular research documents protecting the identity of the interviewee.

#### **5.13.2 INTERPRETATION OF THE INTERVIEW DATA - THEMATIC ANALYSIS:**

Thematic analysis has been proposed as a tool of analysis of data related to participants experiences of life (Benner, 1985; Leininger, 1985; Taylor & Board, 1984). This qualifies as a suitable method for interpretation of ethnographic interview data (Aronson,1994). Aronson (1994) provides a practical step-by-step procedure for performing thematic analysis on interview data which is described below:

##### **1.0 Collection of data and identification of pattern of experience:**

Data in this case, the conversations, should be collected by being recorded on audiotapes (Spradley, 1979) and which was done in the case of the researcher. The conversation then needs to be transcribed and in case of the researcher the entire recorded conversation was transcribed for all the interviewees for both the case-studies. It is recommended to identify patterns of experiences which are drawn from the extracts of the interview. For

instance in case of this particular research the formation of CoPs at the early recruit stage of IAS officers is being studied. The first experience listed, was the induction of the fresh recruit IAS officers into the CoP by seniors and the different mechanisms like sharing of stories and anecdotes being deployed. The second pattern of experience listed was the role of participation in the routine tasks and activities by the fresh recruit IAS officer influencing their entry into the CoP.

## 2.0 Identification and Relating data to the Classified Patterns:

There are patterns which have been 'classified' and identified based on the theoretical framework which was the template for conducting the case-study research. Here the interview transcripts are scoured for data which relate to the classified patterns. These identified and classified patterns are enriched by the data drawn from the interview transcripts and elaborated and explained as part of the interpretation of the interview data. The talk as derived from the interview that fits under the specific pattern is identified and located within that corresponding pattern. For instance in case of this particular research, interviewees stated their 'experiences' of 'discharging duties' or 'learning' about a specific task or responsibility during their conversation. Some mentioned the 'anxiety' of ordering action in times of a law and order problem or some of them mentioned 'learning first time about issues like reproductive health of tribal women' since they were completely unfamiliar being from urban areas.

## 3.0 Creation of Catalogue of Patterns into Themes:

At this stage after having identified and listed the patterns the step would involve combination and cataloguing of the identified and classified patterns into themes. Here the themes were broadly of two kinds; one conceptually developed from the conceptual framework as derived from literature review, the other being emergent from the interview transcripts. Conceptually themes were the ones which the researcher brought to the research process as derived from the conceptual framework with regards to Situated Learning and CoP. For instance the theme of learning by participation in the social practice was one of the themes which the researcher sought for within the interview transcript. Themes which were derived from the patterns as gathered from the interview

transcripts beyond the scope of the conceptual framework has been termed the emergent themes and were new findings of the interviewing process. Themes for the purpose of this particular research have been defined as units derived from patterns such as ‘conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings, feelings, or folk sayings and proverbs’ (Taylor & Bogdan, 1989, p.131). Both the emergent and conceptually developed themes emerged from the stories of the respondents and then joined together to form a comprehensive image of the reality of their living experience. For instance the theme of paternalistic mentoring and Codes of Conduct as building blocks of CoP were emergent themes which were not covered within the theoretical framework. In this exercise the researcher played a key role in the evolution of the depiction and recording of the total lived reality and experience of the interviewees based on the treatment of the interview data, ‘coherence of ideas rests with the analyst who has rigorously studied how different ideas or components fit together in a meaningful way when linked together’ (Leininger, 1985, p. 60).

#### 4.0 Developing a valid Argument based on Themes:

While gathering the themes both emergent and conceptually developed, a comprehensive pattern emerges about the totality of the social phenomena being studied. For instance in case of this particular research, with respect to Situated Learning through CoPs as fresh recruit IAS officers in their early years, a wholesome view is there evident for the researcher. At this stage the researcher obtained feedback from the respondents about the depiction of reality which provided confirmation. This allowed the researcher to maintain certain flexibility in asking the questions during the interview. Respondent’s feedback was considered during the thematic analysis though not formally incorporated. Interestingly the researcher wishes to mention that there were very ‘surprises’ during the feedback stage. In some cases the respondents offered feedback while transcribing the interview data. The researcher was in constant interaction with the respondents during the entire research process.

This step involves building and presenting a coherent, logical and valid argument for choosing the themes which in this case was based on the literature review. Conceptual

framework developed for the case-study research assisted the researcher enormously in drawing inferences from the interview transcripts.

There is a specific conceptual framework developed for the case-study research and particularly the process of analysis.

The final stage is the formulation of the coherent, logical narrative based on the thematic statements along with their categories and sub-themes. This developed narrative acquires legitimacy when it reflects and explains the research findings. ‘A developed story line helps the reader to comprehend the process, understanding, and motivation of the interviewer’ (Aronson,1994).

According to the researcher this narrative should capture the expected themes as drawn from the theoretical framework and the emergent themes thus completing the case-study investigation of the social phenomena.

### 5.13.3 PATTERN-MATCHING:

As mentioned earlier the technique of pattern-matching enhances internal validity.

Pattern-matching compares an empirically based pattern with a predicted one, and on the coinciding of the patterns the results strengthen the internal validity (Trochim, 1989).

Here the mode of explanation-building pattern matching has been deployed where the goal is to analyze the case-study data by building an explanation about the case (Yin, 2003). The process of pattern-matching in explanation building is as follows:

- 1.0 Making an initial theoretical statement or an initial proposition about policy or social behaviour.
- 2.0 Comparing the findings of an initial case against such a statement or proposition.
- 3.0 Revising the statement or proposition.
- 4.0 Comparing other details of the case against the revision.
- 5.0 Comparing the revision to the facts of a second, third or more cases.
- 6.0 Repeating this process as many times as is needed.

#### 5.13.4 TRIANGULATION:

This is one of the most acknowledged forms of data analysis and may follow interviews with documentation review (Stake, 1995). Along with the thematic analysis triangulation methods were applied along with the interview data to strengthen the validity of the case-study. The secondary data sources from literary and textual material provided an underpinning for validation of the data drawn from the recorded interviews. This method has been explained in an earlier section.

Methodologically as described earlier the research deployed triangulation techniques and the interview data was buttressed by the documents of district diaries, biographies, memoirs, media articles and media interviews. The researcher wishes to emphasize that for the conceptual themes the triangulation was conducted within the conceptual framework and for the emergent themes it was more a form of additional source of confirmation of the findings. For instance in the Karnataka cadre the fragmentation of the CoP emerged through the reticent and orchestrated cautious exchange of information during the interviews which was captured by participant-observation only.

#### **5.14 ELITE RESEARCH STUDIES – ‘SERENDIPITOUS’ FINDINGS:**

The issues pertaining to elite research emerged during the process of conducting the case-study on West Bengal cadre IAS officers and were partially evident from the findings. Predominantly the elite research issues emerged during the conducting of the case-study. The initial research methodology chapter did not account for elite research since the study did not intend to study the IAS as elites or within an elite framework but more as a professional group. Elite themes started emerging while seeking access, conducting the research interview, identifying the location for interviews, selecting and reaching potential interviewees and to some extent interpreting the interview data where the predominance of the ‘social reality’ could no longer be ignored in an elite context. The researcher wishes to term this phase as the ‘Serendipitous’ findings, implying the researcher did not set out to conduct the research expecting to find elite issues and then mid-way through the research located them by ‘surprise’. In a separate chapter the elite research issues have been discussed with respect to the influence on research methodology and the process of

conducting the research. Important to emphasize here in this particular research elite issues were emergent only in case of the West Bengal cadre IAS officers.

#### **5.15 CHAPTER SUMMARY:**

The research methodology and methods of data collection and analysis deployed in the study were discussed and described above. In conclusion, the research philosophy adopted is that of Social Constructivism, research approach that of ethnography, research epistemology that of interpretivism and research method of case-study. The researcher wishes to emphasize that the principal data in this particular case-study research consists of the interview transcripts. Data collection process had the objective of broad-based capturing of the data through adequate number of interviews which was based on saturation principle as explained earlier. In the pilot-study stage the data collection was limited to a selected sample of IAS officers of the Karnataka cadre. Here triangulation with the literary and textual sources like biographies and autobiographies played a key role. Data analysis focused on the correct and appropriate interpretation of the interview data to capture and record the social reality and the associated phenomena under study. In the pilot-study the focus was on to ascertain if there existed a CoP based on the shared meaning, identity and understanding. In the second stage of case-study based research the focus shifted towards CoP-based learning in West Bengal IAS cadre and CoP-based innovation in the Karnataka cadre. Triangulation as a method was deployed to enhance the validity of the case-study findings. 'Thick description' techniques were deployed to strengthen the generalization of the case-studies to other contexts.

## **6.0 CONDUCTING THE CASE STUDY – DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS:**

### **6.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION:**

In this chapter there is a brief discussion about the cases being studied as part of the case-study research. The rationale for selection of the case-sites, profile of the case-sites, description of the process of data collection relevant and specific to the case-sites, the interviewee or respondent selection mechanism and the number of respondents participating are discussed here in this chapter. Particular attention is given to the conducting of the case-study on West Bengal cadre IAS officers.

### **6.2 OVERVIEW OF CASE SITES:**

The case-study focused on the two dimensions of ‘practice’ in the Community of Practice; Innovation and Learning. The researcher decided to study two distinct cases located in two distinct regions of India for the investigation process.

PRACTICE	REGION – CADRE	‘THE CASE’ –individual or Institution
INNOVATION	KARNATAKA–IAS CADRE	KARNATAKA ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
LEARNING – COLLECTIVE LEARNING	WEST BENGAL – IAS CADRE	Individual stories, narratives and experiences of lifelong learning

**Table 14 – Overview of Case Sites – source: developed by the researcher**

### **6.3 CASE – BACKGROUND – THE WEST BENGAL CADRE:**

West Bengal is one of the 28 states located in the eastern region of India with the fourth largest population. The state covers a total geographical area of 88,750 km<sup>2</sup> sharing the border with the neighbouring countries of Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. West Bengal has been blessed with rivers, lakes and ponds with the river Ganges flowing and culminating its long journey through the plains of Northern India in the Bay of Bengal. The capital of the state is Kolkata(formerly Calcutta) which was the erstwhile capital of

British India until 1911. In post-independence India Calcutta continued to play a key role in the affairs of the state with a strong, vibrant presence of commercial and manufacturing firms. Historically the British established their empire in this part of India after the victory in the decisive Battle of Plassey fought in 1757. In 1765 Bengal presidency was established with Calcutta as its capital city and the area included all the British territories north of the Central Provinces, extending from the mouths of the Ganges to entire North-Eastern India, Northern India and the Punjab. The geographical extent of West Bengal was much larger in pre-independence India which is now confined to much smaller area with the partition of Indian sub-continent and the formation of newer states in Eastern India.

The British Raj administrative structure was established here initially with the East India Company Civil Service (Indian Civil Services) and later then being transferred to the Crown in Britain when the famed Indian Civil Services (ICS) was born in 1858.

Subsequently in post-independence India West Bengal witnessed the emergence of a strong Left political movement with the establishment of a democratically elected Communist government in 1977. The Left-front government lasted for 34 years and was defeated only in the 2011 elections. West Bengal government was headed by Mr. Jyoti Basu as Chief Minister for the entire period making him the longest-serving Chief Minister of India and democratically elected Communist leader in the world.

The state has enormous significance for this particular research on civil service elites, i.e. IAS officers, since the state has an incredible legacy and tradition of civil service dating back to the days of British Raj. This qualifies West Bengal as one of the most glamorous and prestigious Presidency cadres (regions which were under direct British Rule and governed by ICS officers) given the role of Kolkata as the capital city of India.

Here in Bengal the civil service witnessed the dramatic transition from initially East India Company civil services to Indian Civil Services and then the post-independence Indian Administrative Services (IAS). The first Indian ICS officer, Mr. Satyendranath Tagore hailed from a distinguished aristocratic family of Kolkata, the Tagores. Subsequently

several distinguished ICS officers of Indian ethnicity hailed from the state of Bengal and particularly Kolkata. The researcher can safely assume that it is in West Bengal the ICS really honed the skills of administering the large territory of India with its diverse population and varied geography.

#### **6.4 RATIONALE FOR WEST BENGAL CADRE – PRESIDENCY GLORY:**

The rationale will not only explain the primary reasons behind the selection of the case site but will throw light on the subsequent understanding of the case through the consideration of the distinct characteristics pertaining to the cadre belonging to different regions of India. In this case the rationale will assist in interpretation of the case findings at the later stage for the researcher and hence is an important research dimension. In this case-study for exploring the collective learning amongst IAS officers through a process of CoP-formation of IAS officers attached to the West Bengal cadre were selected primarily for the following reasons:

##### **1.0 PRESIDENCY CADRE:**

West Bengal in the pre-independence India prior to 1947 was ruled directly by the British establishment, with its own administrative apparatus headed by a Governor-General/Viceroy headquartered in Kolkata( the erstwhile name being Calcutta). Kolkata happened to be the capital of India during days of the British Raj prior to 1911 when the capital was shifted to Delhi. The regions which were directly governed by the British were known as Presidencies and West Bengal was known as the Bengal presidency, which those days encompassed large geographical regions including the current nation of Bangladesh. The civil administration was staffed by the ICS officers( predecessor to the IAS) is an interesting site for any socio-cultural and organizational research as CoPs. Contrarily Karnataka, the other cadre studied in this research was part of a princely state which were not governed directly by the British Imperial establishment and the administration was not staffed by the ICS officers.

## 2.0 REGIME CHANGE:

The period during which this research was conducted and the timing of the interviews, West Bengal was in the throes of a cataclysmic political change, of a significant regime change after a span of three decades of uninterrupted Left rule. West Bengal had been ruled by a Communist party led Left-Front regime for over three decades, and the party was losing its grip on power during the timing of the research investigations. This long spell by a single dominant political party is an anomaly in Indian politics given the nature of elections and the sharp battle for power between different political parties. The effect of this was not decipherable in conducting the interviews except when the general conversation drifted towards political climate of the region. As far as the core data collection of investigating the CoPs were concerned the existence of a Left-regime did not figure so prominently since most of the interactions were with the senior IAS officers who were apolitical, the characteristic of that generation of civil servants.

The atmosphere of the interviews were affected to the extent that some of the retired IAS officers were contesting elections on behalf of the centre-right party opposing the Left and this created a sense of jubilation about active participation in public life. In May 2011 when the interviews were concluded the Left Front government suffered significant defeat and was replaced by a regional party and the state sworn in its first woman Chief Minister.

## 3.0 TRADITION OF LITERARY TEXTS:

One of the criteria for selecting West Bengal was the presence of large volumes of existing textual and literary material in the form of memoirs, journals, diaries and even works of non-fiction and fiction. The researcher was of the opinion that the notion of 'induction as an insider' of a young trainee IAS officer into the core of the CoPs (the model used for research here for collective learning being that of LPP- Legitimate Peripheral Participation) through storytelling and shared narratives would manifest in these biographical texts. West Bengal cadre had a tradition of a several former ICS and IAS officers being excellent writers who captured their life-stories and experiences through memoirs and literary texts. One of the most distinguished ICS officer Annada Shankar Roy was even a national award-winning litterateur with a collection of poems.

The West Bengal IAS cadre is reputed to be culturally-inclined through active participation in music, arts and culture. For instance the well-known exponent of Rabindrasangeet like Mr. Dipak Rudra(IAS;1963) who has performed in the concerts and have musical records launched in the market. Another instance of the literary tradition is the seminal memoir by Bhaksar Ghose(IAS;1960) titled 'In Service of the State: IAS Reconsidered' which has been a key reference text for this particular research while conducting triangulation of the data.

This existence of literary texts will provide the building blocks for this specific research methodology which will deploy triangulation of individual recorded and non- recorded interviews, modest participant-observation and textual material in the form of memoirs, diaries and journals. This secondary data sources provided an underpinning for validation of the data drawn from the recorded interviews. The secondary sources, the literary texts provided a general overview which assisted the researcher to prepare better for conducting the elicited interviews since they provided a background.

#### 4.0 CULTURAL AND SOCIAL FAMILIARITY:

The researcher grew up in the city of Kolkata and ethnically belongs to the region of West Bengal and speaks the language of Bengali fluently it being his mother tongue. During his school days in Kolkata the researcher participated in a host of curricular activities of editing a school magazine, elocution, drama and some amateur choir-singing a few days in the year. So this imparted a cultural and social familiarity with the milieu of IAS officers who often were the 'role-models' for the young students by being mentor-participants as judges and keynote speakers in these literary and cultural events. As a matter of fact one of the interviewees was a Chief Guest on the sports day at the school where the researcher attended, and the researcher marched past him offering him the ceremonial salute with the school flag nearly 25 years back.

This is an important factor for the researcher in the following aspects of conducting the research process:

- having access to the interviewees

- building a rapport through shared language and culture
- participant-observation to a modest extent by capturing out the nuances
- familiarity with the anecdotes about ICS officers and senior IAS officers
- most crucially understanding and appreciating the habitus, the manner, style, language and the coded jokes of the IAS officer.

In the West Bengal context, the shared social world and language allowed fraternisation and opened access. In the separate section on ‘Elites Research’ this familiarity has been explored in details as a key critical factor in assisting the conducting of the interviews.

### **6.5 DESCRIPTION OF CASE-SITE- WEST BENGAL IAS CADRE:**

The access issue has been a major challenging issue through the entire period of conducting the case-study for the researcher. This being classified as an elite research the factors which make elite access difficult have been discussed in a separate section in details. Apart from the typical issues concerning the elite research access there was one more factor which limited the access to respondents or rather narrowed the choice; the availability of serving IAS officers vis-à-vis retired ones. This factor assumes importance and relevance largely with the West Bengal cadre where the interviews were conducted on retired IAS officers.

#### **6.5.1 UNIT OF ANALYSIS:**

In the specific case-study research the unit of analysis were IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre and are currently retired. All of the IAS officers interviewed were engaged in the government apparatus in an advisory role. This made their statements contemporary and in tune with the current reality.

##### **6.5.1.1 Rationale for retired IAS officers:**

The researcher decided this as the basis of research, the units of analysis being retired IAS officers of West Bengal cadre, since the model of Community of Practice formation used as a research template here was the LPP model. The informal learning takes place in informal networks through storytelling, and the newcomer in the group gets recruited to the core through sharing of stories and narratives and it requires some reflection and

introspection on part of the member of the CoPs to explain the process. This reflexive thinking or as the researcher defines it 'distant lazy gaze' requires some maturity and a sense of distance in terms of comparing the different and varied experiences in a span of few decades of working life. Life-long learning which a retired IAS official can relate lends the flavour of an 'oeuvre' to an IAS officer's experiences as an administrator and civil servant.

Learning both in an individual and collective capacity over a period of 30 years will ensure validity and rigour to the methodology of trying to ascertain if there was an active CoP steering the learning process. A retired IAS officer can encapsulate all the decisions made, major eventful incidents and the associated learning processes. As a matter of fact the research findings clearly indicate the relevance and appropriateness for selection of retired IAS officers since the CoP-based learning process becomes far more diluted and weak once the district postings are over and the officer starts working at the Secretariat level. If the interviews were conducted on currently serving IAS officers their conclusions would not have established the differences in formation of CoPs across the professional life of an IAS officer i.e. the fragmentation of CoPs at the Secretariat level since they would not be able to compare between district years and the rest.

The aspects of the 'unit of analysis' relevant to elites research has been discussed separately in the chapter on elites research.

#### 6.5.2 PROFILE OF THE INTERVIEWEES:

Total number of IAS officers = 12

Number of women IAS officers = 3

Number of men IAS officers = 9

Most of them have served in both the Union ministries in New Delhi and at the regional level as well. Practically all of them are associated with the government administration in

an advisory capacity. This imparted the familiarity with current practices, changes in administrative policies and procedures and political dynamics.

### 6.5.3 SELECTION OF THE INTERVIEWEES:

This particular research focuses on Communities of Practice, where the emphasis is on informal coalescence of individuals with shared domain interest, meaning and identity which necessitated adoption of a special method for selection of interviewees. The twin rationale in this process of selection method of interviewees were:

1.0 Informal nature of Communities of Practice formation

2.0 Elites research methodology – IAS officers being defined as elite

The method of selection of interviewees entailed ‘personal recommendations’ by one of the identified potential interviewee who was known to the researcher as a neighbour.

As far the elites research rationale is concerned, it has been discussed in a separate chapter which explores all the relevant factors influencing this research process as an elite research. The researcher will discuss here only the rationale of the approach adopted with regards to the informal nature of Communities of Practice formation. The evolutionary story of arriving at this method is briefly described below.

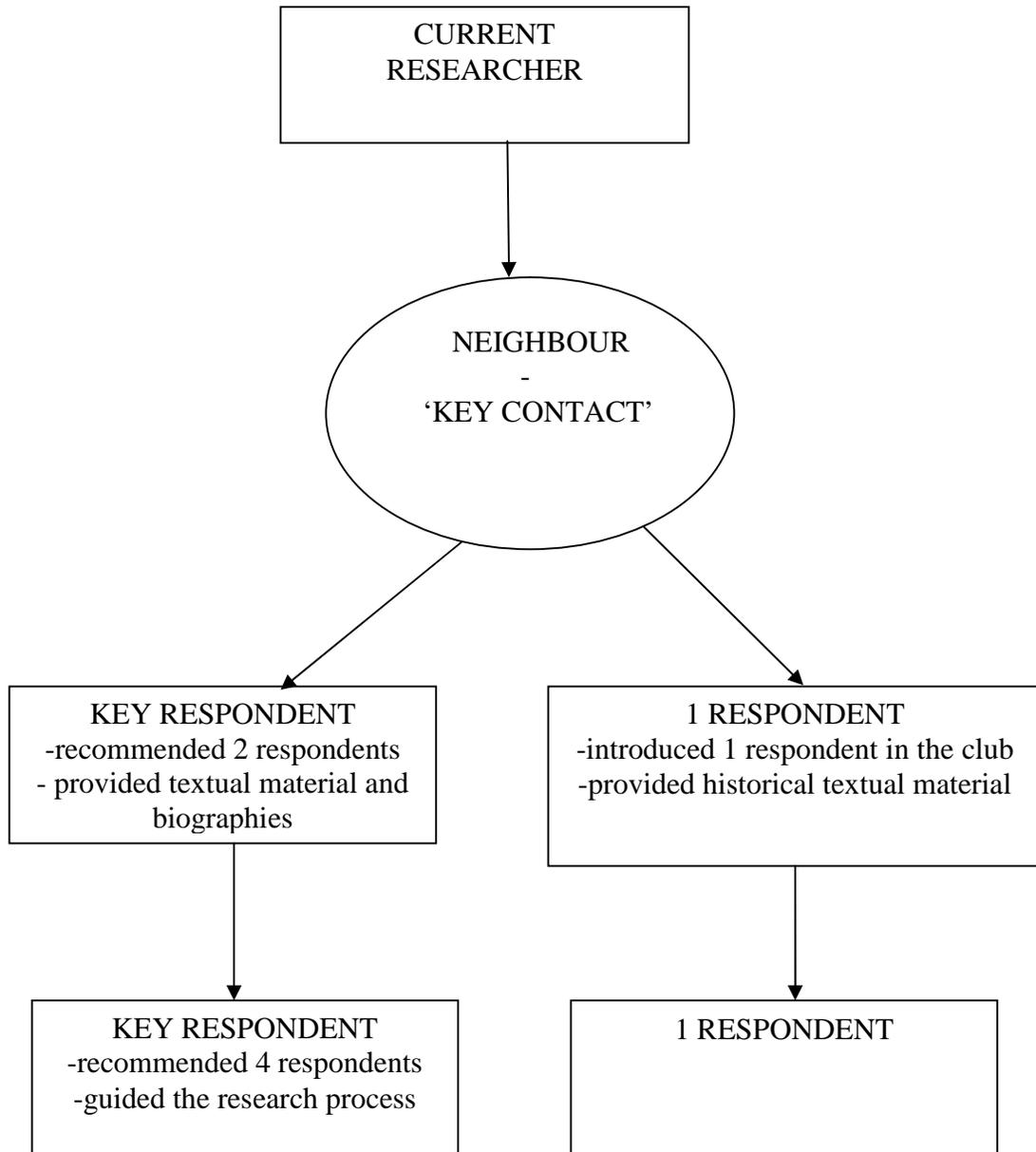
#### 6.5.3.1 Early Days:

Initially the researcher met for a social chat one of the serving senior-ranking IAS officers of the West Bengal cadre and told about the idea being toyed of conducting research on CoPs of IAS officers. This IAS officer was known to the researcher from his Brussels days as a student and he was familiar with his academic interests. The IAS officer categorically cautioned the researcher against drawing up a list of officers from the Department of Personnel which would indicate nothing about their relationships. During that conversation he went to narrate several incidents where in summits and symposiums and workshops they would form separate groups cutting across cadres and generations. This made abundantly clear to the researcher that CoPs exists in the IAS organization at a much more personal level rather than at an organizational one.

## 6.6 IDENTIFICATION OF THE 'KEY CONTACT' AND INTERVIEWEES:

This has been described in detail in the chapter on Elites Research.

A sketch has been drawn to explain the networked process of identification of the interviewees:



**Figure 9 – Identification of Key Contacts and Interviewees - source: developed by the researcher**

## **6.7 ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE – WEST BENGAL:**

The researcher thought it would be prudent to explain and elaborate the administrative structure of West Bengal. IAS officers are primarily responsible for total administration of an Indian state and are positioned as head of affairs of state at every stage of the administrative structure. Importantly there are positions which are typical of erstwhile Presidency regions under direct ICS rule. The administrative structure described here is specific to the West Bengal cadre which is similar to the all-India IAS with the exception of the post of the Divisional Commissioner.

Current administrative structure has changed along two very specific ways:

1.0 New districts have been created from the old districts, they have been made smaller units.

2.0 The concept of Division, comprising of several districts has been abolished and hence the post of Divisional Commissioner does not exist anymore. A map of West Bengal has been attached as an Annex.

West Bengal was administratively divided into basic units of districts. The next higher unit of administration was Division, which comprised of few districts brought under its aegis. Broadly the administrative structure composed of the Divisions with allotted districts and was the unit responsible for managing the administrative affairs of the districts under its fold.

West Bengal primarily had 3 divisions:

1.0 Burdwan Division

2.0 Presidency Division

3.0 Jalpaiguri Division

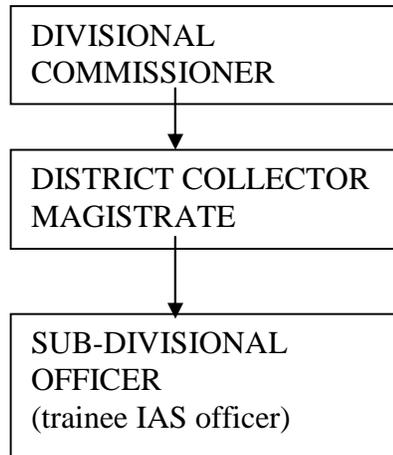
The different districts under the different administrative Divisions have been tabulated below:

Burdwan Division	Presidency Division	Jalpaiguri Division
<p>HEAD QUARTERS – Chinsura in Hooghly District</p> <p>Districts under the fold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hooghly</li> <li>- Burdwan</li> <li>- Bankura</li> <li>- Birbhum</li> <li>- Midnapore</li> <li>- Purulia</li> </ul>	<p>HEAD QUARTERS - Kolkata (formerly Calcutta)</p> <p>Districts under the fold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nadia</li> <li>- Murshidabad</li> <li>- Kolkata (formerly Calcutta)</li> <li>- 24 Paraganas</li> </ul>	<p>HEAD QUARTERS - Jalpaiguri</p> <p>Districts under the fold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jalpaiguri</li> <li>- Cooch Behar</li> <li>- Darjeeling</li> <li>- West Dinajpur</li> <li>- Malda</li> </ul>

**Table 15 – Administrative Districts and Divisions of West Bengal – source:  
developed by the researcher**

The state of West Bengal is bifurcated by the river Ganges which flows through the middle, and all areas north of the Ganges is part of the Jalpaiguri Division.

ADMINISTRATIVE HIERARCHY:



**Figure 10 – Different Postings in the first part of the career of an IAS officer – source: developed by the researcher**

Each of these administrative divisions were headed by a Divisional Commissioner, an IAS officer or an ICS officer. The districts were headed by a District Collector/Magistrate or Deputy Commissioner, who were an IAS officer or ICS officer. In turn each district was sub-divided into sub-divisions which have been explained separately, and usually a trainee IAS officer started their career with the first posting as a Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO). Important to note that the first posting of an IAS officer on completion of the training at the Academy in Mussorie is Sub-Divisional Officer (henceforth referred to as SDO).

**6.8 CASE – BACKGROUND – THE KARNATAKA CADRE:**

Karnataka is an Indian state in the Southern region located on the south-western part. Geographically the state has a large coastline by the Arabian Sea and bordering with 4 neighbouring states. The state was created in 1956 under the States Reorganization Act on the 1<sup>st</sup> November, and this day is celebrated annually as the Karnataka Rajyotsava or formation day. Originally the territory of current Karnataka was part of the Princely state of Mysore and parts of the state were governed by the Madras and Bombay presidencies.

During the state formation parts of regions belonging to Bombay and Madras presidencies were amalgamated into the broader state of Karnataka. The capital city is Bangalore which has attained global fame and recognition as the ‘Silicon Valley’ of India for its vibrant Information Technology sector. Besides the IT-industry Bangalore has a very modern, cosmopolitan character with swanky malls, shopping complexes, apartment enclaves, pubs and restaurants. The state has been the emblem of modern India with its economic and technological progress and have made significant progress in cutting edge areas like renewable energy and bio-technology. Historically Karnataka has been a powerful centre for ancient and medieval empires of India and has several rich historical sites and towns scattered across the state. The administrative tradition of Karnataka is a combination of both the ICS officers administering parts of the state under the erstwhile Presidencies of Bombay and Madras and the rule of the Princely state. The royal kingdom of Mysore instituted its own civil service, the Mysore Civil Service and the administrative head of the Mysore kingdom was the Diwan. The ultimate authority of the government rested with the Royal Family. After independence of India in 1947 and the dissolution of Princely states the Mysore Civil Service was replaced by the IAS.

#### 6.8.1 RATIONALE FOR KARNATAKA CADRE – MODERNITY IN BLOOM:

The rationale will not only explain the primary reasons behind the selection of the case site but will throw light on the subsequent understanding of the case through the consideration of the distinct characteristics. In this specific case the rationale will assist in interpretation of the case findings at the later stage for the researcher and hence is an important research dimension. In this case for exploring the CoP-facilitated innovation amongst IAS officers through a process of CoP-formation in the Karnataka cadre of IAS officers and its attached were selected primarily for the following reasons:

#### 6.8.1.1 LEGACY OF GOVERNANCE:

The princely state of Mysore and its monarchs were known for their progressive social reforms in the areas of education and development like irrigation. There were excellent administrators in the old Mysore Civil Services who acquired fame and reputation far beyond the geographical confines of the state. Some of the illustrious names which emerge are that of Sir K Seshadri Iyer, Sir Mirza Ismail, N.Madhava Rao and Sir M Visveswaraya, who pioneered the modern Indian irrigation system.

In post-independence India the administrative elites in Karnataka steered and implemented several progressive measures like land reforms, rural self-governance institutions. Many of India's prestigious educational institutions and research centers were established in the city of Bangalore in the domains of aerospace, space research and physical sciences. The researcher felt that given its rich tradition and legacy of governance Karnataka cadre would be an interesting case-site for studying innovation.

#### 6.8.1.2 'SILICON VALLEY' OF INDIA – TECHNOLOGY DRIVEN:

In recent years Bangalore emerged as the 'Silicon Valley' or the IT-Capital of India with the blossoming of Indian IT-global giants of Infosys and Wipro(Ibtimes, 2009). Some of the Indian IT-majors were born in Bangalore and chartered their growth with the local manpower and infra-structure. Interestingly contrary to popular perceptions the state government of Karnataka did play a proactive role in fostering and nurturing the growth and development of IT-industry in Bangalore. According to Business Week(2001) 'The Government of Karnataka has also been extremely positive about the software and services marketplace and has helped create the relevant telecom and policy infrastructure conducive to the growth of this sector.' This encouraged the researcher to consider Karnataka cadre IAS officers as an exemplary and interesting case-study for innovation as facilitated by CoPs formed between IAS officers. A very rare instance of administrative machinery playing a proactive role in encouraging the rise of an innovative industry.

#### 6.8.1.3 ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND HIERARCHY:

The state of Karnataka was created and born in 1956 with the merging of the old Princely state of Mysore with Coorg and other districts from former Madras and Bombay Presidencies which were Kannada-speaking, Kannada being the official language of

Karnataka. Hence Karnataka inherited a mixed administrative structure with districts which were governed by ICS officers along with districts which belonged to the Princely state administration. The capital of the old Mysore Princely state was Mysore which was shifted to Bangalore and thus became the capital of the newly-formed state of Karnataka. Currently there are 27 official districts with some of them being newly created since the formation of the state of Karnataka. A district of Karnataka is headed by a Deputy Commissioner (DC), an IAS officer who is over all in-charge of the administration in that particular district. There are 36 Ministerial Departments like Transport, Energy, Education in the State Secretariat Administration and each are headed by an IAS officer usually known as the Principal Secretary. The case-study site of Karnataka Energy Regulatory Commission (KERC) here belongs to the Ministerial Department of Energy.

#### 6.8.2 SELECTION OF CASE-THEME – ENERGY REGULATION:

The case-study intended to identify the processes of ‘innovation’ that is the ‘implementation of new ideas’ through the mechanism of CoP. The researcher sought the appropriate and relevant case-site to study innovation and the search ended at the doorstep of Karnataka Energy Regulatory Commission. The rationale for selecting Karnataka Energy Regulatory Commission is explained below:

- 1.0 The organization was the outcome of a new practice as part of the broader deregulation of electricity and power generation, allowing private players in the energy market.
- 2.0 Key mandate of the Commission was to set tariffs and evolve a pricing mechanism considering the private power producers and generators. This was a major departure from the past where the government bodies unilaterally set tariffs and prices.
- 3.0 The Commission had to address the grievances of both the producers and the consumers through a tribunal mechanism where it heard petitions challenging its own decisions.
- 4.0 Promotion of renewable energy and power was one of the key objectives.

These four major points which were part of the mandate of the Karnataka Energy Regulatory Commission qualifies as innovation since they were all new practices being

introduced in the energy sector. This was the first time that private players were encouraged and the end-consumer of electricity was taken into account and offered a redressal of grievance facility. In the opinion of the researcher studying the processes of implementation of these new practices would be an interesting laboratory to highlight CoP-based innovation mechanism. Karnataka Energy Regulatory Commission is the case within the broader Karnataka cadre IAS which is being studied for CoP-based innovation.

### 6.8.3 DESCRIPTION OF CASE-THEME – KERC:

Karnataka Energy Regulatory Commission (henceforth referred to as KERC or Commission) is an independent regulatory commission set-up under the Karnataka Electricity Reform Act 1999. The act provided for the constitution of an Electricity Regulatory Commission ("The Commission") for the State of Karnataka with the following broad goals and objectives:

- to provide for the restructuring of the electricity industry in the State.
- the corporatisation of the Karnataka Electricity Board and the rationalization of the generation, transmission, distribution and supply of electricity in the State.
- to provide for avenues for participation of private sector entrepreneurs in the electricity industry in the State.
- taking measures conducive to the development and management of the electricity industry in the State in an efficient, economic and competitive manner.
- to provide reliable quality power and to protect the interest of the consumer including vesting in the Commission the powers to regulate the activities of the power sector in the State and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

This Commission is headed by a Chairman who is usually an IAS officer and staffed by individuals who have requisite qualifications and competence in the power sector with an assured independence including economists and technical experts.

Some of the defined routine tasks and responsibilities of the Commission are:

- 1.0 Licensing of companies providing electricity services.
- 2.0 Approving the establishment of new capacity at the minimum possible costs through a process of competitive bidding.
- 3.0 Monitoring the operations of the licensees.

4.0 Establishing tariffs in accordance with the principles laid down in the legislation for achieving objectives of this Policy.

One of the key mandate of the Commission in the initial stages were to introduce necessary modifications in the tariff structure which will progressively reduce cross subsidies and eventually resulting in their withdrawal. The small rural consumers and the rural poor need were to be protected. The tariff will also have appropriate incentives for supporting a programme of load management and Electricity conservation. It is worthy mentioning that in the early formation days of the Commission a senior level steering committee headed by the Chief Secretary was established to provide policy guidance and monitor the implementation of the Reform Programme. There was a proposed task force headed by the Secretary to Government, Energy Department set up to manage the routine activities of the implementation of this new power and electricity regulation program. This was perceived by the researcher to be an ideal location for the nurturing of CoPs with the possibility of forging informal networks around the domain interest of power and electricity deregulation.

#### 6.8.4 CASE-STUDY ANALYSIS STRUCTURE:

In the KERC case-study the researcher studied the innovation process and its diffusion by initially identifying the new practices which have been implemented in routine practices of the administration. The focus will be to detect and locate CoInv in the KERC engaged in the energy policy tasks which emerges as safe nurturing places for creative ideas and in turn translate these ideas into newer practices. Interestingly as explained earlier KERC working groups draw members from other departments related to energy and power supply. According to the researcher the process of analysis would involve the following:

- 1.0 Identification of new practices which have been implemented.
- 2.0 Locate the individuals who were involved in this implementation process of the new practice.
- 3.0 Investigate the social interactions through interviews for all the individuals involved to ascertain the formation of a CoP centered around innovation the CoInvs.

4.0 Record the data and interpret to locate the operation of a CoP-based mechanism for the implementation of the new ideas into new practices.

#### 6.8.5 DATA COLLECTION FOR THE CASE-STUDY - CONDUCTING

##### INTERVIEWS:

Interviews were the primary source of data collection. In the present case-study there were not adequate literary textual material like biographies and journals which revealed the CoP-based innovation process. The available textual data was with regards to the new practices introduced along with the economic rationale and the proceedings of the meetings of the Commission. This provided information on the details of the innovation, the new practices being introduced by the KERC but not the social mechanism of CoP.

##### 6.8.5.1 Identification of Interviewees:

The researcher identified the IAS officers connected with the KERC who either served in their board of Directors, mostly as Chairman or with the associated ministries and departments like Energy, Renewable Energy, public sector undertakings engaged in the power generation and distribution sector. The interviews were expected to reveal the workings of an informal network of innovators, a CoP of innovators, or innovation champions, the CoInvs. Accordingly the researcher identified about 10 IAS officers, both serving and retired who would have been connected with the KERC as a CoInvs.

Total number of interviewees identified = 10

Total number of interviews conducted = 4

Number of recorded interviews = 1

Number of retired IAS officers = 1

Number of telephonic interviews = 1

Number of reluctant interviewees = 6

Most of the IAS officers of Karnataka cadre were reluctant to participate in any recorded interviews who were active or engaged with the Energy Regulatory Commission presently or in the past. Only the Chairman of the KERC consented to be interviewed and recorded in his office. The researcher attempted to interview one former Chairman who refused recording and the rest were busy.

## **6.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY:**

The twin case-sites of West Bengal and Karnataka have been covered with regards to their description and background which offers an insight into the contextual conditions of both the states. The important distinction which emerges between the two states is that of the historical legacy of the ICS rule in the Presidency cadres i.e. the parts of India which were directly under British rule and were governed by the ICS officers. This distinction led to an important shift in the research study where dimensions of elite research had to be considered with respect to West Bengal cadre IAS officers methodologically. The case-background of Karnataka was primarily driven by considerations of a modern setting, the contemporary tasks of delivering renewable energy and energy deregulation which were expected to trigger innovative practices and CoPs formed around them amongst the IAS officers. Clearly it is found that the process of conducting interviews in Karnataka was beset with problems and there were refusals and reticence leading to incomplete and unsatisfactory data collection.

## **7.0 ‘SERENDIPITOUS FINDINGS’- ELITES RESEARCH ISSUES:**

### **7.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION:**

This is revisiting the research literature because the elite themes were emerging so clearly during the conduction of the research on West Bengal cadre IAS officers. Initial research methodology chapter did not account for elite research since the study did not intend to study the IAS as elites or within an elite framework but more as a professional group. Elite themes started emerging while seeking access, during the process of conducting the interviews, interpreting the interview data where the predominance of the ‘social reality’ could no longer be ignored in an elite context. The researcher wishes to term this chapter as the ‘SERENDIPITOUS FINDINGS’, implying the researcher did not set out to conduct the research expecting to find elite issues and then mid-way through the research located them by ‘surprise’. Most important to emphasize and specify that this chapter and the associated elite research issues are restricted to the West Bengal cadre IAS officers only.

### **7.2 DEFINITION OF ELITES:**

Elite in its basic definition is derived from the Latin word ‘Electus’ which means the chosen and can be broadly defined as a group of individuals in society which have more knowledge, money and status and assume a higher position than the others in the population (Odendahl & Shaw,2002). Although the idea of elites is ancient, it is only a recent legacy amongst sociologists to work on the notion of elites and placing them in the social context; and the pioneers in the early phases were Vilfredo Pareto(1935) and Gaetano Mosca(1939) both of whom associated the term elite with respect to a ‘ruling class’ or ‘governing class’ which were separate from the society or the rest of the population and were individuals who enjoyed power and authority.

However Mosca(1939) established the succinct distinction which exists between the elites and the rest of the society. In later years C. Wright Mills(1956) in his landmark work ‘The Power Elite’ defined the elites as ‘power elites’ a group of individuals in a society distinguished by their authority and political importance. Some more recent definitions of elites are ‘those with proximity to power’(Lilleker, 2003) or ‘with particular expertise’(Burnham et al., 2004). According to Odendahl and Shaw(2002) the designation of elite for specific research purposes varies according to the purpose

and field of inquiry and is part of the investigative process in determining the scope of inquiry. This is important since as evident from the varying definitions of elite that there can be several forms of elite, where they derive their privileged position in society from economic, political, cultural, knowledge and attached status sources (Becker, 1995).

In case of this specific research the term 'Elite' is clearly defined through status and position obtained by holding high offices in the government bestowed with higher authority and power by the constitutional framework which makes them in a superior position than the rest of the society in the Indian context. Men holding public office has been accepted as a definition of elites in research literature (Trexler, 1974; Mills, 1956). An IAS officer in the Indian society enjoys the power and privileges of an administrator class who can exercise constitutional authority and make decisions on matters concerning public policy.

In case of defining an 'elite group' where a collective of individuals is referred to as conforming to the definition of elites implies a certain shared homogeneity of characteristics like shared meaning, skills, resources and power of the members of this group. Defining a group within a society as an elite can be problematic and requires careful analysis since one needs to establish the shared homogeneity amongst the members of the elite.

For the purpose of this study the researcher associate the concept of elites as elite groups, as rulers or governors of the state (Burke, 1974).

This particular research is focused on studying IAS officers belonging to West Bengal cadre as a group and aims to investigate whether as an elite group they do form Communities of Practice, i.e. informal networks of learning and innovation. The group of elites is the collective of IAS officers who hold senior positions of authority and influence in the Indian state.

The shared commonalities of IAS officers as a collective has been established through the earlier preliminary study conducted in the first part of the research.

To narrow the focus on shared common characteristics which define them as elites are mentioned below:

Characteristics	Elite Nature – Qualifier
Skills	Qualifying the competitive examinations
Meaning	Earlier preliminary studies indicated the existence of shared meaning of being a significant person in society
Resources	Constitutional authority bestowed by their position
Power	Holding highest administrative offices

**Table 16 – Common Elite Characteristics of IAS – source: developed by the researcher**

#### 7.2.1 QUALIFYING THE IAS AS AN ELITE:

The researcher felt that based on the above definitions of Elite it would be prudent to have a qualifier for the IAS officers as an elite group. How are they more privileged in status from the rest of the Indian population? What makes them a distinct group? This is also important to capture the modified status of an IAS officer against the backdrop of a changing socio-political milieu of India with the forces of globalization and free-market economy being unleashed and less of state intervention in the economic affairs of the state. A table describing all the qualifiers of categorizing the IAS as an elite in broad general terms has been depicted below.

QUALIFYING THE IAS AS AN ELITE:

DIMENSIONS OF ELITE	PRIVILEGES IN INDIAN CONTEXT
Economic	Until recently prior to the resurgence of a private sector economy IAS officers drew a good income by Indian standards and was highly sought after as a career since government jobs were prestigious.
Status - Power Symbolism	IAS officers enjoy special 'red lamp' cars and accomodation in earmarked residential quarters with many having security and retinue of servants and orderlies.
Authority	In early years of post-Independence India the state ruled the economy through controls and regulations known as the 'license-Raj' and an IAS officer enjoyed authority of approvals for the private sector and society at large. In the current climate they do enjoy authority in many areas of life but not so much in the economic spheres of life.
Intellectual	IAS officers were selected through fiercely competitive examinations which were known to be academically rigorous and hence they enjoy the intellectual glamour of a bright mind.
Power – Over Society	IAS officers hold the highest positions in the government at the Central level in New Delhi and at the state secretariat. This is powerful when compared to the other categories of civil services so they are privileged amongst the public servants as well. All the ministerial departments are headed by an IAS officer including Defence and Railways. In the current scenario there has been diminishing of the supreme role since new actors emerge in the arena of policy making like NGOs and private sector bodies.
Legacy and Tradition –ICS of the British Raj	IAS is the successor civil service of the ICS of the British Raj and enjoys a lot of the prestige and glamour of earlier ICS ruling elite. There is a lot of continuity of legacies and traditions of the old ICS.

**Table 17 – Qualifying the IAS as an elite group in Indian context – source: developed by the researcher**

Since the elite issues emerged while conducting the case-study research with the West Bengal cadre it would be prudent in the opinion of the researcher to identify few specific dimensions of elite relevant in the West Bengal context.

DIMENSIONS OF ELITE	PRIVILEGES IN WEST BENGAL CONTEXT
Historical Legacy	This is a Presidency cadre where the ICS officers ruled directly during the British Raj, and Kolkata was the erstwhile capital of India. One can state that ICS as an administrative tradition was born in Bengal presidency, the first region of direct British rule in India.
Social-cultural milieu	In West Bengal the civil service and administrative jobs drew individuals from the graduates of Presidency College which was the bastion of Anglophone upper-middle class Indians. This society was perceived as the ‘custodian class’ of India during the British Raj and later in the first few decades of independent India.

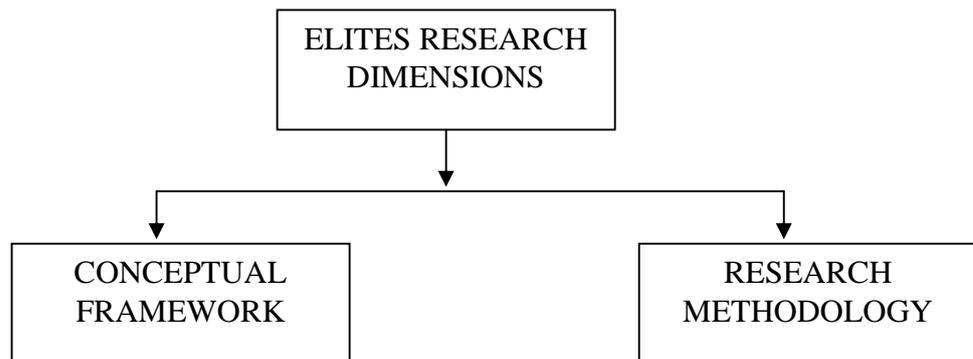
**Table 18 – Dimensions of an elite for the IAS in West Bengal context – source: developed by the researcher**

These two factors specifically contributed according to the researcher to the elite characteristics of West Bengal cadre IAS officers. Presidency cadres, the IAS officer cadres which belong to the regions which were directly under the British rule where the ICS officers were the administrative elites are known to be elitist and formal in character as compared to the other state cadres. The Indian Princely states which were indirectly under the British rule had their own administrative apparatus and were not governed by ICS officers.

The researcher reckoned the conducting of elite research along twin dimensions:

1.0 Conceptual Framework – providing the theoretical rationale based on literature review

2.0 Research Methodology - the methodological issues related to conducting elite research



### **7.3 CONDUCTING ELITE RESEARCH – DIRECTIONS:**

The serendipitous emergence of ‘elites’ as a research category posed for the researcher the task of revisiting the research methodology and the underpinning theoretical framework. It was not prepared at the onset of the research process to conduct an elite research which would have impacted and influenced the theoretical literature and research methodology since elite research required a different methodology. Literature review earlier conducted excluded any reference to research literature on elites since it was irrelevant, IAS officers were not being studied as an elite professional or social group. Most importantly the research conducted on both the IAS cadres as pilot studies did not indicate any characteristics of an elite group. The initial pilot-study results revealed a significant, important social group which occupied powerful positions in India society but there was no self-perception of being distinct from the rest of the society, sharing special manners, values and tastes from the rest of the Indian society.

As part of the revisited literature on elites, IAS officers have been treated as an elite group on account of their position as governors of the state (Burke, 1974), but it is important to explore the reasons of only West Bengal cadre IAS specifically displaying elite characteristics. The Karnataka cadre IAS officers did not display similar elite characteristics though they belonged to the same elite group by the

above definition of holding an important position in society. Hence the researcher wishes to establish that the elite characteristics displayed specifically in the context of the case-study on West Bengal cadre IAS officers required further explanation beyond the criteria of elite set for this research.

Specific to the West Bengal cadre IAS officers being interviewed for the case-study, the following factors could be accounted for as an explanation for their display of elite characteristics.

1.0 The legacies and traditions of ICS as inherited by the West Bengal cadre since they are the direct successors of the ICS, belonging to Presidency cadres.

Presidency cadres are IAS cadres belonging to states which were directly ruled by the ICS officers and were part of British India. ICS officers were a distinct elite group aligned with the imperial establishment of the British Raj.

2.0 The dominant habitus of the West Bengal cadre IAS cadre being that of the Anglophone Indian upper-middle class, which was an elite habitus by the nature of its restricted presence among small sections of India society. Besides the individuals who possessed this elite habitus of an Anglophone Indian upper-middle class were holding positions of power and prestige in all walks of life in British India and subsequently for a while in post-independence India.

Clearly, these two factors on initial consideration offer an explanation for the IAS officers of West Bengal cadre emerging as an elite group with displaying of elite characteristics. These above two factors will be investigated by the researcher during the course of the case-study research on West Bengal IAS cadre officers.

The 'serendipitous' findings of this particular research about the emergence of IAS officers as an elite group and specifically in the context of West Bengal cadre was addressed through three distinct parameters which provided the direction:

1.0 Methodological – here all the research methodological issues relating to elite research were accounted for in the interpretation of the results.

2.0 Theoretical – here the conceptual framework for elites forming CoPs and the facilitated processes of learning and innovation, in other words the Practice, was based on the notion of Habitus influencing the Practice.

The broad research questions which emerged from the initial discussion on elite research pertaining to the West Bengal cadre IAS officers were:

- 1.0 To what extent the legacies and traditions of the ICS were continued in the IAS?
- 2.0 To what extent the habitus of the ICS manifests as the prevailing dominant habitus in the current West Bengal cadre IAS?
- 3.0 To what extent the dominant habitus of the IAS pertaining to the West Bengal cadre relates or corroborates with that of the Anglophone Indian upper-middle class?

The different considerations and deliberations for both these dimensions of elite research has been tabulated below:

Dimensions of Elite Research	Considerations and Deliberations
Conceptual Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Elite Habitus and interactions with CoP-formation</li> <li>- Influence of their Elite habitus on Community-formation and influence on Participation in Practice</li> </ul>
Research Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access Issues</li> <li>- Conducting the research</li> <li>- Interactions with Respondents</li> <li>- Power relations between researcher and respondent</li> </ul>

**Table 19 – Considerations of Dimensions of Elite Research – source: developed by the researcher**

## **7.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF ELITE RESEARCH – ELITE**

### **HABITUS:**

Pierre Bourdieu, the French sociologist introduces the concept of 'HABITUS' which are generative structures which conditions the individual's practice and are dispositions which are present prior to participation, in other words one brings it to the world of practice even before one entered it (Bourdieu, 1986). Habitus is defined as 'systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures', basically an acquired disposition produced by 'conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence' (Bourdieu, 1990). In Bourdieu's case it is worth mentioning the 'conditioning' of the social reality referred to is that of the French elites, which was central to his study on the process of perpetuation of elite dominance through habitus in the fiercely 'apparently meritocratic' educational system.

According to Bourdieu: 'the apparently most insignificant techniques of the body – ways of walking or blowing one's nose, ways of eating or talking ... [reveals] the most fundamental principles of construction and evaluation of the social world' (Bourdieu, 1986) and when a person with a certain habitus encounters a familiar world for its habitus 'it is like a 'fish in water' ... it takes the world about itself for granted' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Some of the salient points about habitus; it is unconsciously acquired, is context-independent, structures one's response to the social world and can reproduce itself under different circumstances. Bourdieu's 'habitus' are particular dispositions, patterns of thinking acquired early on unconsciously and are 'embodied principles' acting like manuals for negotiating social realities and practices.

Bourdieu's focus on practice interests researchers on Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998) and has appeared in literature on organization, learning and knowledge (Von Krogh et al., 2000; Delamont & Atkinson, 2001). Recently the concept of habitus in Communities of Practice influencing practice has received attention by Mutch (2003) in his work on UK public house managers. It would be interesting to explore the dispositions participants bring to the Community of Practice through their 'habitus' and how it influences their practices. 'Habitus' regulates one's practice and not that practice generates 'habitus'. However here

there is a divergence with Wenger (1998) who affirms that 'habitus' is generated by participation in practices within a CoP, dispositions inherited outside a CoP can be modified by the practices of the CoPs, and when there is a discrepancy between the inherited 'habitus' prior to engagement with the CoPs and that of the one developed within CoPs, there will be tension in the negotiation of meaning of the individual. This tension between acquired dispositions and that required in the participating CoPs in individual identity is illustrated by the work of Mutch (2003). So the researcher can safely critique that Wenger (1998) has not done rigorous treatment about 'habitus' formation within CoPs and the accompanying processes to stake the claim that practice alone generated in a particular CoP can influence the 'habitus' of an individual belonging to a particular CoP. It is important to emphasize that a group of individuals belong to multiple CoPs and the discussion in this section moves swiftly from plural to singular and should realize that 'habitus' conditioning might not take place in any of the CoPs one belongs to or might be influenced by some one belongs to.

In context of this particular research 'elite' dimension of the IAS collective is incorporated as a concept which might possibly emerge given the nature and background of the Indian civil service, that is, the tradition and legacy of ICS specific to the West Bengal cadre. There is no separate literature review on elites and the influence on formation of CoPs and the associated processes of CoP-facilitated learning and innovation since this particular research study did not intend to study them as a group of elite individuals. Initial pilot-study results did not reveal any clear notion of IAS being an 'elite' with a distinct cultural capital, habitus but more a professional holding important positions in society.

This 'elite' dimension became evident while conducting the West Bengal cadre IAS study and had to be incorporated as a separate chapter. The conceptual framework here developed for interpretation of the collected data from the West Bengal cadre IAS officers case-study is that of 'Habitus' and the influence on 'Participation in Practice'. According to the researcher this 'elite' dimension emerges from West Bengal being a Presidency cadre, where the ICS officers ruled directly and the legacy and influence they left behind. In this context the seminal work of West Bengal cadre IAS officer, Mr. Bhaskar Ghose(1960 batch), 'In Service of the State;

IAS Revisited' lucidly captures this social reality of a distinct group of officers hailing from an Anglophone Indian middle-class background with "...the ideals that are brought from one's formative years"(Ghose,2011).

ICS officers clearly belonged to an elite in every sense of the term with the trappings of power, prestige and glamour and the social respect accorded to them by ordinary Indians. Important to state that ICS officers possessed a specific and typical elite habitus in terms of habits, manners, conduct and speech as manifested in the literary works of memoirs and biographies.

In case of this specific research the specter of 'Habitus' appears in three very important socio-cultural contexts:

- (1) The state cadres where the ICS officers ruled directly, defined for the current study as Presidency cadres, the elite influence would be discernible vividly. The elite habitus described is more a product of the world of the ICS officers of the British Raj.
- (2) The Training academy in Mussorie influences the habitus of recruits particularly those for whom the transition from college to IAS was not implicitly assumed and thought to be a natural one by acculturating the habitus of an ICS officer modeled along the lines of an English gentleman. The Academy training program was in tune with that of the ICS officers who were groomed to be 'Gentlemen Civil Servants'. Hence the researcher will look for evidence if the dominant habitus encouraged at the Academy was similar to that of the ICS officers.
- (3) The dominant habitus encouraged at the Training Academy is that of the British-styled Gentlemen ICS which in turn is similar to that of the Anglophone Indian upper-middle class urbane society. For them there seems to be an aura of 'a cut above the rest' for the ones who speak impeccable English, educated in one of the few 'English-styled' schools and have been exposed to public life at an early formative stage. Across the entire spectrum of Indian public life are present and particularly within the IAS there seemed to be a 'social set' drawn from the old Anglicized elite who can straddle between the world of private club,

Oxbridge education, reading Jane Austen, playing tennis and attend to the tough ground realities of district administration. Hence the researcher wishes to investigate, record and capture if the IAS officers hailing from Anglophone upper-middle class Indian society were more at ease with the dominant habitus of the Academy and the IAS in general.

The specific research questions which emerge from the conceptual framework discussions on elite research pertaining to the West Bengal cadre IAS officers are:

- 1.0 Do the IAS officers hailing from Anglophone Indian upper-middle class backgrounds naturally form CoPs amongst themselves due to their shared habitus and the dominant habitus of the IAS as inculcated by the Training Academy being similar to their inherited one through family and education?
- 2.0 How does the elite habitus brought from the social backgrounds of IAS officers influence their Participation in Practice of the CoPs?
- 3.0 How does the Training Academy encourage and instill this habitus which is the elite habitus in the Indian context?

The researcher will draw from the theoretical framework of ‘habitus’ both acquired at the academy and inherited at an early stage to observe and record any influence in their participation in CoPs. Interestingly the question would be if the natural formation of CoPs within the IAS reflects any particular affinity amongst those who have shared ‘habitus.’

## **7.5 RESEARCHING THE ELITES – METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES:**

The focus of most long-standing sociological research is ‘researching down’ where the researcher is usually in a relative position of power as compared to the researched or the interviewee and below the researcher’s social level (Whitty & Edwards, 1994; Walford, 2011). Social scientists rarely ‘research up’ which is defined as where the researcher is not at a higher social level and more powerful than the ones being researched (Nader, 1972; Ostrander, 1995; Gusterson, 1995).

This kind of research is also known as Elite Research or “studying up” contrasting the more prevalent forms of research where the researcher usually has more power than the researched (Walford, 2011). In domain of social sciences there is a strong identification with the underprivileged with a firm faith in research as a tool for empowering through understanding them; as the pertinent question is being constantly posed about the purpose being served by empowering the rich and powerful by studying them (Hertz & Imber, 1993). This explains as well the paucity of research on the elites section of society.

In the motley of elite research there are a few outstanding ones because of their brilliant sociological analysis as they went out to explore the world of elites in terms of what they think and do and some of the well-known examples are (Mills,1956), (Useem,1995), (Hirsch,1986),(Gusterson,1995) and (Hunter, 1995).

There is an accepted dearth of research literature on methodology of studying elites, the special issues and challenges encountered in the process and possible solutions of methodology in securing the research data (Thomas, 1995).

It is important at this stage the researcher wishes to clarify the focus of this research was not the elite nature of IAS officers, or the elite characteristics of IAS officers but more a focused study on formation of Communities of Practice amongst the IAS officers.

However the elite nature of IAS officers could not be avoided in conducting the research on West Bengal cadre IAS officers. Elite research issues typically started surfacing forth with issues of access, information and the very nature of interviews conducted between the researcher and the IAS officers. So in essence this was not an elite research per se but had to confront some of the issues associated with the elite research.

## **7.6 ‘PITFALLS’ FOR ELITE RESEARCH:**

The recalcitrance for doing elite research can be explained by the challenges in gaining access to the respondents (Morris, 2009; Bygnes,2008;Burnham et al.,2004;Ostrander,1995) which dissuades the researcher at the early stages.

Elites erect barriers by very nature of their position being separated from the rest of society which make it difficult to enter into their exclusive world (Hertz & Imber, 1995). So access as part of any elite research requires substantial attention and devising of a coherent strategy (Morris, 2009; Ostrander, 1995; Thomas, 1995; Smart and Higley, 1977). The researcher experienced similar difficulties at the early stages of conducting research in access to the interviewees, in this case the IAS officers belonging to West Bengal cadre.

In a landmark paper on methodology for conducting research on Elite Zoë Morris (2009) identified three key issues which deserves close attention or pitfalls which one has to watch for as this researcher calls it in conducting elite research. Morris (2009) considers these issues along the lines of having implications for research outcomes and practice.

The three issues or ‘pitfalls’ are tabulated as below:

ISSUES OR ‘PITFALLS’	IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH
Assumptions about Truth –Objective Truth	Quality and reliability of the data obtained through research
Respondent and Interviewer relationship -Honesty on part of the interviewer and interviewee- ‘sophisticated researcher’	Poses questions of research ethics if the interviewer manipulated the interview or if the respondent was not honest in their responses
Superior Interviewee – powerless researcher	This influences the issues of access which is of paramount importance in case of Elite research – access to respondents and research sites

**Table 20 – Pitfalls of Elite Research and Implications – source: developed by the researcher**

These three issues set the framework for identifying the aspects of elite research relevant for this particular research on IAS officers. It would be significant to state that this research is an elite research to the extent that it selected an elite group of public servants in the Indian society and not about their broader views and opinions with regards to their role and position in the Indian society.

Hence the discussions of 'pitfalls' for elite research will be confined to the three broad issues as drawn from above discussions by the researcher:

1.0 ACCESS – powerless researcher

2.0 RELIABILITY OF THE DATA – the interactions of the respondent and researcher influencing the data collected from interviews

3.0 OBJECTIVE TRUTH – this is clarified by the philosophy of this specific research

### **7.7 ELITE ACCESS AND STRATEGIES FOR GAINING:**

Access to research sites and respondents have been identified as a major deterrent towards conducting elite research for most social-science researchers (Burnham et al., 2004; Bygnes, 2008; Ostrander, 1995). Nader (1972) noted that most common objection to doing 'studying up' was restricted or limited access. 'The powerful are out of reach on a number of planes: they don't want to be studied; it is dangerous to study the powerful; they are busy people; they are not all in one place, etc.' (Nader, 1972).

There were also 'problems of secrecy and confidentiality' (Nader, 1972). These problems of access raises scepticism and doubt about the quality of data collected by the research in terms of time allotted (Smart and Higley, 1977) and 'how to gain access had been identified as a key question for conducting elite research' (Thomas, 1995).

Entire research process is influenced by the elites, powerful as they are with their ability to make you wait which will impact on the pace and the organizing the process (Fitz & Halpin, 1994). As one can decipher from the notes above the entire research strategy needs to be treated with caution and elite research is fraught with risks of delay, inadequacy of data collection and even complete failure.

The researcher was well aware of these risks and downsides and these were evident after the initial preliminary case-study particularly the issue of time allotted for the interviews much more than access, and it can be termed 'Quality Access'.

Quality access which for the purposes of this study can be defined as the combination of the following factors:

- time allotted
- attention to the process of interview and interaction provided by the respondent
- willingness to share candid information
- open to further consultations during the research process

The researcher can conclude from the experience of conducting the research process that sheer access may not be the sole issue in elite research but more the potential for that access to be relevant and meaningful for the research purpose. Otherwise the appointments turn out to be social pleasantries with little contribution to the research process where the meeting was offered by him on recommendation of one of his senior IAS officer.

#### 7.7.1 STRATEGIES FOR ACCESS:

There have been growing business literature on interviewing elites which are suggesting recommended strategies for gaining access to elite respondents and research sites (Burnham et al.,2004; Dexter, 1970; Lilleker, 2003; Richards, 1996). The suggestions encompass manners including dress (Thomas,1995) and tactics to present oneself as a researcher (Batteson and Ball,1995; Berry, 2002; Burnham et al.,2004; Dexter, 1970; Herod, 1999; Leech, 2002; Lilleker, 2003; Richards, 1996; Sabot, 1999).

There are few interesting dimensions of the strategy for gaining or securing access which go much deeper than the scope of just gaining access and conducting the research interview, they 'tell the tale' or speak about the relationship of the researcher to the researched which can influence the entire research process. These dimensions are way too significant and merit a serious attention and in the next few sections will discuss them prior to summarizing the techniques deployed by the researcher for gaining 'quality access'. According to the researcher these factors in this particular research played a very significant role and were fundamental to the

research strategy of the researcher based on the shared social, cultural world between the researched and the researcher.

### **7.8 ELITE ISSUES WITH UNIT OF ANALYSIS- RETIRED IAS OFFICERS:**

This particular research is based on twin case-studies, and have one case-study on lifelong collective and the individual learning through CoPs where the units of analysis are retired IAS officers of West Bengal cadre. As part of this case-study interviews were conducted with retired IAS officers belonging to West Bengal cadre where the issues of access were relatively simpler, as have been argued, that access is easier with retired elites than who are currently in power (Kogan, 1994;Gewirtz and Ozga1994). Though the selection of retired were based on rationale other than access, since lifelong learning can only be captured only through the kaleidoscope of someone who have completed the entire tenure of an IAS officer and can compare the CoPs formed at different stages of the career, the researcher does concur with the notion of selecting retired IAS officers as a strategy did enhance quality access. The upside of this strategy being that the retired ones would be more willing to divulge information about their experiences of being in a CoP. However the researcher had to be cautious about the tendencies to attach larger-than-life images and importance to their activities and ascribe themselves a place in the annals of history ((Kogan, 1994;Gewirtz and Ozga1994).

Interestingly the researcher did encounter one particular instance of an individual who held the ‘vaulted image’ of a dauntless IAS officer where these egoistic tendencies were very clear, for instance when he refused to acknowledge in plain terms that he has been mentored by anyone. It was one of his contemporaries who pointed it out to the researcher that ‘me being his batchmate I can tell you he overestimates his achievements while his juniors hold him in reverence and keep quiet, but I can tell him to shut up’(IAS;1956). This characteristic was also evident amongst few other retired IAS officers and the longer they had been retired the more pronounced was this trait, exaggerated notions of the self-achievement. Particularly amongst some of the IAS officers of West Bengal cadre who joined the service in early years of post-independence India were this tendency evident to wax eloquently about their role in quelling law and order disturbances and riots. They perceived their role in the broader sense of ‘custodians’ of society and upholders of law and

the constitution rather than as mere civil servants implementing policy decisions. This was in sharp contrast to Karnataka cadre where the IAS officers prided on their technocratic skills and managerial achievements of implementing decisions.

Besides the West Bengal cadre IAS officers were erudite, literary in their speech and enjoyed talking about their poetry-writing, singing skills or knowledge of classic films. Many of them prided on being 'cultured' sophisticated individuals with refined taste of music and literature.

However the researcher did account for this tendency of glorification of self-achievements and sometimes it assisted the research when probed to talk about themselves and their glorious achievements the information they shared turned out to be extremely valuable. It is this enthusiasm for recollecting their years in service which emerged as a source of rich data and information about the learning communities, since this research was more about the processes of learning and implementation of new ideas, the exaggeration did not affect the interview process. In most cases the alertness and questioning tactics of the researcher revealed the existence of mentors and epistemic groups even when they denied having learnt from groups.

#### 7.8.1 INSTANCE OF SELF-ADMIRATION:

The individual respondent from West Bengal cadre mentioned above was highly insistent that he had learnt nothing from his seniors and no IAS officer is worth the salt to have taught him anything. When the researcher posed a question about his favourite senior he bursts into an animated and vigorous conversation describing his first boss, Mr. S.N. Ray ICS officer, the first Chief Secretary of West Bengal after Indian independence in 1947 who was known for his stern voice and imperious ways along the lines of true pukka-sahib ICS style. This gentleman recounted how Mr. Ray pulled up a minister for food for irregularities in his presence in his Chief Secretary's sprawling chamber. One suddenly realized his entire model for conducting discussions with the ministers was along the lines of the stern ICS Mr. Ray despite him being insistent on having learnt nothing. The individual readily admitted to "Mr. Ray ICS" being his role model on being repeated the question by the researcher if this superior ICS officer was his role model. Importantly a lot of this specific research was about careful listening to the stories of the respondents and

interpreting them. The researcher wishes to propose that in elite interviews one has to draw the individual into a conversation engagingly and then pose questions from different angles and perspectives based on the responses rather than a structured, stylized interview, answers might be obtained at different stages of the interview. For instance the question of an inspiring mentor might be obtained towards the end of the interview while discussing a memorable anecdote.

The researcher observed that in West Bengal cadre the ICS officers were admired as inspirational role models across the cross-section of the IAS officers interviewed without any misgivings and particularly a few legendary names like Mr. Ray and Mr. Mitra kept being constantly raised. There is a tinge of humour which needs to be added to this research, a lot of the anecdotes about ICS officers related to their stern and strict ways and even their stentorian voices mimicked by the respondents who are now retired IAS officers looking back at their youth.

## **7.9 REACHING OUT TO THE RESPONDENTS FOR INTERVIEW:**

In order to obtain the consent of the respondents for the interview, IAS officers of West Bengal cadre, the researcher adopted a personalized approach with regards to the task of identifying interviewees and seeking a confirmed appointment with the agreed respondents through his personal networks (Thomas,1995; Ostrander,1995; Walford,1994;Dexter,1970). The researcher referred and held a directory of IAS officers which listed all the IAS officers who were retired till 2009 since the research was being conducted in the year 2010-2011 spread over a period of 9 months.

### **7.9.1 TAPPING PERSONAL NETWORK FOR DRAWING UP THE RESPONDENTS LIST:**

Initial steps to reach the interviewees involved getting connected through a known individual into the network and the researcher adopted the personal contact mode rather than anonymous calling over the phone, which created a personal affiliation to the elite group being researched (Ostrander,1995;Thomas, 1995;Dexter,1970). The steps involved were:

1.0 Making an Entrée into the network of potential interviewees through personal links

2.0 Drawing up a list of potential interviewees

3.0 Confirmation of the appointment for an interview

#### 7.9.2 ENTRY INTO THE NETWORK OF THE POTENTIAL INTERVIEWEES:

In the case of this specific research the first ‘port of call’ was a retired IAS officer neighbour living in the same apartment as the researcher in Kolkata who had interacted with the respondent in the past. This was an extremely important source for contacts, information and understanding of the network of retired West Bengal IAS officers(Ostrander,1995). A small minute detail is mentioned below since this will highlight the approaches to elite research.

The researcher did not arrive directly at the door of the apartment but was chaperoned by a staff of the apartment maintenance who ensured that it was the right time to meet the researcher by seeking prior permission through the intercom. In every visit to the gentleman’s house who was the ‘key contact’ for the researcher in West Bengal cadre, the researcher never went on his own directly but sent a message through the maid or driver and was then accompanied to the flat. This was an important courtesy or ritual prevalent in elite formal circles of Kolkata where you don’t just arrive or for that matter telephone and then come over. Chaperoned or accompanied by was something which the researcher lost familiarity since he has not lived in his home town Kolkata for over 20 years and this came back to him since that’s how he visited certain homes in his early years.

Importantly this conveyed a sense of familiarity with the social landscape and its norms and which helped the process of research through support and candid conversations (Workman Jr., 1995).

The detailed process of interview seeking is described in a separate section on interviewing and here the focus is only on the aspects which are raised in the research literature on elite studies. Strangely the first few minutes of conversation centred around the researchers background like family, schooling, growing up neighbourhood and shared acquaintances. Soon enough it was established that the researcher and the ‘key contact’ shared a social world and some of the questions

were framed as ‘Do you remember that Member of Parliament..?’ or ‘I don’t know if you had seen that film or read that article or that columnist who had leftist leanings...?’

This created a ‘personal affiliation’(Thomas,1995) and opened up a space where the ‘key contact’ was willing to share and recommend some of his fellow retired IAS officers who would be more than happy to meet the researcher with an adequate reason being the recommendation of the researcher’s ‘key contact’ who was a respected IAS officer (Aldefer,1980; Beer,1980;Aldefer&Browm,1975; Argyris,1970). As Van Maanen notes:

‘Fieldwork usually means living with and living like those who are studied.’ At a certain stage it was necessary to be established as an ‘insider’ which draws into the notion of ‘outsider/insider’ an often explored theme in research literature on elite interviewing (Desmond,2004; Herod,1999; Sabot,1999; Becker,1995). This will be discussed later in the section on conducting interviews. This meeting served a kind of an ‘icebreaker’ where the gentleman offered a chilled glass of whisky literally ‘breaking the ice’ and the researcher is a teetotaler who refrained from this indulgence; instead settled for a cuppa Darjeeling tea yet establishing a smooth comfort zone with his first elite respondent and a key trustworthy insider contact (Hirsch,1995;Gurney,1990; Kleinman,1990;Shaffir,1990;Gurney,1990;Davis,1973).

The researcher was seeking the ‘key contact’s’ recommended list of people who would be interesting for the research and people whom he would know well (Hirsch,1995; Thomas,1995; Useem,1995; Gamson,1995). Cassell (1988) argues that the researcher of the powerful needs many of the characteristics of the social climber: ‘everyone who might possibly know someone, must be contacted and asked if they will give introductions, vouch for one, and otherwise help one’s enterprise’. In this context the researcher established such good rapport that his ‘key contact’ was revealing names on his own after some thought (Winkler, 1987). Similar technique was used along the lines of ‘reference’ and ‘introduction’ after a rapport has been established with the interviewee during the interview process. As explained in a separate chapter on the case-study contexts that there were two key respondents who introduced the researcher to other interviewees and one interviewee introduced one respondent.

At the end of that lovely evening the ‘key contact’ revealed the name of two retired IAS officers one of whom was a reputed person in literary circles for writing skills and well-known exponent of Rabindrasangeet (songs composed by Tagore based on his metaphysical poetry).

### 7.9.3 CLUB MEMBERSHIP:

This was specifically an incredible elite characteristic of the West Bengal cadre IAS officers, most of them belonged as members to this elite ‘gentleman’s club’, the Calcutta Club, which incidentally allowed independent women members recently, and the club played an important role in their lives. The club was the site of lively discussions and reminiscing of ‘good old days’ amongst the IAS officers and they met regularly on Saturdays for a lunch roundtable. An appendix is attached about the club and its history since this institution stood out as an elite symbol for this specific case-study research as compared to the Karnataka cadre. The ‘key contact’, the neighbour of the researcher in Kolkata reached for his Calcutta Club directory while recommending the names of potential respondents, i.e. retired IAS officers of West Bengal cadre, and they all happen to be members of Calcutta Club. The researcher interestingly observed that he did not reach for the IAS officers association directory which was lying next to his telephone directory. Similarly the researcher observed the other ‘key contact’ recommended respondents on the basis of Calcutta Club or other gentleman’s club membership as well, seemingly the membership of this club plays an important role in the formation of an informal network once retired from active service.

Particularly Calcutta Club is a very elitist institution with restricted membership of distinguished members of society and was founded by an Indian Bengali industrialist for the Indian gentlemanly class. The club is located in the heart of the city in a Victorian building with grandeur and charm of the Curzonic era of Raj architecture. Membership of the club attracts civil servant members in large numbers. The membership directory of these clubs was an important resource for identification of IAS officer interviewees.

### 1.0 OBSERVATION:

The ‘older guard’ IAS officers of West Bengal cadre retired for over nearly 10 years approaching the age of 70 tend to be more familial and willing to introduce fellow

retired IAS officers and expressed keen interest in the activities of the researcher. This willingness to recommend other retired IAS officers was much more forthcoming amongst this group without any askance from the researcher. In contrast the relatively freshly retired IAS officers were relatively formal without such prompt volunteering of assistance to the researcher.

## **7.10 DATA OBTAINED FROM ELITE INTERVIEWS: OBJECTIVE TRUTH**

The prevalent assumption of literature on elite interviews is that the ‘truth’ is existing and needs to be captured by the researcher and is independent of the individual influences (Kogan, 1994). The objective ‘truth’ in elite interviews have been of concern given the asymmetrical power relationship between the researcher and the respondents and the ability of the elite respondent to control the flow of information (Morris, 2009; Hirsch,1995). The focus of this specific research being the personal stories, narration of the elite group of IAS officers this concern is not that much of a problem since its not touching upon their public or official roles and decisions made but more their life-story (Hirsch,1995). Elite research which focuses on their organizational role or critique some of their decisions would be the suspects in terms of the objective nature of the information conveyed through personalized interviews (Hirsch,1995). However the researcher deployed a few methods in order to verify the auto-biographical stories and narration of the respondents to be consistent and valid.

### **7.10.1 TRIANGULATION:**

This specific research deployed the methodology of triangulation of sources of data being:

1.0 Semi-structured interviews

2.0 Participant-Observation

3.0 Textual material like journals, diaries, autobiographies, biographies, newspaper articles

Particularly helpful in the case of West Bengal cadre was the availability of plethora of literary texts scribed by both the IAS officers and ICS officers. In fact there is a long tradition of writing one’s district experiences in the form of a ‘District Diary’

or 'District Journal'. Many of these civil service officers went on to write memoirs after retirement with strong focus on personal reflections, experiences and less of political matters. Multiple methodological approach is the often recommended approach in elite studies given the complexity of capturing the information about the reality (Hunter,1993; Moyser &Wagstaffe, 1987; Brewer &Hunter, 1989).

In this section on the elites, the researcher wishes to mention a peculiar trend of naming the books written by IAS officers as 'A civil servant remembers' or ' The long road to a civil servant's office' or 'Recollections of an uncivil servant' which all indicate the narcissistic nature of narration which only affirming the self-perception of an elite role of the IAS officers in the Indian context. Rarely one can find a book written on civil service without the personal-centric focus. Interestingly most of the biographical accounts and memoirs have been written by IAS officers belonging to the Presidency cadres. For this specific research this was enormously helpful from an elite research perspective since the stories about the 'Self' were all there to be read and interpreted and provided an excellent source of information. With regards to participant-observation there were tacit codes and insider anecdotes which the researcher being familiar could utilize as validation for the information provided.

According to the researcher this insider perspective offered insights which facilitated gathering and verification of information. With respect to elite research the researcher identified the need to have a grasp of the scenario in which the elite groups, IAS officers lived and operated and the recurring themes like food shortage of the 70s or the IT revolution of the early 90s at the onset of this research.

#### 7.10.2 DISCUSSION GROUPS – INTRA-ELITE CONVERSATIONS:

In the sylvan surroundings of Calcutta Club or the genteel ambiance of the iconic confectionary café Flury's in the heart of Kolkata the researcher observed conversations between IAS officers. The researcher generated a discussion group mildly without a loud declaration of any research purpose but more as a curious individual. Given the nature of IAS officers and their penchant for reminiscences about the 'good old days' it wasn't too difficult to spark off a conversation about their life-long learning and experiences. The researcher wishes to affirm that the

information obtained broadly were in line with the personalized face-to-face interviews and the names of 'icons' offered a great 'clue' or 'lead' to the researcher which kept coming up in conversations.

The researcher has been a party to few such intra-elite conversations and this familiarized him with the anecdotes and jokes which circulated amongst them and were great 'clues' to posing questions while conducting the interviews.

As one respondent from West Bengal cadre mentioned that there were some legendary officers who 'entered their pantheon of model IAS officers' and would be worth mentioning there were no dearth of ICS officers in this pantheon. Here again humorously they fondly recollected the very stern and strict senior IAS officers in their early years of service, who were more paternal guardians than professional bosses. The researcher wondered if they were so fond of them while serving these very strict IAS officers or this is more a romantic nostalgia of the seniors who shaped them!!

In context of elite research this is relevant with respect to the notions of 'apprenticeship' concerning professional life; the appreciation of being treated in a tough manner which shaped them for later challenges, this can be treated as a characteristic of elite training as well, not just kind-hearted seniors but ones who instilled sense of duty and discipline.

These conversations were informal and spontaneous in terms of generating interesting data for the research. This information provides tremendous advantage for the researcher since there was no intervention (Herzog, 1995).

### 7.10.3 CONSTRUCTIVIST MODE – RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY:

The research is of a constructivist, interpretive philosophy with its meaning underpinned in 'situated knowledge' (Haraway, 1989). In this philosophy individuals are guided by subjective meaning which is derived from interaction with the social world through the agency, which is the active conscious interactions of the self with the external world (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Grix, 2002; Bryman, 2001; Lewis, 1990). This subjective meaning is being constantly revised through social interactions (Morris, 2009; Bryman, 2001). This particular research draws from this

concept that the social phenomena being studied is produced through social interaction and that there is no 'one' objective truth which is being sought through research. In elite research the concern is expressed about capturing the 'objective truth' through research and the possible shortcomings (Morris, 2009). Strategy of the research is interpretive with its focus on capturing the particularity and is the 'vantage point' for analyzing the social phenomena which is under investigation. The research inquiry is a conversation between the researcher with his theoretical construct and the 'situated knowledge' of the respondents, i.e. the IAS officers (Haraway, 1989; Rosaldo, 1989).

This research captures and records the meaning as defined by the actors, in this case the respondents, the way they interpret their world and hence the sense making is what the researched makes (Sarantakos, 2005). Hence this research does not search for any 'universal' meaning independent of the actors, respondents claiming finally that what is 'true' about the social world for the people researched (Sarantakos, 2005; Gusterson, 1995). Here one is studying the formation of informal networks, CoPs which are formed amongst IAS officers during the course of their career and how it facilitates lifelong learning and innovation. The research does not intend to offer any external perspective or conclusions regarding the 'truth' of formation of CoPs independent of the narratives of the IAS officers and verify in a logical manner their interpretation of the social reality. The 'objective truth' is what the respondents depicted as their 'objective truth'.

The entire focus of the research has been to capture, record and interpret this social reality with high degree of accuracy and detail, no minutiae however trivial has been overlooked in this research. As far as elite research 'pitfall' is concerned research strategy and methodology has strived to attend to this process of capturing detail about the social world of IAS officers. In the case of the West Bengal cadre retired IAS officers this has been smoothed by the fact that the researcher hails from the region and their shared social reality with that of the researcher.

#### **7.11 RELIABILITY OF THE DATA – ELITE INTERVIEWS:**

Current elite research literature expresses concerns about the reliability of the data even when the respondents are honest given the asymmetrical power relationship

between the respondent and the researcher (Bygnes, 2008; Leech,2002) and the ability of the respondents to control the process and agenda of the interview through their power (Lilleker, 2003; Woliver, 2002; Leech,2002;Ostrander,1995). Some of the related issues in this research has been discussed below with regards to taking charge of the interview and persuading the respondents to speak, which has not been a problem in both the cadres, IAS officers tend to be articulate given their experience with media and the general public.

Interestingly this particular research indicated that in an elite research setting like that of the IAS officers, particularly those belonging to the West Bengal cadre, the concerns about power relationship between the interviewee and the interviewer need not influence the outcome or the process. The shared social world, shared language, shared interests and a good tactical strategy helped to mitigate the effects of the unequal power distribution. Shared social world played a very important role in facilitating the interactions which went beyond the restricted interview and sometimes extended to social meetings and interactions. There is a separate section in the chapter on methodology which discusses the potential influence of the researcher on the research process owing to his 'insider status' and the factors which created 'a safe distance' between the researcher and the researched ensuring reliability of the data. One of the mechanisms adopted by the researcher was to validate the preliminary findings or the broad conclusions which were becoming evident with the respondents at the end of each interview, and this was done mostly over the telephone (Lilleker,2003; Woliver,2002; Sabot,1999).

## **7.12 SETTING UP OF THE RESEARCH – FRAMING THE RESEARCH QUESTION:**

The question often raised in research literature on elites is the divergence of the intellectual and conceptual worlds of the researcher and the researched, which in most cases of elite research rarely meets at a common point (Gamson, 1995; Hirsch,1995). The examples of studying business elites and entertainment elites are prime instances where the interviewees perceive with suspicion and scepticism the world of social sciences researchers and in many cases are treated as competitors in public space (Gamson, 1995; Hirsch, 1995; Thomas, 1995). In an instance of research on business elites (Hirsch, 1995) the researchers often are perceived to be people of abstractions which the dynamic corporate leaders performing and living in

a world of action have little relevance. This divergence of intellectual worlds will tremendously influence the shared language and discourse which in turn will affect the interview process.

In this specific research this was not the case and quite contrary to this perception the IAS officers across the board were well-versed with social sciences research on elites and management theories of learning and innovation. To the utmost surprise of the researcher the potential interviewees read the twin page brief on the research goals and objectives carefully and defined the interview objective in very relevant terms for the researcher. An instance is where one of the West Bengal cadre IAS officers introduced the researcher to his recommended IAS officer for an interview appointment with the phrase ‘Mr. Bhattacharyya is studying collective learning and innovation in groups..’ As a matter of fact one particular IAS officer in the West Bengal cadre was so excited about the term Communities of Practice that he immediately concluded that ‘IAS is indeed a Community of Practice’. Many of the respondents in West Bengal cadre have attended courses in Harvard, Cambridge and Oxford and were familiar with the modern lexicon of management theories. Some of the respondents in both West Bengal cadre have pursued doctoral programs while being in their jobs and evinced a keen interest in discussing social science and management theories.

### **7.13 FIELD OBSERVATION- ‘TALES FROM THE PLAIN’:**

The researcher observed that the younger crop of IAS officers tend to be more focussed on topic pertaining to their educational background while the older guard (retired or close to retirement which would make them 58 years) shared a much wider interest and had an inherent respect for academics and scholars. In the introductory conversations the older guard usually mentioned their ‘academic friend’ at Berkeley or that in their youth they aspired to be professor and then joined the civil services as an unplanned move. There is a dire need to project the image of an ‘intellectual-scholar’ amongst this generation of IAS officers, defined as post-independence urban English-speaking bourgeoisies across all the cadres.

### **7.14 BRIEF –PRIOR TO INTERVIEW:**

After the respondent was contacted over the phone and the reference was introduced along with the researcher. The researcher took care to be precise about the affiliated

institution, location of the researcher, time proposed and the purpose of the interview being a doctoral research. In West Bengal cadre most of the respondents invited the researcher to a 'members club' for an appointment or in two cases at a café located in the heart of Kolkata. The researcher usually gave a written note for some who demanded preliminary information and in most cases a 3-slide power-point with clear succinct research questions and objectives.

Here the research questions were framed in an autobiographical manner of a curious researcher wishing to capture their life's story. The questions of the research and not the interview questions were framed to entice an interest in the retired IAS officers of the West Bengal cadre to share their life-story, their experiences and the interesting anecdotes. Important to note that the researcher did not apply the suggested technique of explaining or elaborating a broader value or relevance of their interview in the management research (Yeagar & Kram, 1995). Again the research questions were framed in contradiction to the recommended method in research literature on elites research methodology to offer some gains or value for the respondents (Yeager & Kram, 1995; Herzog, 1995; Coxon, Davies & Jones, 1968). It is thought that research is a two-way process where the interviewee or the respondent sense some value or gain and offer their time and resources.

Here the proposition was simple and candid in case of West Bengal cadre IAS officers; 'I wish to hear your fascinating stories of being an IAS officer over the last three to four decades and intend to capture them'.

### **7.15 SHARED WORLD BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND THE RESEARCHED:**

As explained in the earlier chapters on research techniques and methodology the researcher shared a similar social world with the researched, i.e. the IAS officers of West Bengal cadre.

Most of the respondents shared some of these characteristics:

#### **1.0 SHARED LOCAL LANGUAGE – 'POETIC BENGALI:'**

In the tradition of the ICS dating back to the British Raj all IAS officers are required to learn the local language of the cadre, the region to where they are posted within

India. All the interviewed respondents spoke Bengali, the language of the region of West Bengal and most of them were ethnically from that region as well. In case of West Bengal the language plays an important role and even a sentimental one given the long tradition of literature, music and poetry with Rabindranath Tagore, the first non-Western nobel laureate in 1913 being one of its renowned icons. This knowledge of the local language enabled the researcher to understand some of the typical local expressions, for instance one of the interviewees referred to his first district posting as his 'first love' in a very typical Bengali poetic expression which implies no love will be the same as the first love replete with its charm and adventure. These expressions cannot be easily translated and interestingly only in West Bengal cadre the respondents slipped into Bengali during an all-English interview. Significantly these expressions are not colloquial Bengali and can only be found in the discourse of the cultivated Bengali elite. This expression holds tremendous relevance for the key conclusion of this particular research that district posting is one of the most active, enriched period in the IAS officers career in terms of learning and innovation and is the site of existence of the most vibrant CoPs. How can the researcher ignore the serious metaphor of 'first love' as district years in formulating the conclusions?? Here one can conclude this research demonstrates that in elite research there is a finer and subtler aspect language which needs to be deciphered by the researcher and considered while writing the results (Ostrander, 1995).

## 2.0 ANGLOPHILIA

There is a peculiar love of things English visible amongst the urban middle-class post-independence generation of Indians, since all of the respondents of the West Bengal cadre were born before 1947. Aptly termed by Salman Rushdie as 'midnight's children' this generation had a certain intellectual and mental outlook which was inspired by the role models of earlier generation of Indian leaders who were products of a classical English education like the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, named as the 'Nehruvian generation'. The influence of English language and literature in its European form shaped their reading and knowledge of English language, those post-independence years did not witness the blossoming of post-colonial literature emerging from non-European sources. Significantly these 'midnight's children' generation negotiated with vestiges of Britishness and the

English language in their own terms as citizens of an independent India without any super-structure setting the norms and standards. An entry into the IAS in the early 70s required a good grasp of English language and most of the entrants till early 70s were drawn from this section of English-speaking urban professional class who attended Anglicized colleges like St. Stephens, Madras Christian College; it was said that ‘the number of IAS officers selected from St. Stephens College could fill two cricket teams’ (Swapan Dasgupta,2011). The researcher can safely conclude that the dominant culture of the IAS was that of a typical Anglophile urban Indian hailing from a professional class.

Another IAS officer from West Bengal cadre mentioned, “Our role model civil servants for the first 20 years after independence were the British-style ICS officers and in my first posting in a district I looked for the notes to successor from the last ICS officer to have served that district.” This is epitomized by the novel ‘English August’ by an IAS officer, Upamanyu Chatterjee caricaturing the urban English-educated IAS officer dislocated in a rural district, which happens to be a brilliant work of fiction on IAS officers. The researcher though born a good quarter century after the independence shares some of these peculiarities of this generation in terms of reading Wodehouse, adoring the ICS pukka-sahib role-model and an ironic sense of humour and wit.

All the necessary support and encouragement at both stages of the research for the researcher emanated from the ‘English-speaking’ ‘midnight’s children’ generation of IAS officers.

There was no need for any censorship typical in elite research since there was no need for future access and it was meant solely for the doctoral dissertation (Fitz & Halpin, 1994; Kogan, 1994; Lilleker,2003; Ostrander, 1995; Phillips, 1998; Sabot, 1999; Walford, 1994). From an elite research perspective, this is an important dimension of this particular research; the shared world of the researcher and the researched and a deeper understanding of the jokes, anecdotes and language despite a generation gap. The point worthy of mentioning here is that the researcher attended an Anglo-Indian school where the first language of instruction is English and IAS was looked upon as a decent career with some of the interviewees being Chief Guests at the school function.

### **7.15.1 SHARED WORLD RELATIONSHIP – INFLUENCING THE INTERVIEW:**

This shared repertoire of discourse and shared social world was true across both the cadres where the researcher conducted his research study which mitigated the issue of relative lack of power in elite research interviews (Bygnes, 2008; Leech, 2002). Superior positioning of the elites, i.e. IAS officers were not evident or made clear by the respondents during the process of interview and the relationship with the researcher was contrarily pleasant where they made efforts to make the researcher feel comfortable in their presence. It is abundantly clear that the shared social world between the respondent and the researcher made the interview process smoother since the interviewer was comfortable and felt at ease with regards to the interview subject and the setting (Kleinman, 1990; Shaffir, 1990; Gurney, 1990; Davis, 1973). The sharing of insider jokes and anecdotes and references to familiar works of fiction and films which in a way created a ‘sporting event’ between the elite interviewee and the interviewer where both sides tossed shared anecdotes and wit to establish the rapport (Ball, 1994a).

Hence this issue of relative lack of power did not influence the interview process once the permission for interview had been granted. The research literature on elite interviewing mentions that access is likely to be granted when the interviewer is seemed to be non-threatening and harmless (Gewirtz & Oga, 1994).

### **7.16 CONDUCTING THE ELITE INTERVIEWS:**

This section explores the conducting of elite interviews and the related issues and ‘pitfalls’ in securing the data and information from the respondents for this particular research. Some of the factors which typically influence conducting of elite interviews as derived from the research literature on elites interview are described below.

#### **7.16.1 INFLUENCE OF THE RESEARCHER:**

In qualitative research the question of researcher influencing the study is accepted and the modes and mechanisms of researcher influencing the study is what is often expected to be explored and explained (Pierce, 1995; Kleinman & Copp, 1994). The notion of researcher influencing the study is more relevant in elites research with the

asymmetrical power relationship, vulnerability of the researcher to be overwhelmed and the feeling of awe and charisma in their presence after securing an access rather with much effort and the high social status associated with the interviewer vis-à-vis the researcher (Thomas, 1995; Adler & Adler, 1990, Punch, 1986; Warren, 1988). Here the researcher explores some of the factors which can be ascribed as the influence of the researcher and the methods of mitigation to capture the necessary and accurate data.

#### 7.16.2 CHARISMA – INFLUENCE OF THE RESEARCHER ON THE INTERVIEW PROCESS:

The researcher was mesmerized by the charisma and held the respondents, IAS officers of West Bengal cadre in high esteem and were charmed by their articulation, language and manners (Thomas, 1995). These would have created a ‘halo effect’ (Thomas, 1995) which would have influenced the interview process without the researcher realizing it and affecting the data collection. As explained in earlier sections of this chapter the researcher held IAS officers in high esteem prior to embarking on the research and hence was cautious about being their ‘mouthpiece’. The location and the setting of the elite interviews can be daunting and distract the interviewers along with the sheer honour of being granted one (Thomas, 1995). The setting of the interviews were mostly the members-only clubs or what used to be ‘Gentleman’s club’ and the ambiance can be daunting with vintage teak furniture, liveried waiters and bearers, oak-panelled windows and doors, well-groomed guests sipping their drinks in comfortable long chairs, an aesthetics from a bygone era and one can get surely ‘carried away’.

Being aware of the influencing factors of personal affinity, charisma and the location the researcher ensured the following controls on the interview process:

- 1.0 The researcher ensured that any such ‘losing track’ because of the locational distractions did not happen by carrying the paraphernalia of tape-recorders, cassettes and writing pads, notes and writing instruments which alerted attention. Besides the researcher was familiar with these surroundings and have visited some of these clubs in the past and was familiar with the décor.

2.0 The researcher carried a laptop or printed powerpoint slides with the research goals and objectives and the information which needs to be captured during the interview process. This placed focus on the researcher's purpose of the meeting and the interaction.

All these documents were kind of a checklist of the issues to be covered for the interview with all the salient mentioned points to be covered during the meeting which has been recommended for elite interviews as a guard against distractions (Zuckerman, 1972).

3.0 Methodologically as described earlier the research deployed triangulation techniques where the interview data was buttressed by the documents of district diaries, biographies, memoirs, media articles and media interviews. These documents surely helped to ascertain whether there existed a CoP and an 'apprentice' LPP model of induction of young recruits into the core of IAS.

In the context of the 'mesmerizing effect' of the charisma and articulation the researcher wishes to mention that this factor on several occasions facilitated the exchange of their life-stories and biographies. The researcher is aware that some of the respondents were inflating their claims to achievements in the district years exaggerating their contribution to public administration (Berry, 2002) and speaking about their selective impressions about the charismatic seniors IAS, district life, training period and some of the ICS officers they encountered (Lilleker, 2003; Berry, 2002; Richards, 1996). This factor and its influence on the research interview is context-dependent, but given the nature of this specific research this had limited impact. The inquiry was not to evaluate the authenticity of their achievements and accomplishments but to the extent they were steered by CoPs, i.e. informal networks of learning and innovation and the extent to which this was a process of 'apprenticeship' where the seniors shared stories with their young recruits about performing the tasks.

To the extent of capturing the mechanisms, which is CoP-facilitated learning, i.e. Situated Learning in this context, the exaggerated version of their life's achievements did not affect the data collected from the interview process. The 'charisma' effect would surely have influenced if the research inquiry critiqued their

public policy decisions and role as civil servants in society. It is noteworthy to mention the role of IAS officers in their district postings have come in for criticism from political and civil society quarters as being 'colonial' and 'patriarchal' which fuelled the movement towards devolution of powers to the elected village assemblies. In case if this research was about their performance at the district level or their democratic spirit of rule then surely the 'charisma' factor would have played a major role.

### 7.16.3 POSING QUESTIONS – SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS:

The nature of the interviews were non-intensive, semi-structured, flexible open-ended (Thomas, 1995, Yeager & Kram, 1995). All the responses were all recorded by a tape-recorder. Semi-structured interviews are an effective approach to fieldwork (Schein, 1990) and more so when seeking meaning (Morris, 2009; Lilleker, 2003; Richards, 1996). The semi-structured interview method offers the interviewer or the researcher power to steer the direction of the research in elite settings (Thomas, 1995, Hirsch, 1995). A consensus has emerged about the preference for a semi-structured format for interview questions in conducting elite research interviews (Sarantakos, 2005; Thomas, 1995; Hirsch, 1995; Aldridge, 1995; Herzog, 1995). Apart from offering control to the researcher a semi-structured question interview allows the respondents the open space to express their reflections, personal experiences without direct intervention but only gentle lead from the interviewer (Aldridge, 1995; Oakley, 1981; Maines, 1993). In case of elite biographical research the semi-structured question interviews facilitated the recording of the self-narration and interpretation of the world (Maines, 1993; Oakley, 1981). This research being exploratory in nature about the biographical narratives of the elites this method has been deemed appropriate in capturing the life-stories.

Along with the semi-structured interview questions an alert and active participant observation by the researcher was deployed to capture all the tacit messages and subtle clues which enabled the researcher to enter the social world of the subject being researched (Workman Jr., 1995). As the interview proceeded, the researcher was alert towards 'clues' which were interesting and would be framing probing questions around them, particularly the interesting anecdotes and stories.

The tape recorder was permitted in all the 12 elicited interviews which indicated that elites would be open to being recorded when the topics are not sensitive.

#### 7.16.4 COUNTERING RETICENCE:

In case of reticent interviewees or respondents the semi-structured open nature of the interview questions allowed the interviewer to strike an interesting conversation prior to posing the desired questions. Reticence or ‘plunging into silence’ is an issue of concern with regards to conducting interviews in general (Morris, 2009) and the tactics the researcher had to resort to ‘break the silence’ and get the respondent to speak (Richards, 1996; Dexter, 1970). In the experience of the researcher early on during the interview process of the research there were few key words which were identified as ‘triggers’ for conversations. ‘Triggers’ proved to be effective in resuming the interview and breaking the silence, they also revealed some important facets of the CoP-formation amongst the IAS officers.

Some of these ‘triggers’ are listed below:

- District Years
- Early years of posting
- First District Posting
- Mussoorie Academy Days
- Your most impressionable senior
- Your most inspiring senior
- Any mentors in the IAS service
- Role-Models in the IAS
- ICS officers if any you remember (applicable to the early years of IAS in post-independence India since the ICS officers started to retire in the late 1960s or early 1970s).

The question would be typically ‘Tell me something about your early years of posting?’ or ‘What are your memories of first posting and how did you learn in the job?’

The researcher recollects an anecdote with one particular interviewee in the West Bengal cadre who felt having reached the end of the story when the researcher posed the question, 'Do you have any memories of the ICS?' and even before the question was completed he reached for the tape-recorder nodding his head vigorously and then narrating the tradition of handing over charge in the district from the senior to the junior, with remarks being made in the report.

#### 7.16.5 CONTROL OF THE INTERVIEW PROCESS – AGENDA SETTING:

The question of control of the interview process is of paramount concern in elite research given the ability of the respondents to steer the conversation in their desired direction owing to their powerful position, termed here as agenda setting (Bygnes,2008; Burnham et al.,2004; Lilleker, 2003; Leech, 2002; Wolliver, 2002;Thomas, 1995; Pollitt et al.,1990). There is a tendency on part of the elites to deflect questions, shut down questions (Ball,1995) which can derail the interview process.

Here the researcher had a check-list drawn about the issues to be covered and the topics to be raised. In all cases the researcher ensured the interview process did not end without the questions being answered and was alert to the tendency of deflecting or shutting down questions. Tactic adopted by the researcher in this regard was to come back to the deflected question with a style of inquisitive inquiry, 'I am just trying to understand....sorry if I may repeat this question..' or 'Can we just explore the earlier question about...?' which were effective in eliciting responses.

The researcher was strict about the time-limit for a successful interview being minimum 45minutes and ensured that all of the West Bengal cadre IAS officers spoke for about minimum 45 minutes but fortunately the time limit exceeded in all the cases. The issue of time allotted was strictly observed during these research interviews as some of the respondents would attempt to shorten the duration or get exhausted. In similar situations the researcher would adopt the tactic of seeking another appointment for the allotted time, usually with a phrase, 'Your story is really fascinating and would be a pity if I can't capture for my research...'. In most cases the researcher observed there was a penchant to tell their own life-story and in many cases of the West Bengal cadre IAS officers the tendency was to reveal a lot more

about the confidential political intrigues and some of the interviewees relished in such revelations. In a way this placed them on a pedestal with access to the intrigues of the mystical world of power politics.

The possibility of indulgent talking about their lives and the past, more of well-performed soliloquies is something to be accounted for in elite interviews (Ostrander, 1995). It is recommended in research literature on elite interviews that the researcher should structure and steer the conversation in such a way that enables them to capture the data relevant to the research (Ostrander, 1995). Although this characteristic is not totally without merit when conducting interviews on life-histories and the researcher accounted for it (Ostrander, 1995).

The researcher detected this trait in the first couple of interviews and devised a mechanism to bring back the respondent to focus. Whenever the respondents were lost in their nostalgia of ‘those were the days...’ the interviewer after offering an apology for interruption would pick up an earlier thread and restore the conversation on the right track. An instance would be when one of the IAS officers would plunge into redolence about the dashing nature of his first superior who happens to be an alma-mater of his college the interviewer would interrupt with a question as framed: ‘That sounds great but just as earlier you were talking about the menace of high absenteeism in the rural office, did your senior offered you any advise in this regard..’

It is important to note that the researcher is not influencing the interview outcome here but only picking up an earlier thread about a challenge which the respondent faced as a district commissioner and how this senior would have helped. The researcher was looking for a ‘story’ which was shared by this senior to the respondent being interviewed enabling him to address the issue.

At the end of all interviews the researcher went through his checklist to ensure all the necessary points were covered in the process (Zuckerman, 1972).

#### 7.16.6 STYLE OF QUESTIONING:

The approach of questioning the respondents, elites in particular received detailed attention with respect to the most effective styles for securing the required data from

interviews (Hertz & Imber, 1995). It has been argued that interviews with the powerful are more complex than most other kind of respondents. Some have recommended a confrontational style and approach which will challenge the interviewees to speak and have expressed concern that a 'bonhomie' or a good rapport might not elicit the requisite data in elite interviews (Mickelson, 1994).

However the researcher adopted a more curious or inquisitorial style (Priyadarshini, 2003) with respect to style of questioning. The researcher felt that results were good and the respondents were forthcoming to share their stories without any adversarial tone.

Some of the possible explanations might be as concluded from this research:

- 1.0 A certain age difference between the researcher and the respondents which created a familial atmosphere with feelings of elderly affection rather typical in the Indian context, where age commands a certain respect.
- 2.0 The interviewer shared the same 'social world' and did not feel antagonistic towards their privileged position in society. It is important to mention this since a lot of the past experience of the respondents have been with researchers who were questioning them from an anti-establishment perspective, where they were being held accountable for their privileged position. As a matter of fact all the respondents admitted that this was the first interview by a researcher which was exploring their life's stories and biographical narratives. Many of the respondents in West Bengal cadre were pleasantly surprised that the researcher being of the younger generation was interested in the vignettes and anecdotes of an IAS officer when rest of the Indian society have no time for such incomprehensible eccentricities!!
- 3.0 The researcher did his homework in terms of reading the text, familiarizing with the IAS officers roles and responsibilities and their life-stories from textual material prior to conducting the interview. This enabled the researcher drawing from his preliminary-study experience as well to pose questions which might be uncomfortable but couched it in polite terms starting with the phrase 'If I may be

curious...’. This preparatory groundwork has been known to be effective facilitator for the interview process (Phillips, 1998; Hunter, 1993).

4.0 The generation of IAS officers of the West Bengal cadre interviewed had this style of self-deprecating humour and wit which cast them people who never took himself or herself too seriously. It might be worthwhile to quote a few of the statements from some of the West Bengal respondents:

“Are you doing this research for amusement to speak these tottering old men?”

“You should maybe pick up a less stressful research topic...”

“I don’t know how much we have learnt since our lives are just a celebration of mediocrity...”

On one occasion the researcher mentioned his earlier engagement in the world of business working on washing machines and one of the respondent commented:

“When are you going to design a machine which can wash the civil servants and their dirty linen...”

This characteristic was evident in some of the ‘midnight’s children’ generation of IAS officers in the West Bengal cadre. One of the respondents of the West Bengal cadre IAS on hearing that the researcher had interests in penning poetry in his youth commented:

“I hope now after your research you will not be writing poems on prosaic topics like IAS officers...”

According to the researcher this characteristic lightened the ambiance of interviews and one did not have to struggle hard to get them speaking about uncomfortable topics since they were not such somber serious individuals. This might be a concluding factor for elite research interviews where the elites possess a sense of wit and humour and do not project a serious somber image and the interview process need not be highly confrontational.

### **7.17 CHAPTER SUMMARY:**

This chapter is the capturing and description of the manifestation of the ‘surprise’ element of this particular research. The research study did not intend to study IAS officers as an elite group but during the conducting of the case-study on West Bengal IAS cadre there were clear traces of an elite group being studied and this needed to be incorporated into the doctoral thesis. Hence this chapter is a later addition to the other chapters which followed sequentially with the research process methodological flow. Important to state that the primary factor which determined the elite status and character of the West Bengal IAS cadre is the fact that West Bengal historically belonged to ‘Presidency’ cadre where there was direct rule by ICS officers, and hence existed a strong continuity of legacies and traditions of the ICS in the current IAS. This residual legacy and tradition of the ICS is what imparts the IAS of West Bengal cadre its elite character. As the chapter discusses and elaborates primarily the methodological issues pertaining to the conducting of elite research. The discussion ensures that the researcher adopted adequate safeguards and measures to ensure the accuracy and validity of the data collected as part of the elite research.

## **8.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS – SITUATED LEARNING IN WEST BENGAL CADRE IAS:**

### **8.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION:**

This chapter presents the findings of the case-study conducted on the West Bengal cadre IAS officers to locate, identify, record and capture CoP-facilitated mechanisms of learning, i.e. Situated Learning amongst the IAS officers. In the first few sections the methodology of case-analysis based on the conceptual framework is discussed and described.

In the following sections the findings as interpreted and disseminated by Thematic Analysis is presented. The expected categories and themes are contextualized based on the interview data, i.e. the transcripts and subsequent interpretations drawn based on the transcripts. There is a separate section to discuss the new emergent categories as evident from the interview data and discussed through analysis of the new themes and categories as relevant to Situated Learning. This chapter is about CoP-facilitated learning i.e. Situated Learning case-study conducted on West Bengal cadre IAS officers.

### **8.2 INVESTIGATIONS OF THE CASE-STUDIES:**

#### **8.2.1 ANALYSIS OF CASE-STUDIES:**

The analysis of the findings of the case-studies places them in the context vis-à-vis the research question. Case study analysis has been known to be the most difficult stage of case-studies and inexperienced investigators are prone to troublesome journey (Yin, 1994). Analysis of case-studies is still a developing field of study methodology and is not yet fully grown as evident from the current literature. This made the researcher adopt a cautious stance with regards to conducting the thorough analysis of both the cases. The researcher is aware of the challenges of interpretation in an explanatory case-study like this one which is not assisted by the existence of robust models.

#### **8.2.2 FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS OF CASE-STUDIES:**

According to Yin(1994), “ Data analysis consists of examining, categorising or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of a study”.

This statement was rigorously followed by the researcher to compare the evidence from interview data where the initial proposition was about CoPs emerging as vehicles of learning and innovation within the organizational structures of West Bengal cadre IAS officers.

Most importantly the initial proposition of LPP on which the case-study is based is that the newcomer to the CoP, who starts as an outsider the fresh recruit IAS officer is drawn into the core from the periphery through sharing of stories and narratives from oldtimers and senior IAS officers. The researcher was vigilant about this while studying the West Bengal cadre IAS officers where the focus was on CoP-driven learning, i.e. Situated Learning. LPP-model of CoP-formation is the template against which the data from West Bengal cadre was constantly compared and contrasted.

According to Stake(1995), 'In my analysis I do not seek to describe the word or even to describe fully the case. I seek to make sense of certain observations of the case. I recognize that the way I do it is not the 'right way'. Each researcher needs through experience and reflection, to find the forms of analysis that work for him or her'. This was very important process for the researcher to engage in reflection about the forms of analysis since the elite research dimensions were going to be considered. Sense-making of the data collected was important, this being an elite-research where the social world and reality played a significant role.

### 8.2.3 TECHNIQUES OF ANALYSIS OF CASE-STUDIES:

Miles and Huberman(1994) suggest some of the methods to be used include using arrays to display the data, the creation of data displays, tabulating the frequency of events and ordering the information. This particular research did not deploy any computer methodology of using qualitative software.

Some of the proposed methods of analysis which are conventional and widely-used are Yin (1994):

- Pattern matching
- Explanation-building or Case-focused analysis (to construct a story of a specific case)
- Time-series analysis

Considering the explanatory nature of the case-study research the technique adopted for case-analysis was Explanation-building or Case-focused analysis. This along with the accent on story-telling and narratives as research methodological tools provided a good context for constructing the story of the specific case.

#### 8.2.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE CASE-ANALYSIS:

The case-study analysis will attempt to achieve four objectives:

- to capture the most significant aspects of the case-studies.
- using of the data-evidence and demonstration of that in the results.
- to make explicit that the ‘shared social world’ of the researcher has been adequately leveraged in the study.
- ensuring influence and the knowledge of the researcher in conducting the case-study.

#### 8.2.5 METHOD OF CASE-ANALYSIS:

The concrete steps followed by the researcher in the Case-Analysis were based on Miles and Huberman (1994), who emphasized the data-reduction as the first step.

Data Reduction(Miles & Huberman, 1994) have the following steps:

- Selecting
- Focusing
- Simplifying
- Abstracting
- Transforming transcriptions of field notes and documentary data

This approach attempts to sort the evidence collected from the field in order, or rather structuring of the field evidence or data prior to the commencement of the actual analysis (Yin, 1994). These research case-studies were designed to bring out the details from the life-stories, biographical narratives of the key respondents using multiple sources of data which includes:

- semi-structured interviews
- journals
- district diaries
- biographies
- personal narratives as interviews in media

- autobiographies

After the data had been identified and grouped within each case-study, a more focused process began in order to isolate emerging patterns and themes, placing them against the template of the theoretical framework constructed at the onset of the study.

#### 8.2.5.1 Considerations in Case-Analysis:

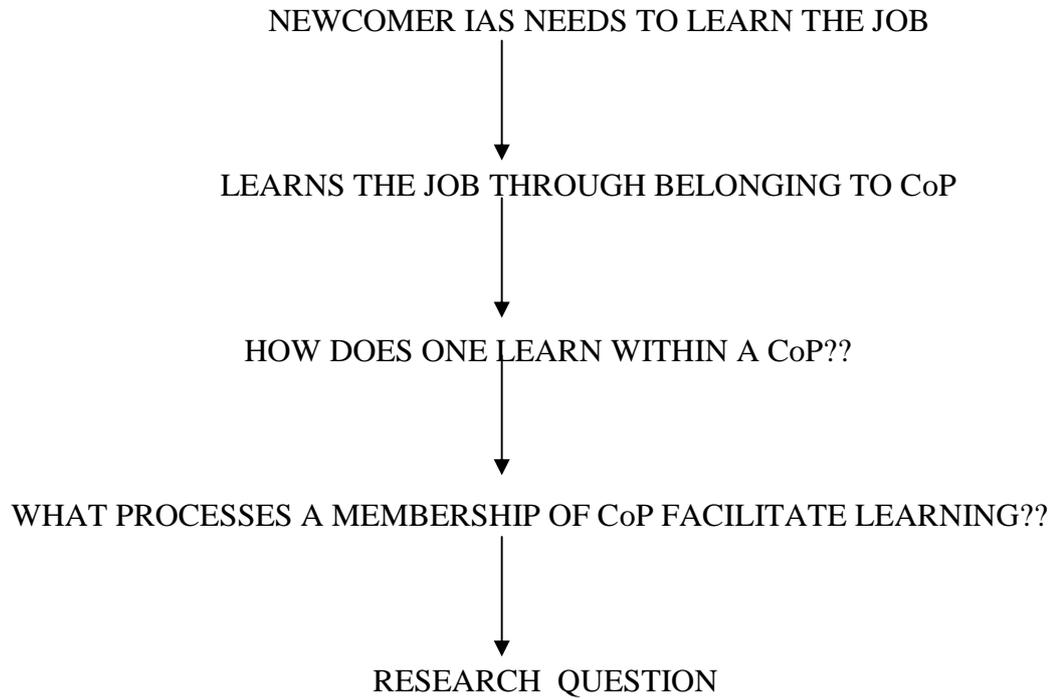
The two cases were separately analyzed and a cross-case analysis was conducted to ascertain the similarities and contrasts in terms of CoP-formation. In case of differences in CoP-driven processes and the results achieved through the CoPs in terms of practices like learning and innovation. The cross-case analysis was conducted to deepen understanding and explanation (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Individual cases were compared and contrasted with all the sources of evidence being reviewed and analyzed, the case-study findings were based on the convergence of the information from different sources.

### **8.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR CASE-ANALYSIS:**

The case analysis of the West Bengal cadre focused on the dimension of CoP-driven learning. LPP-model of CoP-formation is the template against which the data from West Bengal cadre was constantly compared and contrasted. This data here was primarily drawn from the interview transcripts of the 12 IAS officers. The researcher intended to compare the evidence from interview data where the initial proposition was about CoPs emerging as vehicles of learning and innovation within organizational structures of West Bengal cadre IAS officers in informal mechanisms. Most importantly the initial proposition of CoP-based learning which is about the newcomer, who starts as an outsider is drawn into the core from the periphery through sharing of stories and narratives from old-timers and seniors, and an active participation which confers on them legitimacy through a process of apprenticeship has been investigated empirically. Here it would be prudent to define learning as the process of absorption and building of capability to perform tasks and duties, and the research theoretical framework proposes this process happens through the membership and belonging to CoPs.

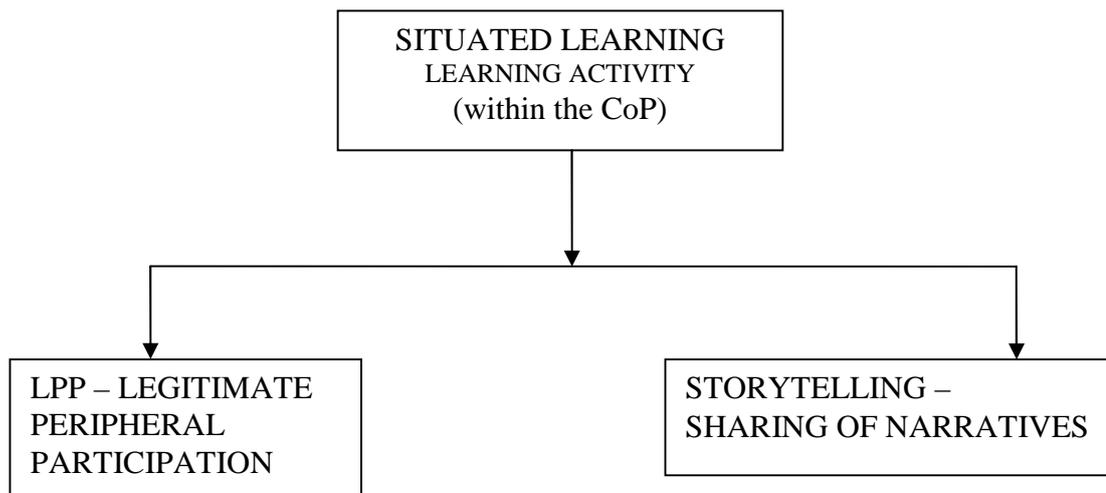
This case-study on West Bengal cadre of IAS officers investigates the processes of learning which happens through belonging to a CoP.



**Figure 11 – Model of Learning of an IAS officer – source: developed by the researcher**

The research did not progress with the question of how does one learn in an a priori fashion but more tuned towards the processes involved in the learning within a CoP. The theoretical framework of LPP (Lave&Wenger;1991) served as the guiding template for conducting the research.

SITUATED LEARNING:



The processes of learning within the CoP have been identified in the theoretical literature as SITUATED LEARNING, which is basically learning that is located and rooted in a social reality. LPP, “legitimate peripheral participation” provides a framework for understanding learning and how newcomers earn and learn their way into a CoP. According to this framework, learning is an active and contextual social practice where the meaning is constantly negotiated between the learner and the external world involving social relations between the individuals.

This concept has been elaborated in earlier chapters with regards to the theoretical dimensions.

Here the researcher felt appropriate to sketch an outline to set the tone for analysis of the interview data. In the proposal for case-analysis the researcher succinctly identified the twin processes of CoP- based learning namely:

- LPP- Legitimate Peripheral Participation
- Storytelling – sharing of narratives
- 

Though storytelling is often seen to be a part of LPP process but in this specific case the researcher has separated and proposed as an entity which is part of the LPP but merits distinct attention for the case-study analysis. This point has been discussed in

an earlier chapter but is being mentioned to reinforce the methodological approach adapted in the West Bengal cadre IAS case-study. The following are the reasons for this distinct position offered:

- Here in case of IAS officers the stories or narratives reflect the deeper tradition and legacy of the civil services. One of the often mentioned fact in terms of the IAS collective is the continuity with the old ICS-tradition and legacy and its role in shaping the minds of the young recruits.
- The processes of stories being a repository of knowledge which is passed on through generations is way too significant theme in management learning literature to be subsumed under the overarching theme of LPP. This specific research wishes to explore along methodological lines the powerful role of storytelling or sharing of narratives in the learning process.
- In LPP sharing of stories is seen as part of the processes of participation and initiation process but this particular case-study research intends to treat the process with separate attention since the process has a distinct methodology for learning.

#### **8.4 EXPECTED THEMES FOR CASE-ANALYSIS:**

The expected themes are described below based on the above graphic indicating the bifurcation of the processes of Situated Learning. These themes are related to the twin processes of Situated Learning, i.e. learning mechanism within a CoP.

Expected themes are drawn from the theoretical framework and here the researcher delineates the two 'dominant' aspects of the theoretical framework applied for the interpretation of the research data, i.e. Story-Telling and LPP (Legitimate Peripheral Participation).

SITUATED LEARNING Learning Activity (within the CoP)	
Story-Telling or Sharing of Narratives	Legitimate Peripheral Participation
1.0 Periphery – ‘Listening to Stories’ – Learning ‘From Talk’	1. ‘Social World’ 1.1 Problem-Solving abilities –
2.0 Core – ‘Sharing Stories’ – Learning ‘To Talk’	“SCAFFOLDING”
3.0 Belonging – Stories as part of Identity-Formation	2. Participation 2.1 Human Knowing through Participation 2.2 Identity Formation through Participation

**Table 21 – Expected themes for Case Analysis - source: developed by the researcher**

The data interpretation methodology involved categorization as stated in earlier chapters, where the researcher browsed through the interview transcripts, subjected them to content analysis for ‘sprouts’ concurring with the themes the researcher would be looking for based on the conceptual framework. Interview transcripts containing the responses to the research questions are analyzed that would form groups and categories based on the expected themes.

A brief elaboration of the categories and sub-categories within the expected themes is enumerated as below:

### 1.0 STORY-TELLING OR SHARING OF NARRATIVES: FROM ‘LISTENTING TO STORIES’ TO ‘TELLING STORIES – PERIPHERY TO CORE:

- (1) Early Years – Powerful Role of Story-telling in Learning
- (2) Nature of Learning from stories
- (3) Sense of Belonging – Creating and Fostering through stories
- (4) Social World – Exchange of Stories
- (5) Stories and Lessons Learned – Codes of Conduct
- (6) Competitive Spirit Amongst Peer or Fellow IAS officers
- (7) Story-telling between Seniors and Juniors
- (8) Information-rich stories of Seniors – Learning Value
- (9) Learning What?? – Limited Role in enabling Performing Tasks and Responsibilities
- (10) Gender Dimension

### 2.0 LEARNING FROM PARTICIPATION:

Social World:

1. ‘SCAFFOLDING’ - Assisting in Problem-Solving Abilities
  - a. Standing by your junior – “Espirit de Corps”
  - b. Skills and Knowledge for execution – “Hard” “SCAFFOLDING”

Participation:

2. Human Knowing through Participation
3. Identity-formation through Participation

### **8.5 NEW EMERGING THEMES – EVIDENCE FROM DATA:**

During the process of analysis there were some new themes which emerged with regards to the Learning mechanism through CoPs and have been stated as below.

These themes are the ones discovered beyond the confines of theoretical framework of LPP and Story-telling as an explanation of the Situated Learning processes within a CoP. The new themes which emerged were:

1. Paternalistic Mentoring

2. Role-Models – Learning from ‘Pantheons’
3. Codes of Conduct

These themes through the case-analysis were important building blocks for the Situated Learning and the Communities of Learners within the broader CoP of IAS officers of West Bengal cadre.

### **8.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

In order to establish convergence between the conceptual framework and the research questions the researcher outlines the questions pertaining to the Learning mechanism within a CoP. The case-study part of the research is very clear that it does not intend to establish the existence of a CoP within the IAS officers of the West Bengal cadre, which was the objective of the earlier pilot-study, but capturing the processes of learning evidently facilitated by belonging to a CoP. Important to mention that the researcher was alert and vigilant to any contradictory findings with regards to the formation of CoPs as evident from the earlier pilot-studies. The case-study research explores the inherent processes of learning within the organizational structure of a CoP. The research questions were developed specifically bearing the learning aspect of CoP in mind.

- (1) If they do form Communities of Practice then how does that steer learning within the IAS?
  - a. How does the IAS community engage in the learning process?
  - b. How the new recruit into the IAS community does participate in the learning process?
  - c. Is there a ‘collective learning’ where the IAS shares stories and exchange experiences? Or most of the learning is individual and if so what extent?

The research data drawn from the interviews is posited as guiding answers to the stated above questions which would form the core of the processes of learning within the CoP.

## **8.7 STORYTELLING AND CoP-FORMATION:**

### **Periphery to Core – ‘Listening to Stories’ – Learning ‘From Talk’:**

According to LPP the induction of a fresh recruit who is located at the ‘periphery’ of the CoP to the ‘core’ happens through sharing of stories, learning from stories and then when at the core the fresh recruit to the CoP starts telling stories. In other words an indicator of induction into the core from the periphery is the extent to which they start ‘telling’ their own stories to the CoP. In this specific case-study the researcher is studying the CoPs formed by groups of IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre.

The process of induction of an IAS officer as an independent civil servant is a long-drawn process through formal and informal training. As the researcher posed the leading question ‘How does a young university graduate become a responsible elite servant within a span of nearly two years?’ to offer a guideline or roadmap for the investigation of the case-study. Based on the interview transcripts there doesn’t seem to be much listening to stories at the IAS national Academy level.

### **8.7.1 STORY-TELLING/SHARING OF NARRATIVES-TRADITIONAL LEGACY:**

In the IAS collective story-telling has a long tradition and legacy dating back to the ICS days. Indian civil servants both the erstwhile ICS of the British Raj and the contemporary IAS are famed for their raconteur skills and love to share anecdotes and stories when given a chance. This legacy has been discussed in an earlier chapter on story-telling.

### **8.7.2 STORY-TELLING AS PART OF IAS CoP - SOCIAL WORLD:**

The interviewing being a key element of this particular research method intended to establish to what extent story-telling, sharing of anecdotes and narratives is prevalent in the routine daily interactions of the IAS officers, particularly the trainee IAS officer who has been inducted into the service. Case-study research intends to investigate to what extent the induction and absorption of the fresh recruit IAS officer as an insider into the CoP of IAS officer happens through the processes of story-telling and sharing of anecdotes. The transcripts affirms that story-telling is an integral part of the IAS social world and particularly with respect to the young IAS officers, i.e. the fresh recruits. As one the interviewees(IAS;1973) mentioned:

*“Almost all IAS officers are in their anecdotalage, they won’t stop babbling, if you give them a chance they will tell one story after another after another and its absolutely like that”.*

Worthwhile to quote another interviewee(IAS;1966):

*“Whenever an IAS officer is called to speak on anything he is master of speaking on it without knowing anything. I have heard IAS officers propound theories on Narlikar’s theories, some IAS officers would tell us about Narlikar’s theories, they would talk on relativity, they would talk on DNA, they would talk on Darwin’s theories”.*

Clearly IAS officers love hearing and sharing stories, one can guess more of sharing stories and it is against this background of a legacy and tradition of story-telling that the case-study research is being conducted. The research inquiry was framed along the lines of if there was a CoP-based learning process involving story-telling or sharing of narratives within the CoP of IAS officers.

According to LPP-based model of learning through CoP, identity formation and sense of belonging to the social world is part of the process of learning and learning is just not confined to just acquisition of skills and expertise. The learning within the CoP framework involves developing a sense of belonging and participation in the social practice (Lave & Wenger,1998). Hence the study focussed on these processes of belonging and participation for deciphering if story-telling was facilitating CoP-based learning mechanism.

Alternatively this tradition of story-telling or sharing of narratives could be confined to simple social conversations bereft of any value for learning-based CoP mechanism. So it was important for the researcher to ascertain if there was tangible transfer of skills and knowledge through the sharing of stories and anecdotes. The extent of sharing of stories and anecdotes being central to the process of induction into the CoP of fresh recruit IAS officers who traversed the path from newcomers at the periphery to the core and the general formation of CoPs.

The research inquiry focused on the case-study of West Bengal cadre IAS officers to identify the following learning mechanisms through story-telling according to the LPP model, (Lave & Wenger, 1991):

1. Learning about the skills needed to perform the job at hand
2. Induction into the CoP from an ‘outsider’ a fresh recruit IAS officer –  
Belonging

The researcher discovered new related themes of story-telling apart from the LPP model facilitating CoP-based learning during the case-study analysis which are as follows:

1. Deeper acknowledgement by women IAS officers about the role of story-telling in their learning processes
2. Identity formation – inculcation of a code of conduct to qualify as a member of the CoP.

Important to emphasize that there are several CoP-formations within the broader community of IAS officers, not all the IAS officers of the West Bengal cadre belong to the same CoP or the particular CoP which was being studied through the interview process. This particular research focus was being on the ‘induction’ of a fresh recruit IAS officer from the periphery to the core of a CoP formed at a particular point in time between West Bengal IAS officers through a process of LPP hence the accent on CoP formation at the District Administration level.

This accent on Situated Learning at the District Administration level emerges since a fresh recruit IAS officer spends about 10 years of his or her life working in the District Administration. These specific research interviews inquired about Training Academy days as well but there is no significant learning-based CoP formed there.

### 8.7.3 EARLY YEARS – POWERFUL ROLE OF STORY-TELLING IN LEARNING:

The trainee posting after completion of the IAS training Academy in Mussorie on successful performance in the competitive exams is at the level of an Assistant Magistrate and usually placed under the tutelage of District Magistrate who is the *uno numero*, the administrative head of the District. Interestingly it is at this stage one finds prolific learning through stories from seniors, particularly from the District Magistrate and several other senior IAS officers who would be visiting the district.

In the words of one of the interviewee (IAS;1963):

*“As I said life in the beginning from the Mussorie days till I was a District Magistrate, from 1963 till 1973 till I went to New Delhi. The first ten years of service, one constantly received support and advice the shall we say the practical application of experience from my seniors, not necessarily the seniors under whom one worked directly but generally people who are in other departments”.*

The early years of an IAS officer, i.e. a fresh recruit, is influenced by story-telling and sharing of anecdotes as a learning process, an induction process into the CoP of IAS officers at the District Administration level. The fostering of a sense of belonging into the CoP of IAS officers during the early years of a fresh recruit IAS officer through sharing of stories and anecdotes is discussed in a separate section.

In the words of another interviewee (IAS:1973)

*“At that point in time in 1978 I had five years of service, I must have observed large number of seniors, I must have listened to a large number of stories, at parties, at get-togethers, at tea meetings, at coffee breaks during meetings somewhere down the line I learnt this lesson that if you are in a crisis, you cant stick to the rule-book that the greater good is more important than your you know accounting. Its not such a formal kind of mentoring isn't it its totally informal, its absolutely informal”.*

In the other words of another interviewee (IAS;1958)

*“And we shared this, we talked about this, junior officers, senior officers, there was a certain camaraderie about it..... So I would say for the first 5,6 or even 7 years we communicated a great deal among ourselves, it's a large district”.*

Occasionally the junior IAS officer would seek counsel from his or her senior IAS officer or a fellow or peer IAS officer about a particular incident which had left him perplexed or disturbed so as to understand what the phenomenon was all about.

The same interviewee (IAS;1958) narrates a harrowing incident at a refugee camp where he was detained by protestors after a flag-hoisting ceremony and distributing largesse which left him feeling completely traumatized and in his own words below as to what were his next steps:

*“I could not reconcile myself to that so I asked one of my colleague, another probationer, he said “Sivaram read this particular book.” And it was about recent history, post-partition Bengal etc...”*

In his later report to the immediate superior IAS officer he criticized the refugee culture of hand-outs and was tutored by him about the broader issues and problems, which assisted the interviewee (IAS;1958) to place things in appropriate context: *“So also he gave me some of his own experiences of refugee colonies and so on and other senior officers. So reverting to your question on Guru-Shishya, I think that was more or less presumed but some people delivered the message harshly, some people delivered it gently, but it was more or less presumed that it was expected.”*

Certainly the stories heard, stories shared create an indelible impression on the young fresh recruit IAS officers and their mind since they relished and revelled recollecting them after decades and in the case of the interviewee (IAS;1958) after a good five decades. In this case one find instances of story-telling being a powerful tool for sharing of knowledge and information both between colleagues and between juniors and seniors, though it rarely happens between colleagues but more often between seniors and juniors, which is discussed in a separate section on senior-junior relationship in story-telling.

#### 8.7.3.1 Nature of Learning from Stories:

The powerful character of story-telling in the learning process can be explained by the statements of some of the interviewees as empowering and enabling them to confront the situations which they faced alone in their early years of posting as IAS officers.

In the words of one of the interviewee (IAS;1974):

*“Yes it certainly does help with the situations let me give you an elaboration in that. When these stories get into your mind, and they soak into your mind, and they are always there at the background influencing the decisions we take. We unconsciously call upon them when we are taking on certain decisions which are similar to the stories which have percolated through generations of officers, that in this situation we did this, now no two situations are alike so you take certain aspects from*

*whatever you have heard and you try and mould it with the situation as it is on the field and then take on a decision which may not exactly replicate what you have heard of the stories or the way things have been tackled. As I have said that no two stories are ever the same, there are shades of differences, the areas are different, the kind of people you are dealing with is different so necessarily we adopt our techniques to suit the occasion”.*

The stories play a very important role in being tacit knowledge in the memory of the IAS officers while confronting crisis and tackling difficult situations, they are like mental resources which are called upon as an instance or example to consider while making the decisions. This role of stories being repositories of information while making a decision or tackling a difficult situation can be termed as a qualifier for story-telling as a learning mechanism for IAS officers to perform their tasks and duties. Importantly the final decision rests with the good judgement made by the IAS officer in the field and ‘on the spot’.

An explanation offered by the same interviewee as to how the stories play a role in their learning process,

*“Ah ‘I heard from so and so they had done this okay lets do this’ That is the kind of situation we used to tackle but like you put a very straight question ‘did what the predecessor say sort of influence you directly’ what I would say it is more a question of the essence filtering into you, it’s a tacit learning it stays with you and comes up when you need it”.*

Substantiating the stories as repository of information while making decisions is statement from another interviewee (IAS;1973):

*“I learn I think at the very critical moment you don’t ring up your mentor, memories come back to you from past incidents, from stories, and I think you learn hell of a lot from just anecdotal stories. You were in a party and you were talking to somebody else that person tells their life’s stories and you pick up all the lessons from them”.*

Story-telling or sharing anecdotes offer the fresh IAS recruits at the periphery of the CoP a perspective on performing tasks and duties as a civil servant in the District

Administration during the early years, which builds up over the years as a repository of knowledge in his or her memory.

In the words of one of the interviewee (IAS;1973):

*“I think all our lessons, I mean a large part of our lessons come from stories, I think one learns much more from anecdotes than lectures... That you learn from experience of others, and its transmitted through stories and not stories as kind of fiction. These are experiences-related, people talk about experiences and you learn from them. Because of the variety of the work it becomes important, if it was a same kind of drill you could have read a manual and you know it!!”*

Here the fascinating point being offered is that given the very diverse nature of job, the varied responsibilities and tasks handled by an IAS officer ranging from flood relief, law and order to developmental work like ensuring better irrigation facilities, story-telling or sharing of anecdotes tends to play such a key role. This is because since there is no single standard operating manual possible under the circumstances in which a fresh recruit IAS officer has to operate while addressing the crisis situations and emergencies.

#### 8.7.4 SENSE OF BELONGING – CREATING AND FOSTERING:

Story-telling or sharing of anecdotes creates a sense of belonging which facilitates the process of legitimatising of a fresh recruit from the periphery towards the centre as a full-fledged participant of the CoP of IAS officers. LPP theory acknowledges the key role played by the sense of belonging in facilitating the formation and strengthening of CoPs(Lave & Wenger, 1991). This sense of belonging can be fostered by sharing of anecdotes and stories amongst the newcomers, the fresh recruit IAS officers and the oldtimes, the senior IAS officers alike. As one can decipher from the interpretive analysis of the interview transcripts story-telling serves different purposes in the formation of a learning CoP one of them being creating a sense of belonging which is an important building block for a CoP without which no learning or transfer of knowledge can occur.

##### 8.7.4.1 Social world – exchange of stories:

This has been mentioned by interviewees as an important factor enabling them to join and become part of a CoP in their early years as a fresh recruit IAS officer and later on while serving as senior ranking civil servants to sustain a relationship with

their fellow IAS officers and the seniors. The informal exchange of stories and anecdotes amongst fellow IAS officers who were peers assisted them to connect at more human level outside formal, official exchanges. In the words of one of the interviewee (IAS;1963):

*“Well I would say, shall we say unbending over a glass of beer or bottle of whisky certainly helped this process of learning, sort of one let one’s hair down and one would be much freer. During the day you would be involved in meetings with your subordinates with the formal structures of the administration whether in normal times or abnormal times where there were floods, riots naxal movements which need to be tackled. Evening when we were there, maybe we still talked shop to some extent, talked about the day’s experiences, about what to do in the next few days but laced with that there was shall we say a deeper interaction at a human level between the people involved.”*

This deeper interaction was emphasized by the same interviewee (IAS;1963) clarifying the incredible role of story-telling or sharing of anecdotes in forging the human bond:

*“The discussions would be tempered by the fact that we met as human beings, not as officials, or seniors or juniors, met as co-sharers of a problem.”*

In the words of another interviewee (IAS;1957) speaking about access to his seniors and fellow IAS officers:

*“It was not that formal only in the Secretariat but even informally you could meet them. We used to even stay in the same campus, we used to meet together for drinks and they would invite me or I can invite them, they would come over, we would be chatting during the course of the evening.”*

Again elaborating on another senior officer who happened to be ICS officer who later became Chief Secretary, the highest post in the regional administration the same interviewee (IAS;1957):

*“He was very congenial and would invite juniors for drinks and dinner.”*

In the words of another interviewee (IAS;1956) who was sceptical of the role of story-telling in learning about the tasks and responsibilities of the IAS officer even

admitted as a fresh recruit the congeniality of sharing stories and anecdotes amongst IAS officers junior, fellow and senior:

*“Ah Yes, evenings we socialized yes, we used to have regular card sessions in my bungalow with the district judge, superintendent of police, district magistrate they all used to come to my bungalow.”*

Later in the interview the same interviewee (IAS;1956) goes on to elaborate in response to questions posed by the researcher if there was an exchange of ideas and thoughts pertaining to performing tasks or as some of the IAS officers of the West Bengal cadre termed “day’s hard work”:

*“Just narration so there was no conscious efforts at talking shop, there was just whiling away time that’s all, there was no conscious group process, there was no conscious not as a learning process to teach or learn but just that this incident happened today as an interesting story. Just narrated as an interesting story....”*

Here the researcher finds that narrating the day’s incident or the problems tackled as a story is very much part of the conversation between IAS officers in informal social settings. With regards to a question concerning if lady IAS officers form a special conversational group within the broader CoP the interviewee (IAS;1974) responds:

*“No some of us play cards, some of us do sit around and drink, we have a lot of socializing, we get together in our little groups and discuss mostly its shop, specially if its women or men IAS officers.”*

Interview transcripts clearly indicates that the informal story-telling transcends beyond gender dimensions and is an all-encompassing feature of the CoP-formation of IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre.

Interestingly in the West Bengal cadre IAS officers there seems to be a ritualizing of informal conversations where mostly fellow or peers IAS officers exchange stories and anecdotes. In the words of one of the interviewee (IAS;1971):

*“You see what happens in at least in Bengal I don’t know elsewhere you have something called the Lunch Club so during lunch break you meet in some officers room if you are lucky enough and there are lady officers we usually meet in the lady officers room have cups of tea and muri(fluffed rice) and you chat. In that chat things come up, the problems one is facing, there is general exchange how this could be done, how that could be done, and you go back with these ideas buzzing in your*

*brain, and then you take a decision. This is how its very informal and non-structured.....”*

In order to emphasize the informality of the story-telling sessions the same interviewee (IAS;1971) goes on to mention that:

*“But the cuppa tea very important and the muri.”*

The sharing of stories and anecdotes clearly play a social role in fostering a sense of belonging to the CoP which is being formed between the IAS officers of the West Bengal cadre. There is a social congeniality which is being created between the IAS officers through sharing of stories and anecdotes in informal settings which in turn would foster a sense of camaraderie between the members of the CoP being formed.

In the words of one of the interviewees (IAS;1958):

*“And we shared this, we talked about this, junior officers, senior officers, there was a certain camaraderie about it.”*

The noteworthy point here is that in these informal story-telling or sharing anecdotes session although no learning was taking place in terms of exchange of concrete and tangible information and knowledge, it did however facilitate in fostering a sense of belonging to the CoP.

Interestingly the topics covered in these story-telling sessions were not restricted to the tasks and duties to be performed by the IAS officers termed ‘the day’s hard work’ but much more general in nature.

This is aptly described in the words of one of the interviewee (IAS;1963):

*“The people would talk about their personal lives, about how their children growing up, about what they thought of the world in general.....These evening discussions may not have touched upon what we did for living.”*

Again another interviewee (IAS;1974) explains the generalist nature of the stories shared in these conversation sessions:

*“We exchange our views, we discuss issues, we talk about politics everything, it’s a very wide ranging topics we have, its not only the kind of work we are doing but its very wide ranging.”*

The researcher wishes to formulate that the connection between 2 IAS officers at any stage of their professional career irrespective of their position is cemented and

facilitated by story-telling and sharing of anecdotes. The researcher proposes to mention that as explained in another chapter that at a later stage in the professional career of IAS officers the role of learning through CoPs and sharing of stories and anecdotes disappears but the sessions of sharing stories and anecdotes fostering belonging continues unabated.

Story-telling has a specific social role, creating a sense of belonging in the CoP-formation among IAS officers which would be facilitating the learning processes for a fresh recruit IAS officer.

#### 8.7.5 STORIES AND LESSONS LEARNED – CODES OF CONDUCT:

According to LPP, story-telling or sharing of anecdotes assists in the learning process of the fresh recruit IAS officers while moving from the ‘periphery’ as a newcomer to the CoP to that of the ‘core’ to perform the tasks and responsibilities of an IAS officer. One of the findings of this particular research has been the theme of Codes of Conduct for learning-based CoP-formation amongst IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre. As discussed in a later section the Codes of Conduct are a very important criteria for determining the membership of the CoP of IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre. In terms of learning through the CoP from the more experienced members, the Codes of Conduct constitute an important lesson, apart from the practical skills and knowledge required to perform the tasks and discharge the responsibilities of an IAS officer.

Here this particular research would investigate the processes of story-telling and sharing of anecdotes being the mechanism for learning the relevant Codes of Conduct for the CoP. In fact the researcher argues that primarily it is the Codes of Conduct which are learnt through stories and sharing of anecdotes rather than specific skills and competencies required to perform the tasks and discharge responsibilities.

In the case of one of the interviewee(IAS;1971) when referring to one of his mentor hero ICS officers and his communication with him in a period of professional crisis when the interviewee was summarily transferred from his district posting for arresting a political leader for violent behaviour against officers, mentioned about a

letter which the ICS officer wrote to him a on his transfer and this is what the interviewee (IAS;1971) narrated:

*“Dr. Ashok Mitra wrote to me a letter saying that he had made the mistake of taking the Tehbhaga law seriously, when the Tehbhaga law was passed that the land must go to the tribal. So he camped in Sagardighi with his wife in a tent and ensured that the tribals got their land he was summarily transferred. So he says that the day I was leaving a tribal came in tatters to see me in my Bungalow with a slender gold chain and handed it over to me and saying ‘because of you I have got my land.’ He refused to take the gold chain but the tribal would not go away he had to take it he said that ‘it is the love of the people that will sustain you throughout your life because you have done the right thing always and I am sharing this with you.’ he said’ that is because that is what had happened to me in my life’.”*

Here clearly the ICS officer gentleman narrated a story to this interviewee from his own life as an administrator to convey a powerful lesson, an encouraging word to boost his morale but the lesson offered was more ephemeral, philosophical, subtle about the spirit of service and the values which one should pursue. This value system has been termed by the researcher as being part of the Codes of Conduct and is termed as one of the building blocks of the CoP formation. As mentioned earlier, Codes of Conduct is beyond the theoretical framework of LPP defining the formation of learning-based CoPs. In the words of another interviewee (IAS;1957) when referring to one of his admired senior ICS officer as to what he learnt from the gentleman:

*“Anything I learnt from him is that you don’t have to cow down to the politician and can hold your own.”*

and about another of his Commissioners, an IAS officer recruited from the British Indian Army, this what he had to say about the lessons learnt:

*“The main thing I learnt from him is not to be afraid of your seniors or anything to be bold, do what you feel to be honest and correct, do it without fear...”*

Importantly these lessons were communicated in the form of stories or anecdotes with the added ‘moral lesson of the story’. These ‘moral lesson’ of the stories usually centered around the Codes of Conduct for the CoP being formed amongst the IAS officers.

#### 8.7.6 COMPETITIVE SPIRIT AMONGST PEER OR FELLOW IAS OFFICERS:

The sharing of knowledge and information through exchange of stories and anecdotes amongst peers or fellow IAS officers is restricted by a competitive spirit which discourages assisting another fellow IAS officer to succeed in performing their tasks.

In the words of one of the interviewee (IAS; 1974):

*“....Amongst the peer groups also you see all of us are in the same dilemma, I mean if you are facing a situation and at times they do not want to help you out also, it’s a sort of frog in the well sort of thing, they do not want to help you out, they would rather see you sink than offer you some guidance and advice which might help you to stay afloat.”*

Here in the above statement there is a very significant point which make explicit the appropriateness of the senior IAS officers being qualified to offer learning stories and anecdotes vis-à-vis one’s own peers in the IAS community. The competitive spirit amongst the peer or fellow IAS officers would rather prompt them to see you sink.

This element of ‘Schadenfreude’ amongst the peers and counterparts in the IAS officers would severely restrict candid exchange of information and knowledge through sharing of stories and anecdotes.

Another interviewee (IAS;1971) echoed similar statements about peer or fellow IAS officers when seeking advice or assistance for solving problems:

*“You are on your own, it’s very rare that you share, because the IAS also you never know who is going to stick a knife in your back situation is also there. So that is dicey these are private issues my battles I have fought myself.”*

This competitive spirit amongst the peer or fellow IAS officers is quite fierce in nature as evident from the above two specific statements and broadly from the interview transcripts and literary textual materials. Clearly there is not much sharing of knowledge and information between fellow or peer IAS officers towards solving problems or addressing difficult situations and providing counsel or advice.

In conclusion, the story-telling or sharing anecdotes as a form of knowledge sharing, information sharing, offering counsel or advice is not prevalent amongst the fellow

or peer IAS officers but more restricted to that between senior and junior IAS officers. The story-telling or sharing anecdotes does happen between fellow IAS officers but more fulfilling other purposes of CoPs like creating a sense of belonging or spirit of camaraderie which will be discussed in the next section.

#### 8.7.6.1 Storytelling Between Seniors And Juniors:

Although there is enough evidence of sharing and exchanging of stories amongst fellow IAS officers there are serious limits to the flow of knowledge through stories between equals, rarely an IAS officer would pose a query to another fellow or junior civil servant with regards to a particular situation as explained above. Story-telling as means of communicating potential solutions and suggested methods to address a particular situation is more often happening between juniors and seniors. When senior IAS officers are narrating a story or sharing an anecdote more often than not has an importance in terms of suggesting the junior IAS officer as to how to perform a task or address a difficult situation. The stories or anecdotes of the senior IAS officers are often triggered by queries and questions from junior IAS officers seeking counsel. There is warm and affectionate touch to the nature of story-telling and sharing of anecdotes between senior IAS officers and the junior IAS officers which is welcomed as a learning experience.

The researcher wishes to emphasize that inferring from the interview transcripts that the stories shared by the seniors had much more learning value in terms of information and knowledge. There is clearly invariably a 'lesson learnt' from the stories shared by the senior IAS officers as explained by the junior IAS officers. At the same time senior IAS officers are more forthcoming when sharing stories or anecdotes which have powerful meaning as an example to learn from, where they wish to teach their juniors through stories and anecdotes.

#### 8.7.6.2 Information-Rich Stories Of Seniors-Learning Value:

In the words of one of the interviewees (IAS;1971):

*“The senior also would not like to be seen as always advising, hectoring and talking down to. So the intelligent senior does not advice except when by way of a joke or by way of you know this happened when I was doing such a scrape I had got into that sort or thing”.*

This clearly indicates that the senior IAS officer deploys story-telling as a tutorial tool to explain a concept or convey a lesson or an important information and knowledge.

Another interviewee (IAS;1974) elaborates on the limitations of fellow IAS officers sharing stories which have learning potential:

*“Well I wouldn’t elaborate much excepting to say that the seniors have the distance to give you that that mentoring which distance is not there in your peers.”*

In the words of another interviewee (IAS;1973) who narrates her experiences as a young fresh recruit IAS officer undergoing training in a district while living in the Circuit House, which is the most posh accommodation usually reserved for very senior IAS officers and other top officials:

*“...when I was staying in the circuit house one of the joys of staying there was every time a secretary, whether to the government of India or the state government will come they would stay there and in the evening would send for the AM, and have them gobble-eyed while they would held forth on the world. They would like to have an audience and over a cup of tea would tell a lot of stories and with 3-4 juniors around all would be gobble-eyed.”*

This statement surely reflects the enthusiasm in the senior IAS officers to share their life-stories and narrate incidents and share anecdotes in a rather tutorial manner like a teacher speaking to a pupil akin to a philosophers discourse like Plato holding forth with his students. It is very clear that the nature of story-telling or sharing anecdotes is more in the form of a teacher lecturing pupils and hence is enriched with knowledge and information.

It would be prudent at this stage to quote an extract from the interview transcripts of the same interviewee (IAS;1973) which would demonstrate the typical information and knowledge conveyed through stories and the learning value of senior IAS officers sharing stories with their junior IAS officers:

*“So I remember one of the best stories I heard during period from a chap called Kushari, he told me a nice story, he told me that you know we have to wear so many caps. Kushari said “when I was secretary transport prepare a proposal for buying new CSTC buses, you know what CSTC buses are, so I send the proposal for buying 100 buses, I prepared it meticulously and explained why government should subsidize it etc etc...anyway as luck would have it after sending off the proposal I*

*got transferred and was made Secretary-Finance.” I meaning him, “so I went off to as Secretary-Finance and in about 2 days time this file came to me, my own proposal came to me and I was told by my team, finance team, that there was no money, there was no question of subsidizing anybody’s bus-buying. If you don’t generate you own revenue then you don’t buy a bus and I wrote on the file, Mr. Kushari says I wrote on the file ‘the idiot who has prepared this proposal obviously does not understand finance at all, this proposal is rejected’ and I marked it Secretary-Transport and sent it back. “So Secretary- Transport called him up and started moaning and groaning and said ‘how could you do this?? This is your proposal’ and I said no, I am wearing a different cap I wrote this as Secretary-Transport...find it absolutely idiotic and I have right the reject to it”!!”*

This extract from a typical story shared laced with humour and wit by a senior IAS officer with a junior fresh recruit IAS officer when she was trainee in a district administration literally starting out her life as an IAS officer, did convey important and valuable information and was part of the learning process.

Here the interviewee (IAS; 1973) mentions what she learnt from the story:

*“So what...I find this a fascinating story, you know you wear different caps.....look at from different angles”.*

A very good instance of a witty story shared by a senior IAS officer in an informal setting over a cuppa tea of a drink conveying some very important lesson for a young fresh recruit IAS officer, which is an IAS officer has to wear different caps and look at different dimensions of a problem, which changes with the roles assigned to the IAS officer in his or her postings.

#### 8.7.7 LEARNING WHAT?? LIMITED ROLE IN PERFORMING TASKS AND DUTIES:

There is universal acknowledgement as evident in the interview data, transcripts and the literary textual material of the limitations of the stories and anecdotes in enabling to perform tasks and duties, in other words, in the learning process of transition from a fresh recruit IAS officer to a full-fledged IAS officer.

Through the interpretation of the interview data the researcher concludes that most of the learning process relates to the Codes of Conduct and ideals of the IAS service

as passed down through generations dating back to the ICS officers through the stories and anecdotes. Story-telling and sharing of anecdotes emerges as a powerful medium for transmitting the legacy and tradition of the IAS collective.

The researcher wishes to emphasize that contrary to contemporary research literature on CoP-based learning including Orr(1990) study of CoP-based learning mechanism of the photocopier service technicians, the CoP-based learning community of IAS officers belonging to West Bengal cadre does not only restrictedly enable or facilitate the learning of skills and knowledge to perform the tasks and responsibilities of the IAS officer who has joined as a fresh recruit to a large extent but also provides the ‘underpinnings’ of the belonging to the CoP in the words of the researcher like that of the Codes of Conduct and shared values. Surely there are instances in the interview transcripts of stories which have very high practical implications for performing tasks and responsibilities as an IAS officer. To substantiate in concrete terms how these stories in the form of advice assisted one to perform one’s tasks is another extract from the same interviewee (IAS;1963):

*“For example there was a man called MAT Iyengar, an ICS officer who was District Magistrate of Bankura, and is still a legend in Bankura who used to do similar kind of thing. MAT Iyengar did a lot of work through voluntary labour provided by the villagers, like those early days where the water supply was scarce in Bankura and was a dry district, not having brought DVC canal water into many parts of the district and hw would be digging of wells, of ponds where rainwater could be stored and that through voluntary labour with the help of one instrument he had at his command as something known as treasury rule 25 which enabled the collector to draw up to an amount of 5 lacs of Indian Rupees which was even applicable in our time when we did flood relief and that kind of work, that is the kind of thing you know, where there were no budgetary support for such programs there were no national programmes, rural employment programs where the funds come from government of India.”*

This powerful story has been repeated by other interviewees as well and stands apart as a model for managing development programs without any government support in innovative ways. In the words of another interviewee (IAS;1957) one of the outcomes of story-telling sessions were about:

*“Practical things about getting things done.”*

Though there are some very practical and pragmatic ideas and solutions offered through story-telling and shared anecdotes most of the lessons learnt as evident from the interview data and literary and textual material lies in the domain of shared values of a CoP and Codes of Conduct.

Recollecting some of the very difficult situations and crisis which one of the interviewee (IAS;1974) faced during her early years as a fresh recruit IAS officer: *“At that point no stories were running through my mind, it was a plain question of controlling the situation, of let me say of even saving my back.”*

This sets the limitation of stories and anecdotes as a learning tool when confronted by crisis and difficult situations as an IAS officer.

In the words of another interviewee (IAS;1957) with regards to learning from your seniors and the support structure within the CoP of IAS officers:

*“You had to be very much on your own.”*

This emerges as a theme of this particular research from the interpretation of the interview data about the nature of tasks and responsibilities assigned to an IAS officer even in case of a fresh recruit IAS officer who have just completed training period; the role of individual initiative is very important. Individual initiatives and efforts are called upon in most cases to perform the tasks and discharge responsibilities, particularly in case of crisis situations and emergencies. A separate section discusses the nature of tasks and responsibilities of an IAS officer with respect to crisis situations and emergencies.

The CoP formed by IAS officers is supportive and encouraging as evident from the interview data, in the words of one of the interviewee (IAS;1973):

*“DM(District Magistrate) was very supportive but at the end of the day I think I had to fend for myself.”*

The researcher wishes to elaborate that the varied nature of tasks and responsibilities, and the sensitive situations in which the IAS officers operate particularly at the District Administration level, render the examples offered through past stories and anecdotes limited in enabling them to address the situations.

Predominantly the lessons learnt through sharing of stories and anecdotes are the ideals which provide support and direction in times of crisis as evident in the earlier example of summary transfer, which on the other hand is as important as the skills and knowledge necessary to perform the role of an IAS officer in a sensitive and volatile situation.

In the earlier examples lessons learned through story-telling and sharing of anecdotes relates to appropriate conduct in terms of taking a stance in the face of political opposition.

In conclusion, this specific research indicates the role of story-telling and sharing of anecdotes transcending beyond the immediate transfer of skills and knowledge required to perform the tasks and responsibilities, but becoming a member of the CoP, by conveying the shared values of the CoP.

#### **8.7.8 GENDER DIMENSION –ACKNOWLEDGING ROLE OF STORIES:**

The interesting finding of the analysis and interpretation of the interview transcripts is that women IAS officers, there were three women interviewees, were more generally forthcoming in the acknowledgement of the role of sharing of stories and anecdotes in the learning process. The women officers were more precise and thorough in describing the exact role of the stories and anecdotes related by the senior IAS officers played in enabling them to address crisis situations and emergencies. Though limited in scope for this particular research, this dimension needs further exploration in terms of gender and story-telling based learning mechanisms as part of the CoP.

#### **8.8 LEGITIMATE PERIPHERAL PARTICIPATION - LPP:**

Conventional theory of learning conceives of learning as a process of individual internalization of knowledge transmitted from the tutors. In contrast the Situated Learning theory, with LPP as its theoretical framework formulates learning as a dimension of social practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). According to Lave & Wenger (1991) learning is both personal and social, the learning is happening through participation at the individual level but within the social practice, the Community, the social world of individuals engaged in relationships working towards a shared purpose. Here learning is participation of individuals in the CoPs and focuses

attention on the set of relations between persons and the social world. Hence the processes of learning, thinking and knowing are influenced and facilitated by the relations among the individuals belonging to the shared socially and culturally structured world.

In the next few sections the LPP will be categorized into 2 broad categories:

1. Social World – social and cultural dimensions of the social practice
2. Participation – in the social practice

#### 8.8.1 SOCIAL WORLD:

In this section the researcher explores the evidence drawn from the interview data about the social and cultural dimensions of the social practice like the relationships between the members of the CoP, the community spirit, social support structure to the newcomers to the CoP and the acting of the individual in the social world. For instance one of the very important facet of the social world is the relationship between the newcomers to the CoP, the fresh recruit IAS officers and their seniors during the early years of training in the districts. The social world changes at the higher levels of IAS like the Secretariat offices in Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal. There is cordiality amongst the IAS officers serving at the District and the relationship between the senior IAS officer and the junior IAS officer is one of warmth and affection.

#### 8.8.2 'SCAFFOLDING' – PROBLEM-SOLVING ABILITIES:

The Zone of Proximal Development as developed by Vygotsky(1978) is defined as the 'distance between problem-solving abilities exhibited by a learner working alone and that learner's problem-solving abilities when assisted by or collaborating with more-experienced people' which has been termed as 'SCAFFOLDING' (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The 'Scaffolding' theoretical construct has been developed as a concept in pedagogical theory where initially direct assistance is extended for performing tasks by more experienced performers to enable the learners to execute the tasks independently at a later stage bereft of any support being provided (Greenfield,1984; Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976). In other words 'Scaffolding' is an important enabling and empowering method in learning theory which allows the learner to perform tasks and responsibilities much more efficiently by providing

initial support. In the formulation of the case-study analysis theoretical framework the researcher integrated this idea of ‘Scaffolding’ within the theories of Situated Learning as proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991).

In case of this case-study research on IAS officers of West Bengal cadre the researcher found the ‘Scaffolding’ playing an enormously significant role for the fresh recruit IAS officer starting out his or her life in the District Administration to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to perform successfully the tasks of a full-fledged IAS officer on completion of the training till they assume independent charge as a District Magistrate. This specific research argues that ‘Scaffolding’ process facilitates the transition from the ‘periphery’ as a fresh recruit IAS officer to the ‘core’ when the IAS officer assumes independent charge of a District Administration. As explained in an earlier section the starting or entry point of an IAS officer is Assistant Magistrate, trainee in a district and then moving through the hierarchy till assuming independent charge as a District Magistrate which happens over a period of 10 years.

In the entire process of learning by participation the senior IAS officer plays a key role both in informal and formal capacity to provide support and assistance to the junior IAS and more so in the case of a fresh recruit IAS officer. As a matter of fact the fresh recruit IAS officer is placed as an Assistant Magistrate under the tutelage of the District Magistrate who is the highest ranking IAS officer in the District Administration.

The researcher based on the interpretation of the interview data and textual and literary material would propose to delineate the ‘Scaffolding’ into 2 distinct forms of support and assistance:

1.0 Execution of a specific task at hand

2.0 ‘Standing by your junior’ – *Espirit de corps*

This ‘Standing by your junior’ or *esprit de corps* is one of the unexpected themes emergent which is not part of the current theoretical framework.

In the view of the researcher the primary scaffolding in most of the relevant cases is one of esprit de corps variety rather than the tangible assistance to execute a task at hand or addressing a crisis situation.

### 8.8.3 'STANDING BY YOUR JUNIOR' – ESPIRIT DE CORPS:

This type of 'Scaffolding' can be termed as 'Soft' 'Scaffolding' since it is more in the nature of supporting and standing by your junior's actions without directly assisting him or her in the execution of tasks and responsibilities as an IAS officer. Important to note as evident from the transcripts this 'soft' 'Scaffolding' enabled several of the fresh recruit IAS officers to go ahead and make decisions and take appropriate actions in times of dire crisis. The researcher feels it is prudent to highlight the nature of tasks and responsibilities which were discharged by fresh recruit IAS officers on completion of their training through assuming the independent responsibility of the district which involved several crisis situations some of which are listed below:

- floods and natural disasters
- communal violence between 2 religious groups
- disputes over sensitive issues like burial grounds between communities
- pilferage and corruption of public resources like siphoning of petrol
- law and order disturbances provoked by political violence and aggression
- 

In several of these situations the fresh recruit IAS officer who has just completed his or her training had to order firings or stop religious processions risking the wrath of a specific community or withdrawing permission for an event on grounds of potential law and order disturbances.

There is a strong respect and admiration for the notion of 'playing the game together' and supporting one's junior IAS officers, in the words of one of the interviewee(IAS;1957) about how he dealt with his junior IAS officers:

*"The incident I am saying is to say how you could understand the situation initially and then you have to be bold and do what you think is right, to stand up support my subordinates, my officers who have done the work they had reported faithfully to me and to back them up and fight it up at the higher level. I mean my subordinate*

*officers were not called to the Writer's Building to explain I was the one called upon to explain, I was, that is how you should do."*

In order to counter such crisis situations and emergencies the guideline for most of the fresh recruit IAS officers is summarized by one of the interviewee (IAS;1971):  
*"In case there is no time for you to consult anybody, you have gone somewhere, there is an explosive situation you have to decide whether you should order firing or not in that case you have to work on your instinct you cannot fall back on anybody's advice. So these situations have come in our career many many times.... Take the action and then report to him this is what had happened and this is what I have done so normally your action used to be endorsed by the DM it never happened like that he did not support. Instances are galore...."*

The same interviewee (IAS;1971) proceeds to narrate one particular incident where firing had to be ordered when rice grains were being smuggled from the districts to the city for black-marketing purposes and he felt uneasy since the situation turned unpleasant and then spoke to his senior IAS officer, the District Magistrate whose response was:

*"....he said put everything on record and send me a report, because sooner or later the CM, or the Chief Secretary is going to ask me what has happened that is how the matter ended."*

The interviewee (IAS;1957) proceeds to elaborate the concept of 'standing by your juniors' further:

*".....earn and support and the loyalty of your junior officers, they give you their unstilted support and backup of course you have to know whom to rely on and whom not to rely on.....advice and recommend and support them to the hilt."*

This notion of 'supporting them to the hilt' applicable to the junior IAS officers is pervasive through several interview transcripts and the literary and textual material.

Clearly this provided them the confidence to take difficult decisions during tough situations as evidenced by the narration of one of the interviewee (IAS;1974) when she had to stop a religious procession on an auspicious day on grounds of potential law and order disturbances. This incurred the wrath and anger of the specific

religious community and then she had to depose before a commission and in the interviewee's (IAS;1974) own words:

*“I had to face a lot of music for that. So when the issue came up before the Commission I mean they all said that there was no other way this thing could have been resolved at that particular moment unless this was done.”*

The interviewee's senior IAS officer the District Magistrate was sick and he could not attend to the problem and sent his police counterpart, the Police Superintendent to the site and he stood by the interviewee's decision when the time came for the commission inquiry. In the words of the interviewee (IAS;1974):

*“Even though the Police Superintendent may not have agreed fully with the decision I took but once the decision was taken they stood solidly by me. So when the issue came up before the Commission I mean they all said that there was no other way this thing could have been resolved at that particular moment unless this was done.”*

This was one of the most illustrious instances in this particular research based on the interview transcripts of the 'soft' 'Scaffolding' in terms of support extended by the senior IAS officers to the decision made by one of their juniors, and this was her first posting as a Sub-Divisional Officer on completion of the IAS training in the District Administration. The researcher wishes to emphasize the critical role and symbolic significance of such support, the 'soft' 'Scaffolding' for a fresh recruit IAS officer when deciding on such extremely sensitive cases like communal violence being a highly eruptive issue in the Indian society.

In case of IAS officers the CoP-based learning succeeds largely due to the 'soft' 'Scaffolding' provided by the IAS officers given the nature of tasks and responsibilities of confronting crisis situations and emergencies as explained in another section.

This nature of support is not covered by the current literature on 'Scaffolding' as part of the LPP and hence is a finding of this specific research which pertains more to specific, concrete and tangible assistance for performing tasks.

In the words of one of the interviewee (IAS;1974) the support provided by the senior IAS officer after the decisions have been made with regard to any crisis situation:

*“Well I think beyond a point that emotional counselling does not always come in, there is no time for it. It’s a question that later on, after the things accomplished, the objectives accomplished they sit you down and explain why, why this was necessary, we all know why it was necessary.”*

To substantiate this esprit de corps, in the words of another interviewee (IAS;1956) who was receiving flak from the political leaders for being stringent with offenders of hoarding food grains and had to seek the intervention of an ICS officer, who happened to be the then Chief Secretary:

*“ Yes, Yes he stood by, no not the camaraderie but he was playing according to the rules that he had learnt that is if an officer has done right then you got to stand by him. If he is in the wrong then you got to punish him. According to him I have committed no wrong therefore he stood by me what he thought was right.”*

This was in response to the researcher posing a question that if the fact that the senior ICS officer stood by you indicated that there was camaraderie between the senior ICS officer and the junior fresh recruit IAS officer.

Here the ‘Scaffolding’ is subsequent to the events and the decisions made, and does not exactly conform to the above theoretical definitions in terms of assisting the performance of a particular task or discharging a duty. This particular research clearly indicates based on the interview transcript interpretation that this nature of providing support is very much key to the learning process for the fresh recruit IAS officer, who would be confident and bold enough in the future to take difficult decisions.

#### 8.8.4 SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE FOR EXECUTION – ‘HARD’ ‘SCAFFOLDING’:

Interpretation of the interview transcripts reveal the ‘Scaffolding’ or support provided by seniors as mentioned in conventional research literature. The explicit support provided by the more experienced members of a CoP to the newcomers in solving problems which would enable them later to solve problems on their own. In other words the enhancing of the problem-solving ability of the newcomers or young recruits to a CoP by initially providing them assistance in solving problems faced by them. In this specific case-study research there are instances of senior IAS officers

providing concrete support, sometimes hand-holding the fresh recruit IAS officer to solve a particular problem or address a crisis situation. As one of the interviewee (IAS;1963) explains:

*“These are instances where our seniors are actually helping us in setting things right which would not have been possible on my own.”*

The researcher deciphers one particular incident, which is a legend in its own right and has been captured lucidly in the memoirs of Bhaskar Ghose (IAS;1960) the rioting of steel plant workers in the industrial town of Durgapur. Recounting the incident, the frantic telephone call from one of his junior IAS officers on his first posting after completion of training as SDO, one of the interviewee (IAS;1956) mentions :

*“once I received a telephone call from the SDO-Asansol He was KC. Yes KC and he says “Boss I can’t handle it anymore, you got to come”. So I said “What’s wrong?” He said “This Bengali-Punjabi riot I can’t I can’t control.”*

*I said “Wait for a while I will certainly come.” So one hour later he says “No boss you got to come”. So all right then I went, So Bhaskar Ghosh says “Can I tag along also?” I said “Yes come along.””*

To elaborate the extent of ‘Scaffolding’ extended by this particular senior IAS officer, the interviewee (IAS;1956):

*“So with Bhaskar Ghosh in tow I arrived at Durgapur,(neighbouring town of Asansol) and there I found Jatin Bhattacharyya was the Additional Superintend of Police, so I said “What’s happened?” I said “Where is your control room?” and then he said “Control room boss” and I said “Where is your armed constabulary?” I summoned him I said “You hope to quell riots without these.” He said “No one told me”. So that evening we spent in setting up control room, sent for reinforcements from Barrackpore and reinforcements having been ordered I asked the asked the additional SP “where will you be-let them?” then he said “I did not think about that.” I said the town-inspector “Go and have a look” and he came and said “Found a school and there are holidays and we can arrange in the schools for their stay.”*

This particular interviewee (IAS;1956) arrives at the scene of the incident and assists the junior IAS officer in setting up the control room, send in for reinforcements and then finally confronting the crowd and conducts large-scale arrests of the rioters and sends them to custody. A remarkable support and far more explicit than assumed in most cases was extended to the junior fresh recruit IAS officer, literally hand-holding through every detailed steps, and finally ensuring success of the situation. Incidentally this junior fresh recruit IAS officer went on to become a very distinguished civil servant and even till date acknowledges the incredible learning from his superior IAS officer, i.e. the interviewee(IAS;1956) and was one of the researcher's interviewees IAS(1958). This is a glorious instance of what concrete support in terms of 'Scaffolding' can be provided to the junior within the CoP of the IAS officers of the West Bengal cadre. The sincere acknowledgement of the junior fresh recruit IAS officer came in the form of an admission according to the interviewee (IAS;1956):

*“So that evening the SDO sharing the Durgapur steel guest-house with Bhaskar Ghosh, so he tells Bhaskar “Look Bhaskar I gained so much from DM. Then doing all these dirty work in the scene, I cant do it, I cant I am not cut out for the job, he is ideally cut out for the job, I aint, I aint, I aint I am going to give up.” So that ended the Durgapur...”*

In another glaring instance one of the interviewee (IAS;1963) when posted as SDO in his first posting after completion of his training as an IAS officer in the District Administration was confronted with the challenge of tackling siphoning off of kerosene from tankers carrying the fuel to the district. Kerosene was a critical fuel since it was used by large masses for cooking, lighting lamps and was known as the 'poor man's fuel' hence immediate action was required. The interviewee (IAS;1963) deployed police force to escort the tankers and lorries carrying kerosene to the nearest police station and then distribute the fuel against valid documents. This particular action was not backed by any regulatory order, there were restrictions placed on the IAS officers to operate under strict legal guidelines and hence the interviewee (IAS;1963) was worried about the consequences and approached the District Magistrate who responded:

*“ “SDO doesn't have to bother about laws and rules when he knows he is doing the right thing, in support of people, the people whom he is expected to serve”.”*

This reassured the interviewee (IAS;1963) that his actions were in the right direction.

There were cases where the concrete explicit support was provided in sensitive dealings and negotiations which were the responsibility of the junior fresh recruits in their early years of posting. The researcher wishes to cite the instance of a case where one of the interviewee (IAS;1957) was posted in a district where he had to negotiate with a lot of the armed forces officers which was difficult and complex since the armed forces officers in his own words were:

*“The army chaps have a mighty complex and they think little of the civil administration...”*

and he turned to his senior IAS officer, an ex-army man who was helpful and in the words of the interviewee(IAS;1957):

*“...he was always there to help, and guide you if you needed his guidance.”*

who assisted the interviewee (IAS;1957) as follows:

*“So with his ex-army background he was very helpful particularly in our liaison with the army, there he was very very helpful.”*

At this stage it would be prudent to mention one instance where this concrete ‘Scaffolding’ was provided in later years; as a senior IAS officer one of the interviewee (IAS;1963) had to seek assistance and counsel from his superior IAS officer who was in a very senior position with regards to a compensation issue. There was a double claim for compensation for nationalization of a transport company from the British share-holders, the claim was paid once in the past and hence the second round was illegal. The interviewee (IAS;1963) elucidates the support extended by his superior IAS officer:

*“He helped to write a note, about 18-page note where we brought out all the aspects of it and we reintroduced those missing 14 pages of the copies of note which he retained himself which have been removed to the embarrassment of these people. I took the file to the Chief Minister of the time, kept the file for a week .....I showed the file to Mr. (Y) and who read the file and said there is no case for second-round of payment for compensation at all. And the government kept quiet....”*

This was an instance of ‘hard’ ‘Scaffolding’ being provided at a later stage of career for an IAS officer by his superior IAS officer.

#### 8.8.4.1 Observations About ‘Scaffolding’:

Most of the ‘Scaffolding’ both the ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ happens in the early years of the IAS officer, most of the instances as drawn from the interview transcripts are during the first few years of posting on completion of training as a fresh recruit IAS officer.

- 1.0 The period between the completion of training and being assigned full-fledged responsibility as an IAS officer in the position of District Magistrate is when one can locate in the interview transcripts the predominance of ‘Scaffolding’, the explicit and concrete support provided to the fresh recruit IAS officers, i.e. the juniors IAS officers by more experienced senior IAS officers.
  
- 2.0 The nature of the tasks involved even at the very early stages of professional career of an IAS officer is replete with crisis situations both natural like floods and natural disasters and anthropomorphic (man-made) like law and order problems, communal violence between 2 warring groups, political violence and emergencies. This specific research demonstrates that in such kind of activities where the person had to tackle emergencies and crisis situations the opportunity for offering direct ‘Scaffolding’ support by the seniors in the CoPs remain limited, since most of the decisions have to be made in “split-seconds”. The nature of the tasks involved do not offer the time and opportunity to deliberate and discuss potential solutions. A significant finding of this particular research based on the interpretation of the interview transcripts is the type of appropriate and relevant ‘Scaffolding’ to be offered under such circumstances is that of the ‘Soft’ one where the senior, more experienced members of CoP ‘stand by their’ junior less-experienced members in an esprit de corps spirit.

#### 8.8.5 PARTICIPATION:

Learning for an individual in the LPP-model is facilitated by participation in the social practice. Participation in the practices of the CoP as opposed to passive assimilation and acquisition of skills and knowledge is the core process of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Here the knowledge is acquired by the individual through interactions with the content and the learning environment, and they formulate their understanding of the world through reflection, experience, maturation and interaction with others (Knowles, Holton & Swanson 1998). In the current section

the researcher explores the different categories of participation in practice for the newcomers, i.e. the fresh recruit IAS officers in the CoP. The different forms of knowledge and skills acquired and assimilated by the individuals belonging to the CoP, i.e. the fresh recruit IAS officers, is explored along with the challenges confronted during the process of participation.

#### 8.8.5.1 Human Knowing Through Participation:

There is one significant dimension which emerges from the interview transcripts, memoirs, journals, diaries, biographies and all other textual material is the overwhelming accent on 'Being Active' and 'Making a Decision' in the IAS professional life tracing back to ICS officers. The memoirs of ICS officers are filled with anecdotes about their actions and decisions made under very difficult circumstances. Noteworthy to mention that this spirit of being active is most prolific in the early years as an officer in the District Administration. District Administration conversations and recollections convey constantly that sense of making decisions, taking action and in one of the IAS officer's words 'on the spot'. Hence Participation forms an important process of their learning to be a full-fledged member of CoP of IAS officers, discharging their duties and responsibilities and belonging to a CoP in the early years of their professional life.

In the words of an IAS officer (IAS; 1960), 'the things is you have to have a stomach for challenge....in the IAS if you do not have guts, courage, you are really not able to function...and an IAS officer still needs the ability to stand up to events' (Ghose, 2011). According to one of the interviewee (IAS;1956) with regards to learning about the tasks and responsibilities of an IAS officer in the early years of their life:

*"I think one cant impart knowledge in these matter, either you got it or you not got it and then whatever you learn, you learn through the process of working, the process of discharging your duties you learn."*

In the words of one of the interviewee (IAS;1966):

*"...one thing which the service has taught us is generally you have to be self-dependent, you cant keep on asking questions all the time. You should have become a person who is matured enough to tackle one's own question."*

and then proceeds to narrate an incident where the interviewee(IAS;1966) broke open the godowns to release food grains for the flood victims and there is one statement which epitomises this spirit of being active:

*“I couldn’t get anybody to get clearance in one day and I asked the DM ‘Please give me the clearance’ and he said ‘No No you cant do anything like that’. Right, I was SDO but I wanted to do it, then what I did I forced open the godown with police and all, Magistrate and everything and took out 10 truck-loads of rice.”*

According to the researcher the phrase “..Right, I was SDO but I wanted to do it” is what lucidly captures the spirit of a fresh recruit IAS officer and summarizes the entire mode of learning through participation amongst the IAS officers forming a learning-based CoP. Recollecting the early days of fresh recruit IAS officer making the way through different postings in the District Administration one of the interviewee(IAS;1957) mentions:

*“You had to be be very much on your own.”*

And then goes on to elaborate:

*“I can’t say personally that I benefited very much from anybody, in these things you learn on the job yourself..”*

while describing his challenges as a District Administration official of a large district in West Bengal.

The words of another interviewee (IAS;1973): “....but at the end of the day I think I had to fend for myself” summarizes it all, the challenges of learning rests upon the active participation of a fresh recruit IAS officer in executing the tasks and discharging the responsibilities of the district administration.

Significantly this spirit of being active withers and ebbs with flow of time and one cannot locate the same zeal and enthusiasm amongst the senior IAS officers serving at the Secretariat level as evident from the interview transcripts. The discrepancy between District Administration and the later stages has been discussed separately in another chapter. In conclusion, the learning process through active participation supported by a CoP happens most effectively at the District Administration where again the fresh recruit IAS officer spends most of his early professional life, nearly 10 years, moving from the periphery to the core of the CoP of IAS officer. Hence the CoP-based learning process of active participation by newcomers is most

effective and relevant for IAS officers since most of their early years is spent in the site of most active participation: District Administration.

The researcher thinks would be prudent at this stage to define and delineate the participation activities into two different categories:

1.0 Knowing through Participation - Routine Tasks & Responsibilities

2.0 Participation 'On the Spot' – Crisis Situations

The nature of participation varies according to the two different kinds of activities engaged by the IAS officers, routine responsibilities and addressing crisis situations like floods, riots and political violence.

#### 8.8.5.2 Knowing Through Participation – Routine Tasks & Responsibilities:

The process of an IAS officer learning about the roles and responsibilities through participation can be best exemplified by a humorous anecdote about a fresh recruit IAS officer who hailed from an urban background with practically no knowledge of rural life. This particular young fresh recruit during his training period was being taken on a district tour by a distinguished senior IAS officer, where he poses a query about farmers planting paddy, since it was the planting season.

In the words of one of the interviewee (IAS;1966) who narrates the incident with some relish:

*“So at that time this boy had never seen a village, never gone out, Calcutta boy, Presidency College, he was urban, completely urban, townsman. So at that time planting of paddy was taking place, in which the paddy the small seedlings, they are grown in small patches, and they are uprooted from there and then transplanted in the main patch and then grown there by the Japanese method by tillery. So they are carried by the farmers. So he asked the senior IAS officer, “Sir what are these farmers doing by carrying grass?” the senior IAS officer told him “Why don’t you get down and ask the farmers why they are carrying grass?” so the senior IAS officer made him get down from the jeep and drove off leaving him there.”*

The interviewee (IAS; 1966) then sums it up as:

*“...That was his moment of learning, it happens.”*

Here one finds the clear emphasis on learning through participation, the senior IAS officer felt that the young fresh recruit needs to experience and understand first-hand the realities of village life and the cultivation of crops. The senior IAS officer did not indulge in any abstract explanation of the difference between paddy and grass and let the fresh recruit IAS officer explore it himself.

In the words of another interviewee (IAS;1963) reminiscing his first posting as a trainee Assistant Magistrate prior to assuming independent charge:

*“He did the right the thing by ignoring me most of the time during the training program so that I went running around talking and interacting with clerks, sub-divisional officers in the collectorate learning about how the revenue munshi worked.”*

In the words of another interviewee (IAS;1956) when summarizing the learning process of IAS officers in a CoP while being fresh recruits in the IAS profession:

*“.....you learn through the process of working, the process of discharging your duties you learn.”*

This process of working independently holds the key for the fresh recruit IAS officer to learning by participation in the early years while discharging duties. According to the researcher the fresh recruit IAS officer assumes roles and responsibilities of a civil servant through this process. The enormous significance of participation as a learning mechanism is described by one the interviewee (IAS;1958):

*“.....nothing that a training academy could have taught us, nothing that our universities taught us would have equalled this actual real-life experience and that was never delivered in one straight dose, it came little by little, little by little.”*

This participation within a CoP is what describes and captures the learning mechanism for fresh recruit IAS officers and can be termed as one of the building blocks of the learning-based CoP of IAS officers. According to the interview data and literary textual material there seems to be tradition and method in imparting the skills and knowledge through participation for fresh recruit IAS officers in the routine activities of District Administration:

*“The normal BDO was sent out on training, we were put in there, and we were just thrown there and said ‘you work now’ so for 3 months we learnt what the lowest*

*structure in the revenue administration how it functions. We had to look after everything, right from the revenue collection to the law and order to the development work, everything was done by the trainee for about 3 months, and there was only a Joint BDO to help us out and no one else. And this where I learnt most of my work,....”*

The interviewee (IAS;1963) describes in detail the action he adopted to stop siphoning of kerosene fuel by black-marketeers in his early years of posting as a SDO:

*“And then what we started doing is creating roadblocks within my subdivision escorting these kerosene lorries with police help, little bit of police help to the nearest police station and then distributing against cash and card, that was the kind of scheme which came about later on.”*

This typical example where the young fresh recruit IAS officer learnt about the methods and means to deal with hoarding and pilferage without any textbook example, formal training or instruction from seniors but by sheer participation in the process is a demonstrative example of Participation-based learning. In another instance where the interviewee(IAS;1963) actively participated and made a decision was with regards to health and safety issues concerning a cinema hall, where the license for a cinema hall has been issued by his superior IAS officer, the District Magistrate. On one of his visits to that part of the district where the cinema hall was located he went in for an inspection since he was responsible for that part of the district and found several errors concerning health and safety regulations like the position of the fire extinguishers, distance between two rows of seats and excessively sloping balcony so he wrote a notice and closed down the hall. Surprisingly though the license was issued by the District Magistrate the interviewee (IAS;1963) was supported in his decision and the license was not awarded.

In conclusion, the fresh recruit IAS officer actively participates in the processes of administration in turn facilitating their learning processes which confers on them the active dynamic membership of CoP of IAS officers belonging to West Bengal cadre.

#### 8.8.5.3 Participation ‘On The Spot’ – Crisis Situations:

This is one of the unexpected themes emergent from the interpretation of the interview data which is beyond the scope of the theoretical framework of LPP, i.e. the concept of Learning by Participation. Learning by Participation is explained with instances apprenticeships for the professions of midwives, tailors, quartermasters, meat cutters and non-drinking alcoholics and the study locates apprenticeship in the arena of Situated Learning through case-studies of each of these professions (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The proposition of Lave and Wenger (1991) lies in the formation of CoPs as part of the learning mechanism of the apprentices and CoP-based learning through LPP is the model of apprenticeship. This specific case-study research is conducted with the theoretical framework in mind as that of the ones mentioned in the above case-studies of apprenticeships.

The important contradiction which should be mentioned is that the process of Situated Learning of IAS officers hardly resemble anything similar to these-mentioned apprenticeships since the roles and responsibilities are far more independent and the nature of participation of the IAS officers being highly individualistic compared to the case-studies mentioned by Lave and Wenger (1991). This case-study research concentrates on the IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre and their CoP-based learning communities.

One of the most striking and startling themes which emerge is the confrontation with crisis situations in case of fresh recruit IAS officers at an early stage in their lives. This is a research finding beyond the scope of the current theoretical framework since none of the professional apprenticeships involved encountering situations where decisions involve the life and death of human beings, perilous situations where entire communities can be affected adversely or dealing with highly sensitive volatile individuals. Thus unique to the IAS officers and their 'apprenticeship' or induction into the core of the CoP of IAS officers from the periphery is their engagement which brings them close to such challenging situations on a frequent basis and in some postings or districts on a regular basis. Rarely apprenticeships involve a decision-making process with regard to handling a violent political mob on its way to torch an entire village or rival religious groups well-equipped with arms and armaments prepared to plunge into a large-scale violence engulfing an entire town in bloodshed and carnage or large-scale evacuation of millions in a flood

situation. Important to emphasize that these crisis situations and emergencies need to be confronted and dealt with successfully within their first few years of professional career. This, in terms of participation, is a huge challenge for most of them right in the very first year of their posting as SDO, where they would have to deal with communal riots, political violence, volatile religious processions and severe floods. This is even before they assumed independent charge as District Magistrate.

It would be prudent to list out the kind of typical crisis situations and emergencies confronted by fresh recruit IAS officers in their early years:

- 1.0 Communal Riots – fighting and violence between 2 different groups whether linguistic, religious, caste, community or any other forms of socio-cultural identity.
- 2.0 Floods – some of them man-made due to discharge of excess waters by the dams.
- 3.0 Natural disasters – droughts, cyclones, landslides and the accompanying relief work.
- 4.0 Political Violence – violent mob aggression by a particular political party.
- 5.0 Volatile situation – like a contentious religious procession or large-scale hoarding of food grains or fuels involving large masses of human beings.

Interpreting the interview data, the transcripts, the central significance of these crisis situations emerges through their narration of life-stories, experiences and in the literary materials of memoirs, biographies and journals. The centrality of dealing with crisis situations and emergencies is evident from the interview transcripts with their repeated occurrences and is a key part of their life-stories.

The researcher proposes that this mode of participation requires dedicated discussion and analysis. According to the researcher the rationale for the separate section for discussion and analysis with regards to participation is in the very spontaneous, erratic nature of participation in confronting such situations as explained below. Some of the factors which make the participation in such situations deserving special attention:

- 1.0 Erratic nature of the situations – unpredictable and one can't be prepared.
- 2.0 Participation with Spontaneity – react within very short span of time.
- 3.0 No possible standard method of participation– each situation is different and peculiar.
- 4.0 Participation with confidence – more than correctness of response the requirement is that of confidence and courage.

The researcher wishes to highlight that in most of the case-studies of apprenticeships as part of the Situated Learning theoretical framework the process of imparting knowledge and information to the newcomers is embedded within the CoP; by seniors with wider and more experience based on several techniques including direct explicit support, sharing of anecdotes and story-telling drawing on the past instances of performing a task or responsibility.

According to the researcher, knowledge and information concerning dealing with crisis situations is impossible to impart to a large extent by the conventional methods mentioned as part of the Situated Learning theoretical framework, the reasoning being that these situations elicit sharp, prompt and spontaneous response without much reflection and thought. During the process of taking decisions the memory of old stories and tales does surely assist in terms of providing a frame of reference but the action has to be one's own judgement.

In the earlier section the case-study research have explored the knowing through participation in routine tasks and discharging responsibilities, exposing the fresh recruit IAS officer to skills and knowledge required to perform routine tasks and executing responsibilities of the Administration, specifically District Administration.

The question arises as to what does a fresh recruit IAS officer learn through participation in such crisis situations and emergencies, what exactly is the 'knowledge' in knowing achieved through participation in such situations.

The form of knowing through participation in such crisis situations and emergencies can be summarily defined as below:

- 1.0 Adhering To The Rules And Regulations- Legal Framework:

There is a fascinating narration by one of the interviewee(IAS;1966) about a political mob marching with flame torches towards a village which they planned to incinerate and the interviewee (IAS;1966) then Assistant District Magistrate in his early years of IAS took a radical step realizing the seriousness of the situation in his own words as below:

*“...the CPIM MLA was leading an unruly crowd to storm a village and set fire to it, they were carrying mashals, you know what mashals are, torches, big torches. So I ordered firing, now the constables could not fire, there were 2 constables carrying rifles, 303 and the fingers have jammed out of fear, when you have fear then you freeze actually. So I snatched one gun from constable and I fired 2 rounds, that is I fired twice and took precaution to not to fire it at the people. I fired it above their heads, now everybody ran, the reaction is really astonishing, really astonishing, one has to hear to believe it and about 30-35 people crouched in the field, they crouched in the field in fear, we arrested them.”*

The interviewee (IAS;1966) clearly violated the law since it stated that

*“..In the Police Regulations of Bengal, 1943, which regulates all types of action, be it police or Magistrate, there is no authorization of a Magistrate firing, the Magistrate can order a firing but he cannot fire himself.”*

Astonishingly the senior IAS officer District Magistrate candidly withdrew his support for his actions and warned him about the dire consequences and in the words of the interviewee (IAS;1966):

*“I was a Magistrate, so when I came back at that time the DM told me that you will lose the job.”*

The interviewee(IAS;1966) did not receive any support from his fellow or peer IAS officers. As the narration evolves, the interviewee (IAS;1966) mentions that he was exonerated by the political leader of the area for saving the regional government, since the entire village would have been burnt down and would have caused a major political crisis. The senior IAS officer, the District Magistrate completely withdrew support to the interviewee(IAS;1966) and admonished him for his actions, though very apt and laudable given the backdrop of the situation. This instance clearly demonstrates that the IAS officer had to operate within the limits of legal regulations and the membership of CoP demands that. Clearly the CoP will collectively

withdraw its support if any of them operate outside the boundaries of the legal framework irrespective of how noble the cause is.

The lesson to be drawn from this episode in the interview data is that even when one has stunning performance in addressing a severe crisis situation or emergency the boundaries of rules and regulations would decide his evaluation by the senior IAS officer.

Clearly the knowledge received through participation in such crisis is that no matter how severe the situation is, it is better to always try to operate within the prescribed rules and regulations. Participation in crisis situations and emergencies are wrought with risks of transgressing the rules and regulations.

## 2.0 Responding To The Situation- Swift And Playing It Safe:

The researcher wished to investigate the kinds of knowledge acquired through participation in crisis situations and emergencies, the first one being no matter how severe the situation is better to always attempt to work within the stated rules and regulations. Interpreting the interview data and the literary material one of the key lesson emerging for most of the fresh recruit IAS officers is the ability to respond in a very short span of time.

In the words of the interviewee (IAS;1957) about the key lessons learnt while dealing with an insurgency:

*“The main thing was to avoid incidents, it was the SP, mainly the SP’s job, my job was to support the SP in his job, so something needed to be told him to go careful on certain things mine was seeing the overall role. But what I meant is my experience as such, that is a good experience handling a sensitive law and order situation without aggravating it, without creating any situation so that is that.”*

The researcher proposes that the above extract very lucidly captures the key lesson in handling of all these crisis situations; not aggravating it and keeping it under control. This requires a personal judgment and a sense of intuition as to where things can go wrong based on the assessment of the situation, which can never be imparted through formal or informal training. Similar thoughts were echoed by the same interviewee (IAS;1957) in a situation where he had to deal with severe floods and landslides a sort of worst in decades:

*“You use your common sense, you know what is required on the ground that your officer tells we are running short of tents, these medicines are in short supply, these bleaching powder is needed, various mundane things.”*

In this specific research the attributes of commonsense and intuition or a sense of judgment are not just innate but sharpened through experience and participation in crisis situations and emergencies. It is evident that as the fresh recruit IAS officer progresses in the professional life these early encounters stand as a learning experience or repositories of lesson learnt from where they can draw upon.

#### 8.8.6 LEARNING BY ‘OBSERVANT’ PARTICIPATION:

The current research literature on Situated Learning (Lave & Wenger; 1991) focuses on the ‘apprenticeship’ model as a site where the CoP-based learning mechanism is being recovered through case-studies. In this particular study of ‘apprenticeship’ model the role of the experienced senior members of the CoP is to impart the knowledge and information necessary to perform tasks and discharge responsibilities of the particular profession through performing the tasks in the presence of the juniors, so there is observational learning.

In the theoretical framework on Situated Learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) there is elaboration on the process of learning by observing others and being observed in cases of apprenticeships so this aspect is not the new emerging theme, but the nature associated with it. Learning by observing is existent but there is not much discussion about the framework for imparting skills and knowledge (Handley et al., 2006). However the mode of observational learning in case of this particular case-study of IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre is more ‘emotional’ than cognitive ‘inspirational’ and the fresh recruit IAS officers learn more than specific skills and knowledge required to perform tasks and discharge responsibilities. This inspirational model of learning has been discussed separately in the section on new emergent themes.

In the next few sections the researcher will explore the nature of Learning by ‘Observant’ Participation; how do they learn and what do they learn.

##### 8.8.6.1 ‘Observant’ Participants In The Process – Tradition:

There is a tradition as discerned from the interview data interpretation, of accompanying the senior IAS officer as a fresh recruit IAS officer on the district tours, when negotiating with politicians, interacting with broader public on issues of concern. Most of the fresh recruit IAS officers during their training period are placed under the tutelage of senior IAS officer in the District Administration, usually the District Magistrate, the senior-most IAS officer. In the words of one of the interviewee (IAS;1957) talking about the learning process from District Commissioner during his training program:

*“He would give me opportunity to go on tours with him, accompany him, see at first hand, ..... He also took personal interest, he will take me along with him to see at first-hand.....so he would take me with him”*

Summarizing the essence of the training program as a fresh recruit IAS officer:

*I mean we have a training program when you are in the district for a year, whole year’s training program where you are attached to different departments, say treasury, sub-divisions and all that. But what we are supposed to learn most is from the Deputy Commissioner himself.”*

This tradition is manifest in the words of an IAS officer (IAS;1965) ‘as a probationer the training did not communicate any central ethic of what the service is all about’ and he adds further ‘my idea of what a good officer should be came largely through my reading and watching some of the ICS officers’(Ghose,2011). Here clearly it is discerned the long tradition dating back to when ICS officers were actively serving of imbibing lessons through the observation of the seniors discharging their duties and responsibilities.

#### 8.8.6.2 Learning By ‘Observant’ Participation – Practical Lessons:

According to the researcher there is a distinct thread discernible in the case-study of CoP of IAS officers and specifically belonging to West Bengal cadre the incredible contradictory existence of ephemeral and concrete realities, just when the researcher has identified a factor which is abstract, immediately in the next stage of interpretation reveals some very practical and pragmatic factors within the learning-based CoP. In this section on learning by ‘observant’ participation the researcher identified inspirational qualities driving the CoP and now the light will be shed on some of the more practical aspects of IAS tasks and responsibilities learnt through ‘observant’ participation. The significance of Codes of Conduct playing a key role

in the CoP-formation is evident through the case-study interpretation, and it is important for members of the CoPs of IAS officers to learn and follow the Codes of Conduct to continue to be part of the CoP. This inference about adherence to the Codes and Conduct and CoP-membership has been discussed in a separate section.

Hence for the CoP-based learning mechanism of the IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal, cadre Codes of Conduct are an important source of knowledge to perform the tasks and responsibilities of an IAS officer. Important to note that the senior IAS officers take efforts to convey the Codes of Conduct as part of the learning process within the CoP. The researcher feels it would be prudent to present an extract of the transcript of the interviewee (IAS;1971) where a concrete practical lesson was learnt from being an ‘observant’ participant:

*“There used to be a very turbulent MLA called Narayan Choubey, MP sorry, in Kharagpur, he used to always create problems, problems in the sense that on very small insignificant issues he would sit on the railway track and stop the movement of railways. So Siddharth Shankar Ray, he was the Chief Minister, he was very fond of Dipak Ghosh, he used to be very furious with Narayan Choubey because of his disruptive activities, so once he was coming to Midnapore for a program in the afternoon around 3 o’clock, you know Siddharth Shankar Ray was a little vacillating type of a person, Dipak Ghosh had a perfect understanding of the personality. So in the morning he said ‘Today that I am going to Midnapore I will meet you’ he used to come by helicopter. ‘But in the meantime by 10 o’clock you arrest Narayan Choubey I cant stand him anymore, yesterday he stopped all the train movements.’ So we were all sitting over there when the instruction came then Dipak Ghosh repeated that this is what the CM told me over the phone, then he kept quiet. Then we asked him, ‘What happened sir, will he not be taken into custody’ he said ‘You keep quiet and see what happens’. Then the CM arrived at 3 o’clock, the first thing he asked the DM at the helipad, DM and we had all gone to receive the CM, so the CM asked ‘Have you arrested Narayan Choubey?’ Dipak Ghosh said ‘No I have not arrested him.’ then he said ‘Yes, You should not have arrested him’ because by at that time he has changed his mind, and Dipak Ghosh perfectly understood what he was going to say. So this is how situations cropped up and he had many unique and ingenious ways of getting things done....”*

Here the interviewee (IAS;1971) in his first posting as SDO learnt the key lesson to not follow instructions from the Chief Minister, or the political bosses unconditionally but to exercise the judgement and develop an understanding of the mind of the political bosses. In the words of another interviewee (IAS;1973) explaining how she learnt about dealing with political situations:

*“I mean I wasn’t born with these qualities when I was a junior officer I observed my seniors, I observed my seniors working and picked up tips from them. It need not be by a process of dialogue and me ringing up the phone but more a process of osmosis.....”*

And the interviewee (IAS;1973) went on to narrate an interesting anecdote about observational participant learning with respect to one of her junior IAS officers:

*“Also Observing, also Observing...there maybe situations where no words are exchanged just observe. I will give you an example when I was in Bankura as a District Magistrate I had an Assistant Magistrate(AM) who was from Rajasthan who used to follow me around like a ‘Mary had a little lamb’ that was his job. He was to observe me and to learn...”*

There was a particular situation of a burial ground dispute where the interviewee (IAS;1973) had to rush along with her junior IAS officer and settle the dispute. According to the interviewee (IAS;1973) the dispute was settled primarily by allowing the disgruntled public to express themselves and then instituting a land survey team to ascertain if it was a religious burial ground. The junior IAS officer then asked the interviewee (IAS;1973) about her method and approach:

*“When I was returning the AM asked me “how did you allow these people to abuse you so ghastly as if they were your boss?” and I said ‘that’s how you operate in Bengal, you allow the public to shout and scream and after sometime they get tired and agree to your solution. Didn’t you notice they agreed to our solution?’. He said “I did that but in Rajasthan no DM would agree or tolerate”.”*

The interviewee (IAS;1973) proceeds to explain that the junior IAS officer in later years was completely integrated with the West Bengal work culture. In the words of the interviewee (IAS;1973) offers an explanation of the learning process:

*“As Assistant Magistrate he learnt only by observing, I did not really give him much of a lecture. There was no time to sort of expand on that theme. You see its totally*

*informal, not a structured thing, if you try to structure it then it slips and slides away, a very intangible, a very nuanced kind of thing.”*

According to another interviewee (IAS;1957) the essence of IAS officer training program in the first phase after recruitment and completion of formal training at the Academy was:

*“I mean we have a training program when you are in the district for a year, whole year’s training program where you are attached to different departments, say treasury, sub-divisions and all that. But what we are supposed to learn most is from the Deputy Commissioner himself, how he meets the members of the public, how he deals with problems so that way he was an excellent gentleman.*

*He would tell me that the formal program and all that is there, but he used to involve me whenever anything important he was handling..... he was handling it personally and so he would take me with him, how he was talking to the police, how he was handling the matter and so it gives you an insight.”*

The interviewee (IAS;1957) goes on to elaborate about the things he learnt while under training from the senior IAS officer, his immediate superior:

*“The main things is to learn from them, how they behaved in public, how they handled situations and he used to give me assignments to enable me to go and to handle independently and so on and that is when you learn.”*

Interacting with the general public and engaging them in discussions is something clearly learnt through ‘observant’ participation as echoed by another interviewee (IAS;1973). The interviewee (IAS;1973) recounting her experience and puzzlement during her training days as a fresh recruit IAS officer in engaging with the typical rural themes and topics being an urban person:

*“I will tell you, when I was a Trainee Magistrate, my Collector or District Magistrate was a gentleman who had joined the IAS from the army quota, he was an ex-service person and he used to take me around on all his tours within the district, wherever he went he used to make me accompany him, and he would tell me “You observe how I deal with the people, the way I approach them on something, the issues I talk about and even the way I sit with them and talk to them” he says “you just observe it after we come back we will sit and analyze the whole thing” .”*

the interviewee (IAS;1973) goes on to explain that one of the key challenges she confronted as a trainee IAS officer was her unfamiliarity with the world she was operating in:

*“I mean this was a world I was not used to, I was used to a city world, I am an urban person, I never lived in a village and to have to deal with the people of a village was for me a totally different ball-game.”*

The second extract was quoted by the researcher to establish a very important point that how some of the key challenges confronting a fresh recruit IAS officer can be addressed by ‘observant’ participation. The interviewee (IAS;1973) needed to learn in order to proceed in her professional life as an IAS officer to engage in conversations with the wider public and definitely the rural folk in the first few years of her working life. In conclusion, within the IAS the learning by ‘observant’ participation offers some very practical, concrete and valuable lessons.

#### **8.8.7 IDENTITY FORMATION THROUGH PARTICIPATION:**

According to LPP model of CoP-based learning mechanism identities are acquired through participation in the social practice. Learning thus implies metamorphosing into a different kind of person enabled by the system of relations within the CoP(Lave & Wenger,1991). Hence the process of learning involves construction of new identities, the more one learns the more one emerges as a new kind of person. Identities of persons belonging to the CoP evolve through relations between persons and participation. In regards to Participation, the identity formation happens through an ‘ongoing flow of reflective moments of monitoring in the context of engagement in a practice’ (Giddens, 1979). These reflective moments are embedded in the participation of practice. Here identity is defined as the way a person perceives and understands oneself and the way is viewed by others, a perception of self which is both related to the self and the social world around (Lave & Wenger,1991).

The focus on identity in the CoP literature has not emphasized the process of identity-construction in the context of Situated Learning (Handley et al., 2006). Identity in the context of Situated Learning is defined and explored in terms of practice and participation (Wenger, 1998). Sense making within the context of CoPs play a very key role in identity construction, in other words sense-making of

their belonging influencing the concept of the 'self', group and the location; 'who am I', 'who we are' and 'where we are' (Coakes & Smith, 2007; Carbery & Murphy, 2007). It has been observed through several studies that individuals belonging to CoPs can be distinguished by their shared perceptions, actions, and thoughts and there tends to be a strong feeling of self-identity of being situated in the CoPs, and strong identification with CoPs is often encouraged and perceived to be a key success factor for a successful CoP (Contu & Willmott, 2003; Pastoors, 2007). Here the researcher will explore the different mechanisms of identity-formation within a CoP through participation in Practice.

#### 8.8.7.1 Identity Formation Through Participation – Role Perception:

Identity is acquired in the case of a fresh recruit IAS officer through the role-perception of being a civil servant, administration official. The routine performing of tasks and discharging responsibilities modifies the perception of the role expected to be played by the individual, here the fresh recruit IAS officer influences his or her identity. Role perception is a process by which individuals absorb, coordinate and translate the sensory stimulus in the professional environment into significant relevant information relating to their performance of the work (Saha, 2008). Role perception influences the performance of an individual at the workplace (Gibson *et al.*, 1982).

The researcher wishes to conclude that the role played by a fresh recruit IAS officer would be constantly defined and negotiated through participation in the administrative tasks and responsibilities. Role perception would be drawn from the individual impressions derived from participating in the practice of administration. According to Saha (2008) the role expectation of an individual can be broadly defined as below:

- 1.0 Expectations of the duties and responsibilities from the person.
- 2.0 Boundaries and scope of the individual responsibilities.
- 3.0 Individual's relationship within the organization and outside, the beyond.

In case of this particular research the organization can be referred to as the District Administration where the fresh recruit IAS officer is posted. The responsibilities and relationships do extend beyond the immediate District Administration since they

are part of the bigger and broader Indian administrative machinery and the political structure. This happens most actively and acutely during the early years of their posting, particularly at the District level in their years prior to assuming independent charge.

The researcher wishes to propose that the CoP membership and participation is a key facilitating process for the fresh recruit IAS officer in understanding their role-perception and the expectations from their position. As mentioned earlier by the researcher this role-perception is under constant negotiations and changing patterns which occurs within the CoP aided by the support structure. In other words active participation in the social practice of the CoP enables the fresh recruit IAS officer to negotiate and come to terms with the role-perception and hence their new identity.

At this stage the researcher will consider some of the key factors influencing the expectations, responsibilities, boundaries and scope of their positional authority and relationship with the outside world at large, all key factors mentioned above.

There is a positioning of the IAS officer within the broader society and the District Administration.

#### 8.8.8 SOCIAL VALIDATION:

According to the researcher this is one of the most fascinating concepts to emerge from the interview data, the notion has been succinctly explained by one of the interviewee (IAS;1963):

*“Then I thought....very deep you know that is the kind of thing which many of us seem to have forgotten over the years... we look for legal validation for whatever we are doing, but sometimes social validation is more important than legal validation.”*

The definition of social validation as explained in the interviewee(IAS;1963)’s own words can be understood by a context where he was forcibly bringing oil-tankers and lorries to the nearest police station and then distributing kerosene oil against valid documents to prevent pilferage and hoarding. At one point this method concerned him since there was no legal basis or regulatory order backing him and sought the counsel of his superior IAS officer who said:

*“SDO doesn’t have to bother about laws and rules when he knows he is doing the right thing, in support of people, the people whom he is expected to serve”.*

Social validation can be defined as the legitimacy of an action by an IAS officer in the larger interests of the people, general public even where there is no legal or regulatory order supporting the IAS officer.

The interviewee(IAS:1963) passionately explained that this notion of social validation emerged as an important part of being an IAS officer more so in a District Administration, where one was confronted with constant challenges affecting people's lives. Social validation had a legacy and tradition within the Civil Services dating back to the ICS days and then passed on to the IAS officers:

*“Certainly Social validation was important factor in many cases, something which the good old ICS officers would do, or for that matter the earlier generations of civil servants actions based on social validation who were our seniors.”*

The interviewee(IAS;1963) specifically spoke about flood relief work or developmental work where a fresh recruit IAS officer or even an experienced IAS officer had to find ingenious ways and means to assist the general public and do things for the larger public benefit where there were no support provided by the regulatory framework including budgetary one. In his own words:

*“..when we did flood relief and that kind of work, that is the kind of thing you know, where there were no budgetary support for such programs there were no national programmes, rural employment programs where the funds come from government of India. So that is what I mean by social validation. Make people around him understand that something must be done for their own benefit...”*

Another interviewee (IAS;1974) narrated an incident in her first posting as SDO where she had to stop a sensitive religious procession which was going to turn violent. Subsequently she faced an inquiry commission where some of the community religious leaders have filed a complaint against her. The interviewee (IAS;1974) mentions the most gratifying was the acknowledgement by the general public despite the impending legal difficulties, describing in her own words:

*“But what I found what shall I say, what I really felt was that next day the ordinary citizens of the town came to my office and said ‘Madam we are thankful to you that you saved us yesterday from being killed between this quarrel about playing of music before a mosque and temple in fact I mean all types of people came. It is not*

*that only one particular community came, not that, it was ordinary citizens, it was people who lived in the bazaar, it was the municipal people, they all came and thanked all of us, that we took a stand which saved the town from being generally massacred”*

This stands out another glowing instance of social validation being bestowed on an IAS officer, in both cases fresh recruit IAS officers, for having taken a decision outside the strict confines of the law in the broader interests of the people.

According to the researcher the section on social validation would be incomplete without the noteworthy mention of the daring and bold actions by an IAS officer interviewee (IAS;1966) on two counts; breaking into a Food Corporation of India godown without an authorized order and releasing food grains for the flood victims and the other being when he personally fired few gunshots in the air to disperse a mob on its way to torch an entire village. The interviewee(IAS;1966) faced disciplinary action and reprimand in both cases but finally emerged unscathed due to the appreciation of the larger benefit accrued to the general public. In case of the violent mob an entire village would have been burnt down leading to a severe political crisis and the other extensive relief for flood victims who were starving for food.

In the words of the interviewee (IAS;1966) with regards to the legal reprimand being faced for breaking into the food grain godown:

*“But the point is somebody had to intervene on my behalf and what I did was irrelevant, and what I did was for a good cause. So sometimes you have to do something for a good cause.”*

The interviewee (IAS;1966) goes on further to interpret actions which were of the social validation nature, larger good for the broader public without any legal or regulatory support and their justification:

*“You know it could be considered a huge misdemeanour, but a misdemeanour by a government servant it is not intended to benefit anybody personally, but to benefit a community or another district to me is justified but to most of my colleagues it is completely unjustified.”*

According to the researcher social validation requires a certain amount of courage and conviction amongst the IAS officers and a firm belief in their role as servants of the state, acting in the larger interests of the public. The researcher observed from the interview data and the literary textual material that social validation is strongest in the early years of a fresh recruit IAS officer and steadily declines over a period of time. Besides there is a distinct CoP formed around senior IAS officer who believe and encourage junior fresh recruit IAS officers to pursue social validation.

#### 8.8.9 CUSTODIANS OF THE LAW –FOLLOWER OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION:

The role of IAS officers as custodians of democratic order of India and follower of the Constitution plays a very significant part in the polity. India declared itself as a constitutional republic on the 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1950 which is celebrated as the Republic Day with fanfare. The writing of the Indian Constitution by an assembly headed by Dr. B.R., Ambedkar is a significant milestone in the Indian history and is celebrated as a symbol of triumph of India's democratic aspirations.

Certainly the notion of being guardians of the Indian Constitution influences the identity of fresh recruit IAS officers, and this is instilled right from their days as a trainee Assistant Magistrate. In the very candid words of one of the interviewee (IAS;1966):

*“And as we went along we generally learnt that the Constitution of India is something like a bible, and we follow the constitution because all the laws which are operating in our country they emanate from the constitution, that gives the license for all the systems we have in our country. So we have to uphold the law, we have to uphold the regulation, we have to uphold the system,.....”*

In a lighter vein the interviewee(IAS;1966) mentions:

*“That means Rules and Regulations became the main things, now once you get into rules and regulations..... We got more or less incinerated by the religion of rules and regulations and that's why they say bureaucracy is not even responsive.”*

The researcher wishes to draw attention to the fact that the entire CoP of IAS officers is centred around the adherence of the laws, the rules and regulations.

Although the earlier sections discussed instances of infringement but they are more

the exception than the rule. Expressing the problems interviewee(IAS;1966) experienced in one of the crisis situations where he did not strictly follow the legal orders:

*“No nobody can stand by you in these things, illegal.”*

Clearly the support of the learning-based CoP is defined and limited within the bounds of the rules and regulations drawn by the laws of the Constitution of India.

The notion of upholding the sovereignty of the country is strongly inculcated within the fresh recruit IAS officers by the formal and informal training imparted, and the conversation within the CoPs. The researcher feels it would be prudent to consider few extracts from the interview data with regards to this notion of ‘custodianship’ of Indian laws and regulations and how it influences the participation in the Practice of the CoP.

According to one interviewee(IAS;1971) who was nervous about a particular unfavourable decision made with regards to a politician and who directed him to be inactive in pursuing an illegal case of land encroachment approached his senior IAS officer for advice:

*“So at that time I was in a quandary about my legal position in this matter so I went to a senior officer and asked him and he said my legal position was absolutely correct as a court of law no one could interfere not even the minister which gave me a lot of confidence. So I came back and threw this man out.....”*

As evident the correct legal position assured him of the appropriateness of his actions, and the senior endorsed his actions. The learning-based CoP support here was extended by the adherence to the correct legal position.

In the words of another interviewee(IAS;1956) who adopted a tough stance against the misdeeds of a politician and was under immense pressure and his response to the political boss on his request to to release the ones arrested some of whom were the politician’s relatives:

*“No why should I release them? If I had done anything wrong then the superior District Magistrate or Additional Magistrate he can come and withdraw all the cases, I cant, if I got to release them then I will release everyone else selectively I can release these two’.”*

This demonstrates the ‘playing by the rule’ character of the fresh recruit IAS officer in his first posting as SDO. Some of the fresh recruit IAS officers acquire a reputation for being tough, assertive and strict with regards to implementation of the laws of the land, one of the interviewee(IAS;1973) describes her unsavoury reputation for the junior staff in her administration:

*“when I was ADM I was very very tough I mean 2 rupees stolen and I would have a fit, I mean I was a greyhound going around sniffing ensuring that money should not be stolen.”*

In the instance of interviewee(IAS;1974) confronting a rail accident in her administrative area wondered if she had any role to play since the Ministry of Railways is supposed to attend to the site with relief work was reminded of her roles and responsibility:

*“my joint BDO said ‘Madam it is in your area, it is for you to go and see what help is required, what help is not required, I mean what is not required from your side, do the Railways require your help? You are the BDO of this area and it is your duty to see everything is all right, whether it is your revenue, whether it is your law-and-order, even if there is a Railway accident you have to go’. So he taught me that I have to go there, attend to the situation, take the measures necessary, take the steps necessary for the people who have hurt and injured....”*

Clearly the above example demonstrates there are rules and regulations dictating the response of the District Administration in cases where there are multiple Ministries and Departments involved.

In conclusion, the notion of custodianship of rules and regulations based on the laws of the Indian Constitution influences their identity through participation in the practice and the CoP-formation is based on these ethos.

#### 8.8.10 EXPRESSING IDEAS AND THOUGHTS – ‘OPINIONS MATTER’:

According to the researcher the most significant influencing factor in shaping the identities of the fresh recruit IAS officers through participation is the eliciting of opinions on matters of policy importance. The rationale proposed by the researcher is that when a fresh recruit IAS officer is invited to express ideas and thoughts on critical policy matters like irrigation, flood relief work, women health it conveys a

sense of importance to the opinions held by the individual. In other words the fresh recruit IAS officer learns that his or her ‘Opinions Matter’ which in the opinion of the researcher is of tremendous significance for the identity-formation.

There were occasions where the fresh recruit IAS officers themselves were surprised with the seriousness which their opinions were treated like the case of the interviewee(IAS;1963):

*“Did not expect to take it seriously and without editing and had sent it to the Govt. of West Bengal I expressed anger and anguish in that report and did not expect a senior IAS officer, a District Magistrate who was on the verge of becoming a secretary in the WB to take a young man’s view on the subject seriously and send the report without any extra remark or comment as his own report to the government for redressals and action.”*

This report was concerning irrigation systems provided for a plantation which he was critical of in his report, which was asked by his superior IAS officer as part of his training of the interviewee(IAS;1963) says:

*“Now once I produced a report which I guess is naive by today’s standard, I wrote the truth. I went and produced it to my District Magistrate and I said the irrigation is total farce and is helping the wrong people, and the not the people it intended. The alignment of the water channel was wrong inclination of the irrigation pipes are all wrong. Even to me sounded to me like a very very shall we say naïve kind of report and did not expect anyone to take it seriously.....”*

As evident, the interviewee (IAS;1963) was surprised by the seriousness accorded to the report. In the case of interviewee(IAS;1958) it came as a complete shocking surprise when on his trainee posting was directed to prepare a report on the damages inflicted by one of the worst floods in his district by the Chief Minister of the state. Attempting to find a way out of this imbroglio he approached his senior IAS officer who responded:

*“Well since the Chief Minister have reposed faith in you so you better go and find out...”*

In the case of the interviewee(IAS;1971) the report sought by his senior IAS officer made him create history in the world of Indian entertainment during his early years

of posting in the Central Ministry in New Delhi, the interviewee(IAS;1971) found an innovative solution to the launching of the first FM radio in India:

*“I had a series of interactions with officials of AIR and then we suggested that you start the FM radio, then they said ‘Where is the money’ then we gave them the idea of sponsored program. Then this FM started with our active involvement and now you see that it is a most popular channel.”*

This ‘opinion matters’ confidence which is created amongst the fresh recruit IAS officers can manifest as mentioned in an earlier section impacts their identity as masters of valuable knowledge of public policy.

### **8.9 NEW EMERGING THEMES - ELABORATIONS:**

During the process of analysis there were some new themes which emerged with regards to the Learning mechanism through CoPs and have been stated as below. These themes are the ones discovered beyond the confines of theoretical framework of Situated Learning where LPP and Story-telling are explanation of the learning processes within a CoP. The new themes which emerged were:

1. Paternalistic Mentoring
2. Role-Models – Learning from ‘Pantheons’
3. Codes of Conduct
4. Power Relations

#### **8.9.1 SITUATED LEARNING – UNEXPECTED EMERGENT THEMES:**

The current research literature on Situated Learning (Lave & Wenger; 1991) focuses on the ‘apprenticeship’ model as a site where the CoP-based learning mechanism is being recovered through case-studies. In this particular study of ‘apprenticeship’ model the role of the experienced senior members of the CoP teach the knowledge and information necessary to perform tasks and discharge responsibilities of the particular profession through assistance in performing the tasks, so there is observational learning.

In the theoretical framework on Situated Learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) there is elaboration on the process of learning by observing others and being observed in cases of apprenticeships so this aspect is not the new emerging theme, but the nature

and the processes associated with it. Learning by observing is existent but there is not much discussion about the processes of learning and the possible use of role-models in the CoP-based learning mechanisms. Here this aspect of learning by observing has been explored between senior IAS officers and the fresh recruit IAS officers.

The fresh recruit IAS officers belonging to West Bengal cadre learn more than just specific skills and knowledge required to perform tasks and discharge responsibilities. In the next few sections the researcher will explore the ephemeral aspects of Learning by ‘Observant’ Participation; Paternalistic Mentoring and deploying of Role-Models.

#### 8.9.2 PATERNALISTIC MENTORING:

Mentoring emerges as an important facilitating process in the induction of fresh recruit IAS officers to the CoP of IAS officers belonging to West Bengal cadre, the key role of senior members of the CoP played is that of the mentoring of the newcomers and is an important dimension of the learning mechanism. Reminiscing the early years as a fresh recruit IAS officer the interviewee (IAS;1973) refers to the incredible amount of mentoring by her senior IAS officers:

*“Its not such a formal kind of mentoring isn’t it its totally informal, its absolutely informal”.*

In the words of another interviewee (IAS;1974) explaining as to why senior IAS officers were better equipped as mentors to advise on problem-solving vis-à-vis peer or fellow IAS officers:

*“Well I wouldn’t elaborate much excepting to say that the seniors have the distance to give you that that mentoring which distance is not there in your peers.”*

Clearly the mentoring process; the counselling of junior fresh recruit IAS officers by the senior IAS officers is a very important theme of the learning-based CoPs formed by the IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre.

The process has been termed as the ‘paternalistic mentoring’ by the researcher, where the mentoring process happens by transmission of thoughts and ideas in the form of a counsel about performing the duties of an IAS officer.

Paternalistic in the sense that the senior IAS officers treat the junior fresh recruit IAS officers, the newcomers to the CoP, affectionately as members of the family,

more like the younger offspring. This is more striking in the earlier generations of IAS officers, the ones who joined in the IAS in the 1950s and 1960s when most of the ICS officers were in charge, and there were a number of IAS officers drawn from the British Indian Army returning from the battlefields of Second World War.

Interestingly this paternalistic benign culture prevailed as late as in the 1970s as explained by the interviewee (IAS; 1971):

*“.... during those days were so excellent that they used to treat the young, unmarried SDOs as members of their family. So this is all that I can say, there are not that many stories of interest that I can narrate to you but we had very nice and pleasant experiences.”*

This notion of treating young fresh recruit IAS officers as members of the family provided the framework for imparting skills and knowledge through ‘observant’ participation mode and the broader training under the tutelage of senior IAS officers. At this stage the interviewee (IAS;1974) sought the counsel of one of her senior IAS officer who offered her advice:

*“Then I turned to one of my earlier bosses, I asked him ‘Can I come and discuss this with you?’” I went to him and he listened and he advised me, he explained to me certain things, and I realized that I was trying to break my head on an issue where I was not going to win. You know that was something which was bugging me. He brought back a certain calmness and perspective in me.....”*

And then she narrates a particular incident of having a brush with one of the senior politicians who interfered with her tough stance on corrupt practices and ended up in a crisis, being transferred from her post, where she explains her situation:

*“You know you feel so helpless at times that, there isn’t anyone you can discuss this with in the office, there was nobody we could discuss this with in the office.”*

### 8.9.3 ROLE MODEL - LEARNING FROM THE ‘PANTHEONS’:

The learning process in this specific research of the learners, i.e. the newcomers to the CoP involves transmission of knowledge through ‘latent’ indirect participation by observing their senior IAS officers at work who demonstrate the required skills and knowledge while performing their tasks and responsibilities as an IAS officer. Hence the researcher terms the source of inspiration as ‘Role-Models’, the senior IAS officers who stand out as shining instances to be followed in their own

professional life. In this particular research the learning process is in contrast to the existing themes since the relationship with the senior IAS officers, i.e. more experienced members of the CoP is highly 'inspirational', 'emotional' and 'adulatory' where the fresh recruit IAS officers hold their senior IAS officers in highest esteem, as expressed by the interviewee (IAS;1963)

*"I have generally enjoyed a lot of support from my seniors all my life and in fact I have received all my life some and most of them become part of the shall we say pantheon of my if not gods, heroes, whom I remember all my life, many of whom have crossed over and are no more, for example a man like J C talukdar known as chowki talukdar, who was from the Royal Airforce one of those war recruits into the IAS and he was my transport commissioner when I was deputy secretary(transport). And much later, 2-3 years later when I was District Magistrate in Howrah he volunteered and he had no business to do so, he came along and decided to add himself to my flood relief team, assist in my relief operations, and inadvertently take charge though peripherally without interfering with my work".*

Most of the fresh recruit IAS officers speak of their former superiors in complete awe and admiration transcending much beyond their role as mere conveyors of knowledge and information required to perform tasks and responsibilities. In the words of another interviewee (IAS;1971) referring to few of his senior IAS officers: *"That is the type of person one would idolize" or ".....was also a remarkable human being."*

The researcher wishes to establish the novelty of the theme in the nature of 'learning' more inspirational than cognitive, more supportive than interventionist, more indirect than direct transmission of knowledge and information. Expressions like 'idolize', 'pantheon' clearly reach beyond the conventional learner relationship within the framework of Situated Learning within a CoP as evident in the research literature.

Drawing on the interview data transcripts and the literary textual material the researcher wishes to establish that the notion of 'Role-Models' play a significant role in the processes of learning within the CoP of IAS officers belonging to West Bengal cadre. Role models occupy a significant position in the CoP-formation where a fresh recruit IAS officer is drawn by their instances and example which is to

be followed and they emerge as important part of the stories and anecdotes, the shared repertoire of the CoPs.

The relationship between the junior IAS officer and their senior is a life-long one while in service as expressed in the words of another interviewee (IAS;1974):

*“It is part of the learning process, when we joined as youngsters our seniors used to give us emotional counselling.”*

And the same interviewee (IAS;1974) goes on to describe her experience of going on duty tours with her senior IAS officer:

*“I was fascinated with the range of topics he could talk to these people about, the medical services, the medical help there, the veterinary help there, were they getting work..”*

Describing the chaperoning of one of his senior IAS officers while on duty conducting flood relief work in his tenure as a District Magistrate, who brought along with himself huge hamper of sandwiches and crate of chilled beer the interviewee (IAS;1963) says:

*“I tell you this man was a great inspiration to me apart from the sustenance that he provided with in the form of sandwiches and chilled beer. Here was a man leading and not interfering with my work and yet providing a lot of emotional support and as we talked about social validation for whatever we were doing. His one example of providing social validation to what we are doing by being actually there. Also agreeing with what we were doing.”*

Here again the notion of moral, indirect support is evident in the indirect learning by participation provided by the senior IAS officer.

Referring to the first Deputy Commissioner, the interviewee (IAS;1957):

*“...he was very nice person, very an excellent civilian who was a personal role-model.”*

In conclusion, the learning by participation in the CoP of IAS officers involved fresh recruit IAS officers observing the senior IAS officers performing their tasks and discharging their responsibilities. The impressions created in their minds were far deeper than the transmission of knowledge and skills required to perform their routine tasks and responsibilities, in other words there was an element of inspiration. Hence the processes of facilitating learning, the transfer of knowledge and skills

required to perform the tasks and responsibilities were driven by emotional factors like inspiration, awe and admiration.

#### 8.9.4 LIFELINE OF THE CoP OF IAS OFFICERS – CODES OF CONDUCT:

According to LPP the learning process of the fresh recruit IAS officers involves moving from the ‘periphery’ as a newcomer to the IAS CoP to the ‘core’ as to how perform the tasks and responsibilities of an IAS officer. During this process there is a sense of belonging which is created through participation in shared practices and values. Values are embodied in the Codes of Conduct and is a criterion for belonging to the CoP; the rules of membership dictates that one shares this with the rest of the members, particularly the old-timers with the new comers. One of the findings of this specific research has been the theme of Codes of Conduct for learning-based CoP-formation amongst IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre.

Here the processes of learning involves engagement, awareness, imbibing and cherishing of the Codes of Conduct. The cherished values of the interviewee(IAS;1957) were made explicit while comparing the IAS recruits in the early 1950s and 1960s drawn from the Armed forces, the officers returning from the Second World War, being part of the British Indian Army:

*“...but on the other hand I always found the army recruits were better at management, leadership and in being good leaders. The regular recruits were mostly self-seeking individuals, careerists and stuck-up, they were not as good leaders as some of the people from the army whom I found, I found them far better.”*

It would be prudent to present an incident which was narrated by one of the interviewee (IAS;1957) while organizing flood relief work:

*“He was politically inclined, my DM at that time, he wanted me to involve the political elements also which I flatly refused.”*

The interviewee (IAS;1957) further elucidates the stance he adopted during the flood relief work:

*“.....and said ‘No I will not do that you want me to increase team organize faster relief I need more manpower you can give me more officers but I will not hand it over to the political element.’ You can say that was my first, I never got along and never been trying to cozy up with my senior officers and that thing.”*

In earlier sections of the interview this interviewee (IAS;1957) mentions about some of the key lessons he learnt from his admired role-model or mentor:

*“.....Anything I learnt from him is that you don’t have to cow down to the politician and can hold your own.”*

An important reality which emerges is the breakdown of the CoP when the senior IAS officer does not share the same Code of Conduct with the fresh recruit IAS officer as evident in this incident, the CoP was surely not there and not functioning.

In the words of another interviewee (IAS;1956):

*“...I will give you one example, this is the CPM(Communist) government I speak of now, there was a communal violence in the district of Malda and the District Magistrate reported to the government that the local CPM goons are responsible for it, they caused the communal flare-up. When the CM saw this he called the Chief Secretary and said “How can this happen?” and the Chief Secretary then was my batch-mate who said, “No don’t worry I will rectify this”, then the Chief Secretary sent for the District Magistrate and tells him “You write Congress in place of CPM” and District Magistrate says “How can I do that because the Congress was nowhere in the scene, it was the CPM who caused the trouble?” So he said “You wont write it, then that’s fine.” Then he was immediately transferred, so this one the hand shows on one hand what the Chief Secretary was, a total self-seeker and on the other hand shows what the young District Magistrate was, he was totally independent. This was in the year 1990-1991. Successive Chief Secretaries have been cast in this mould.”*

Important to observe and note how the whole CoP is fragmented and dissipated in this specific case, the entire notions of ‘Scaffolding’ and ‘esprit de corps’ is turned on its head and guile and vendetta takes over. Thus the researcher wishes to highlight the key and significant role played by the notions of Codes of Conduct in holding together the CoP of IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre.

The interviewee (IAS;1956) proceeds to explain the reason for such behaviour on part of the Chief Secretary and other IAS officers and why he is unaffected:

*“.....becomes the Home Secretary, a known CPM sympathizer in fact I have described him as a local committee member of the CPM not even the District*

*Committee since he take orders from the local committee members.....I have not hankered for any postings..”*

Earlier the interviewee (IAS;1956) talked about the decline of values in the IAS:  
*“Now with the progress of time I will say this in one word, one word, ‘Officers(IAS) have become more self-seeking’ do you understand, ‘in the sense they don’t care what is right and what is wrong they care for only that which is good for them, they carry out the orders of the ministers irrespective of the orders are right or wrong.....If everyone works with the same spirit then it’s all right...Everyone is self-seeking, everyone.....Each is looking after their own interest, no one will look after you..”*

At this stage the researcher wishes to tabulate the notion of Codes of Conduct and how it translates into Practice which is derived from the shared values of the CoP. The tabular format explains with the two instances how a practice is evolved around Codes of Conduct and is absolutely critical for the sustenance of the CoP.

In both the above cases one finds the fragmentation and dissipation of the CoP when there is a violation of the shared Codes of Conduct.

Evolution of Codes of Conduct and Practice in CoP	Interviewee 1	Interviewee 2
VALUES	No selfish pursuit of career goals at any price – being the typical maverick	Not to hanker for higher postings – being content and proud with one’s position as an IAS officer
CODES OF CONDUCT	Not to appease political bosses while making a decision	Being truthful and honest in reporting situations though uncomfortable for political bosses
SHARED PRACTICE	Not to involve and engage political bosses in flood relief work	Not to write a report which is favourable to any political interests without reflecting the real situation

**Table 22 - Evolution of ‘Codes of Conduct’ and Practice in CoP - source: developed by the researcher**

At this point the researcher proposes that the critical factor of CoP-formation and the sustaining of it, i.e. the LIFE LINE are the Codes of Conduct. The observation from interview transcripts and literary textual material is that without the shared Codes of Conduct the CoP of IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre dissipates and fragments.

The disturbing point should be mentioned that in absence of the shared Codes of Conduct a frightening situation of abandonment, guile, vendetta and infliction of harm by the senior IAS officers on the fresh recruit IAS officers arises.

In fact the researcher argues that primarily it is the Codes of Conduct which is learnt through stories and sharing of anecdotes to a large extent rather than specific skills and competencies required to perform the tasks and discharge responsibilities.

In the case of one of the interviewee(IAS;1971) when referring to one of his mentor hero ICS officers and his communication with him in a period of professional crisis when the interviewee was summarily transferred from his district posting for arresting a political leader for violent behaviour against officers. The ICS officer gentleman wrote him a letter on his transfer and this what the interviewee (IAS;1971) narrated:

*“Dr. Ashok Mitra wrote to me a letter saying that he had made the mistake of taking the Tehbhaga law seriously, when the Tehbhaga law was passed that the land must go to the tribal. So he camped in Sagardighi with his wife in a tent and ensured that the tribals got their land he was summarily transferred. So he says that the day I was leaving a tribal came in tatters to see me in my Bungalow with a slender gold chain and handed it over to me and saying ‘because of you I have got my land.’ He refused to take the gold chain but the tribal would not go away he had to take it he said that ‘it is the love of the people that will sustain you throughout your life because you have done the right thing always and I am sharing this with you.’ he said’ that is because that is what had happened to me in my life’.”*

Clearly the ICS officer gentleman narrated a story to this interviewee from his own life as an administrator to convey a powerful lesson, i.e. the spirit of service, the values which one should pursue. This value system has been developed into a Codes of Conduct and is one of the building blocks of the CoP formation.

The researcher drawing on the interpretation of the interview data, textual, literary textual material proposes to enumerate the shared Codes of Conduct of the CoP as evident from the case-study of IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre:

### CODES OF CONDUCT OF CoP OF IAS OFFICERS:

1. Non-appeasement of political bosses in matter of decision-making.
2. Discouraging formulating favourable reports when the reports are not reflecting the ground reality, the reports are sacrosanct and should not be tampered with.
3. Ability to speak the truth even when uncomfortable for senior IAS officers and the political bosses or the general public.
4. Not to be a self-seeker hankering for opportunities and postings.
5. Independent style of decision-making in crisis situations, being bold and courageous and not to bow down to any pressure; here not just political but even from rival communities. There is a strong notion of taking a stance.
6. Respect and regard for the general public, the notion of acting in broader public interest.
7. Humane approach to administration, keeping the public good in mind at all times.
8. To be firm and fair with the junior IAS officers; never reprimand them in public but in private and always praise them in public.
9. Always support your junior IAS officer if they have done the right thing and taken the right actions, and 'support them to the hilt'.
10. Assist all the team members irrespective of IAS officers or not, and offer a patient hearing to their problems and sorrows and help them to the best of one's ability.
11. Leading by example – for instance being there with the 'team' when flood relief work is being conducted
12. Adhere to the rules and regulations and operate within the boundaries and restrictions of the legal framework.

## **8.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY:**

The results of the case-study discussed in this chapter clearly indicate the existence of CoP-facilitated learning, i.e. Situated Learning. The researcher wishes to state in this context the process of Situated Learning within the West Bengal cadre IAS officers was vibrant and alive. Retired IAS officers provided the complete perspective of CoP-facilitated learning mechanism as manifested through their entire career, and enabled them to compare the CoP-formation at different stages in their professional life as an IAS officer. The mechanisms of Situated Learning investigated were primarily Storytelling or sharing of narratives and Participation in the form of LPP.

Storytelling or sharing of narratives played a major part in the process of induction of newcomers and their subsequent movement from the periphery to the core of the CoPs, which is a fundamental aspect of Situated Learning. The learning through storytelling or sharing of narratives extended beyond the mere acquisition of skills and knowledge to perform the tasks and responsibilities of a fresh recruit IAS officer. In this dimension the CoP-formation is a very fascinating process with the sharing of narratives conveying the legacies, traditions, values, Codes of Conduct thus influencing the identity-formation of the fresh recruit IAS officers.

Participation as part of the LPP process has a long tradition and history within the IAS as evident from the interview data and textual sources and hence is deeply embedded in the learning process. Here the notion of ‘Scaffolding’, the senior member of a CoP, in this case senior IAS officers supporting, assisting the junior member of the CoP, in this case the fresh recruit IAS officer is highly prevalent. The interview transcripts are replete with stories of ‘Scaffolding’ by senior IAS officers. There was emergence of interesting concepts which were beyond the conceptual framework designed by the researcher for the case-studies, one of which was standing by your juniors in times of crisis. This was a fascinating notion widely celebrated which encouraged fresh recruit IAS officers to take decisions under trying circumstances when facing natural calamities, riots or communal violence.

The influence of ICS is existent and their contributions are celebrated apart from being held as ‘role-model’ civil servants. Legacies and traditions of ICS have been discerned through the third decade of post-independence India, and many of the

respondents have been mentored by them. Some of the other newly emergent themes have been treated in the chapter extensively but only one need mentioning here, the importance of Codes of Conduct. There seems to be an agreed, succinct Codes of Conduct which facilitates the forging of the bonding necessary to form CoPs and this seems inviolable and is passed down generations. Any mild infringement of the clearly stated Codes of Conduct leads to immediate fragmentation of the CoP. Apart from the categories confirming the vibrant existence of the process of CoP-facilitated Learning, that is Situated Learning, the interview transcripts provided a fascinating insight into the organizational context of West Bengal cadre IAS. Triangulation was deployed with wide plethora of available textual and literary material in the form of memoirs, biographies, diaries, journals and media articles.

## **9.0 CASE-STUDY – KARNATAKA CADRE INNOVATION:**

### **9.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION:**

The current chapter is engaged in the dissemination, presentation and analysis of the case-study findings in the context of the research questions and objectives in the format of a textual commentary of the case-site (Eisenhardt, 1989). The next section is discussing the different themes, categories and sub-categories which were tools for interpretation of the interview data according to the conceptual framework which was derived from the theoretical framework of CoP-based innovation mechanisms. Though the case-background and details have been discussed in an earlier chapter but it is being discussed here with elaboration. The researcher felt that it is necessary to discuss the details and the context prior to the analysis and presentation of the findings. This is an unusual case-study which is discussing the failure discovered as part of the investigation process, the fragmentation of the CoP which in turn leads to disintegration of a CoP-based innovation mechanism.

### **9.2 DESCRIPTION OF CASE-SITE:**

The case-study intended to identify the processes of ‘innovation’ that is the ‘implementation of new ideas’ through the mechanism of CoPs. The theoretical framework developed by the researcher for the CoPs identified Learning and Innovation as the two practices. In the case-study on innovation Karnataka IAS cadre was selected since the previous pilot-study was conducted there. The researcher sought the appropriate and relevant case-site to study innovation and the search ended at the doorstep of Karnataka Energy Regulatory Commission. The rationale for selecting Karnataka Energy Regulatory Commission is explained below:

- 1.0 The organization was the outcome of a new practice as part of the broader deregulation of electricity and power generation.
- 2.0 Key mandate of the Commission was to set tariffs and evolve a pricing mechanism considering the private power producers and generators. This was a major departure from the past where the government bodies unilaterally set tariffs and prices.

3.0 The Commission had to address the grievances of both the producers and the consumers through a tribunal mechanism where it heard petitions challenging its own decisions.

4.0 Promotion of renewable energy and power was one of the key objectives.

These four major points which were part of the mandate of the Karnataka Energy Regulatory Commission qualifies as innovation since they were all new practices being introduced in the energy sector. This was the first time the end-consumer of electricity was taken into account and offered a redressal of grievance facility.

In the opinion of the researcher studying the processes of implementation of these new practices would be an interesting laboratory to highlight CoP-based innovation mechanism. Karnataka Energy Regulatory Commission is the case within the broader Karnataka cadre IAS which is being studied for CoP-based innovation.

#### 9.2.1 DESCRIPTION OF CASE-SITE – KERC:

Karnataka Energy Regulatory Commission (henceforth referred to as KERC or Commission) is an independent regulatory commission set-up under the Karnataka Electricity Reform Act 1999. The act provided for the constitution of an Electricity Regulatory Commission ("The Commission") for the State of Karnataka with the following broad goals and objectives:

- to provide for the restructuring of the electricity industry in the State.
- the corporatisation of the Karnataka Electricity Board and the rationalization of the generation, transmission, distribution and supply of electricity in the State.
- to provide for avenues for participation of private sector entrepreneurs in the electricity industry in the State.
- taking measures conducive to the development and management of the electricity industry in the State in an efficient, economic and competitive manner.
- to provide reliable quality power and to protect the interest of the consumer including vesting in the Commission the powers to regulate the activities of

the power sector in the State and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

This Commission is headed by a Chairman who is usually an IAS officer and staffed by individuals who have requisite qualifications and competence in the power sector with an assured independence including economists and technical experts.

Some of the defined routine tasks and responsibilities of the Commission are:

- 1.0 Licensing of companies providing electricity services,
- 2.0 Approving the establishment of new capacity at the minimum possible costs through a process of competitive bidding.
- 3.0 Monitoring the operations of the licensees
- 4.0 Establishing tariffs in accordance with the principles laid down in the legislation for achieving objectives of this Policy.

One of the key mandate of the Commission in the initial stages were to introduce necessary modifications in the tariff structure which will progressively reduce cross subsidies and eventually resulting in their withdrawal. The small rural consumers and the rural poor need were to be protected. The tariff will also have appropriate incentives for supporting a programme of load management and Electricity conservation.

It is worthy mentioning that in the early formation days of the Commission a senior level steering committee headed by the Chief Secretary was established to provide policy guidance and monitor the implementation of the Reform Programme. There was a proposed task force headed by the Secretary to Energy Department of the Government of Karnataka set up to manage the routine activities of the implementation of this new power and electricity regulation program. This was perceived by the researcher to be an ideal location for the nurturing of CoPs with the possibility of forging informal networks around the domain interest of power and electricity deregulation.

### **9.3 COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE – INCUBATOR OF IDEAS:**

The researcher introduces the idea of CoPs as being the incubators of ideas which translate into innovation through modification of existing practices and introduction of newer practices (Coakes & Smith, 2007). It is therefore argued, Communities of Practice as being one of the vehicles for facilitating and empowering innovation.

The current research theoretical framework deploys the idea developed by of CoInvs, a form of Community of Practice which are ‘specifically dedicated to the support of innovation’ Coakes & Smith (2007), serves as a theoretical framework for the KERC case-study. The concept is that of CoPs steering innovation are formed around pioneers of innovation, individuals who ‘champion innovation’ through the organization. CoInvs emerge as the safe havens for nurturing, encouraging and disseminating innovation and are the repositories of knowledge for the entire organization. These CoInvs facilitate diffusion of new practices based on the ideas and knowledge developed within the CoPs through the organization.

Here the CoInvs are formed around an individual ‘Innovation Champion’ (Glynn, 1996) who are pivotal to the success of innovation and have the social skills, experience and expertise to translate the innovation into a change in ‘work practices’. In the KERC case-study the researcher will track the process of innovation diffusion which is the process of communication through ‘certain communication channels over time among the members of a social system’ (Rogers, 1995). In the KERC case-study the researcher reverses the study of innovation process and its diffusion by initially identifying the new practices which have been implemented in routine practices of the administration. The focus will be to detect and locate CoInvs in the KERC engaged in the energy policy tasks which emerges as safe nurturing places for creative ideas and in turn translate these ideas into newer practices. Interestingly as explained earlier KERC working groups draw members from other departments related to energy and power supply.

According to researcher the process of analysis would involve the following:

- 1.0 Identification of new practices which have been implemented.
- 2.0 Locate the individuals who were involved in this implementation process of the new practice.

- 3.0 Investigate the social interactions through interviews for all the individuals involved to ascertain the formation of a CoP centered around innovation i.e. the CoInvs.
- 4.0 Record the data and interpret to locate the operation of a CoP-based mechanism for the implementation of the new ideas into new practices.

**9.4 DATA COLLECTION FOR THE CASE-STUDY - CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS:**

Interviews were the primary source of data collection as in earlier case-studies. In the present case-study there were not adequate literary textual material like biographies and journals which revealed the CoP-based innovation process. The available textual data was with regards to the new practices introduced along with economic rationale and the proceedings of the meetings of the Commission. This provided information on the details of the innovation, the new practices being introduced by the KERC but not the social mechanism of CoP.

**9.4.1 IDENTIFICATION OF INTERVIEWEES:**

The researcher identified the IAS officers connected with the KERC who either served in their board of Directors, mostly as Chairman or with the associated ministries and departments like energy, renewable Energy, public sector undertakings engaged in the power generation and distribution sector. The interviews were expected to reveal the workings of an informal network of innovators, a CoP of innovators, or innovation champions, i.e the CoInvs.

Accordingly the researcher identified about 10 IAS officers, both serving and retired who would have been connected with the KERC as a CoInvs.

Total number of interviewees identified = 10

Total number of interviews conducted = 4

Number of recorded interviews = 1

Number of retired IAS officers = 1

Number of telephonic interviews = 1

Number of refused interviewees = 6

Most of the IAS officers of Karnataka cadre refused to participate in any recorded interviews who were either active in any form or engaged with the KERC presently or in the past. Only the Chairman of the KERC consented to be interviewed and recorded in his office. The researcher attempted to interview one former Chairman who refused recording and the rest were busy.

#### 9.4.2 ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEW PROCESS:

In this case-study the researcher deployed participant-observer method along with the formal interviewing to generate information and data about the particular case. One of the observations of the researcher while interviewing serving IAS officers in the State Secretariat is the recalcitrance in sharing and exchanging information. In case of serving IAS officers courtesy was extended to the researcher on recommendation of fellow or senior IAS officer for an appointment at their office and a gracious cuppa tea was served. The researcher observed the incredible reluctance in engaging in a candid conversation about the questions, relating to their experiences with the fellow or peer IAS officers or their senior IAS officers.

Their statements were rather scripted and measured which made it extremely difficult to understand, comprehend, capture and record the social processes and mechanisms associated with innovation. This influenced the quality of the interview data which did not 'tell the story' the researcher wished to capture and record. Importantly the researcher wishes to emphasize that this case-study research investigation was about the social reality, the processes and mechanisms of human interaction facilitating innovation and not just about the number of innovative practices adopted by the KERC.

The objective being not to assess whether innovation exists within the KERC but if the processes of innovation, the adaptation of new ideas into newer practices is facilitated and driven by CoPs existing between the IAS officers engaged with the KERC in one form or the other. In that respect when the researcher realized the fragmentation of the CoP, or in other words there is no existence of a CoP in the KERC framework the innovation dimension was rendered irrelevant. Case-analysis shifted focus to interpretation and investigation of the fragmentation of the CoP.

Surprisingly the retired IAS officers were equally reticent and lacked the enthusiasm in sharing their stories and anecdotes when probed about the KEREC. With regards to one of the interviewees who was a retired IAS officer, his eyes lit up and was quite animated when speaking about his district years and then the conversation ended with more sharing of his innovative practices as a District Commissioner. It would be worthy to mention that this was a sharp contrast to the data obtained for the earlier pilot study conducted on the Karnataka cadre to ascertain if Communities existed as defined within the framework of CoPs between the IAS officers.

The researcher wishes to introduce a measure, the length of the answers to the questions posed by the researcher in minutes, was far lower when they spoke about Secretariat days rather than District days. In the view of the researcher this measure is very important for the nature of the study being conducted to identify a social process like CoP-formation and the subtle mechanisms within the constructivist philosophy.

#### **9.5 CASE-STUDY ANALYSIS:**

The first observation is that there is a clear fragmentation of the CoP as evident from the unrecorded interview transcripts at the KEREC level. This was evident from the refusals for interview for research purposes by the IAS officers, in contrast to the earlier pilot-study in the Karnataka cadre IAS officers, who were keen to accommodate the researcher for the interviews. Interestingly this was the case at the broader level of IAS officers serving in the Secretariat, non-district postings including West Bengal which has been discussed separately in the conclusions chapter. A witty anecdote might illustrate this phenomenon; one of the IAS officers in the West Bengal cadre narrated to the researcher the insider joke about one of his seniors whose name was 'Anish' and was called by that name in the early years and once they reached the state secretariat they nicknamed him as 'Anishta' which in Bengali means someone who spoils other's trip by doing harm.

Hence the phenomena of fragmentation of CoPs in the KEREC instance is not confined to Karnataka cadre alone. It would be prudent to broaden the findings of the KEREC-innovation case to include the IAS officers of the Karnataka cadre. In turn one can extend the discussions to encompass the broader IAS collective across all the cadres and generations since this finding emerges in other cadres as well. In

this aspect the researcher has relied on textual literary material as triangulation data to capture this fragmentation of the CoP at the senior levels in the State Secretariat. The second observation is that Innovation is present and occurring at the State Secretariat level as per the earlier definition, so the process of implementing new ideas is alive. However the process of innovation is not facilitated or empowered by a CoP, the CoP-based innovation is not evident from the analysis conducted by the researcher of the KERC case. The process of innovation is discussed in a separate section.

#### 9.5.1 FRAGMENTATION OF THE CoP AT THE SECRETARIAT LEVEL:

In the following sections researcher will attempt to explore and explain the possible reasons behind the fragmentation of the CoP.

##### 1.0 Sense of belonging – ‘internalizing’ practice:

The researcher wishes to propose the minimal volume of conversation in terms of time expended during the process of the interview is indicative of their levels of belonging in the practice, the social dimension of practice as in the CoP.

The contrast was striking when the interviewees were talking about their early years of posting in the Districts, important to highlight not the non-district postings even though they were in their early years of career, and this for the researcher indicated something beyond the immediate context and content. It would be prudent to mention that this did influence the research outcome in terms of identifying the practice dimension of CoP.

In the theoretical framework of this specific research there is a succinct identification of Community and Practice and their associated themes and categories. This guided the research process with the expected themes or dimensions of the Community at the pilot-study stage and then the practice at the case-study stage. In terms of Practice in the CoP there is a social dimension, the internalization of Practice for the newcomers joining the CoP. Hence the researcher wishes to propose that Practice in the CoP is not confined to the participation of the routine tasks and responsibilities associated with the membership of the CoP but a social one, the internalization of Practice.

This is best indicated during the conversation about their daily practices, participation in the tasks and responsibilities associated with the CoP. An insipid, lacklustre conversation clearly would indicate a limited engagement in the practice, lack of internalization or socialization of practice being a member of the CoP. The excitement and animation when IAS officers narrate their district years is clear and striking indication of their depth of engagement in the practice of the CoP and the internalization. Pride and joy in the daily routine accomplishments and achievements is what for the researcher conveys the level of internalization of the Practice in the CoP.

Noteworthy to mention that this 'excitement' factor was discernible among the retired IAS officers when talking about their District days some of which predates five or six decades. The 'Community' aspect remains intact amongst the serving IAS officers in the state Secretariat with the socializing through dinner, lunches, gatherings being frequent. According to the theoretical framework developed for this particular research only when the social gatherings propel the domain interest, i.e. the daily Practice it qualifies as a CoP, or else it's a social chatting session. The impression conveyed is there is no dearth of social gatherings amongst the IAS officers working at the Secretariat level and the community spirit is vibrant and lively.

Here the research method deployed was entirely participant-observation while the interviewees were speaking to the researcher about their practices at the Secretariat, and clearly it lacked the pizzazz and the touch of pride as compared to the District years, and in case of one of the interviewees the conversation drifted from the KERC case to his work in the district as a young District Commissioner.

In the words of the interviewee(IAS;1974) while describing his interactions with the fellow IAS officers:

*“Usually you see these get-togethers of batch-mates are quite frequent lets say, one of our batch mates is visiting from Delhi and we also say okay so and so is coming lets have lunch or dinner together. So we meet up somewhere and spend an hour during which time you get to know what's happening in Government of India in this ministry or that ministry and he gathers what's happening in Karnataka. So this is*

*one way of getting to know these things. You see among batch-mates means we are all at the same level, there is no formality in communication, we are very very informal.”*

The interviewee(IAS;1974) further explains his cordial relationship with the senior most IAS officer, the Chief Secretary:

*“I could drop in on him at his house and lets say on some occasion I have a dinner and I call all these people at a hotel for dinner. I am hosting it and usually I host it on my personal capacity, so all these people come and I don’t think we discuss these business there but generally hahah let us meet and have this discussion and work out.”*

The researcher did not consider the ‘social spirit’ or the ‘social glue’ (Gustafsson & Juriado,2007) factor as an important dimension of the community in the CoP due to the amorphous nature of the concept. This specific research only acknowledges the role of social gatherings as a platform for interaction and exchange between the members of the CoP; and does not consider the prevalence of social gatherings as an indicator of existence of a CoP. Community in the CoP exists only when the members posses a shared understanding, meaning and identity as demonstrated earlier in the pilot study.

Here Practice in the CoP exists only when the members of a CoP engage and participate actively in the routine practices, i.e. the tasks and responsibilities of the CoP with internalizing them. Hence the Community of the CoP is existent amongst the IAS officers serving in the Secretariat without the internalization of the Practice in the CoP.

## 2.0 Weakening of Codes of Conduct:

In the previous chapter where the researcher presented the case-study analysis of the West Bengal cadre IAS officers there was the newly emergent theme of Codes of Conduct. Interpreting the earlier interview transcripts it was clear that the CoPs start fragmenting once the Codes of Conduct disappear and disintegrate even at the early stages of IAS officers at the District level. The researcher applied this theme as part of the interpretation of the interview transcript of the KERC case-study and discovered it as a responsible element in the fragmentation of CoP.

Some of the identified Codes of Conduct which start gently crumbling the edifice of a CoP at the Secretariat level are:

1. Not to be a self-seeker hankering for opportunities and postings.
2. Always support your junior IAS officer if they have done the right thing and taken the right actions, and ‘support them to the hilt’.
3. Assist all the team members irrespective of IAS officers or not, and offer a patient hearing to their problems and sorrows and help to the best of ability.
4. Leading by example – for instance being there with the ‘team’ when flood relief work is being conducted.

According to a senior high-ranking interviewee (IAS;1976) the difference between the District and the Secretariat in terms of the relationship:

*“In the district the junior IAS officer is not looked upon as a threat by the senior IAS officer, but in the state Secretariat vested interests come into play and the senior does not enjoy the same relationship with the junior to the same extent.”*

the same interviewee elaborates that in the state secretariat:

*“There is less teamwork in the state secretariat but that does not impact the results but at the district it will have severe impact. In the districts you are far from the state capital and not affected by politics and left on your own.”*

In the words of another interviewee (IAS;1966) who worked with the KERC case:

*“Bureaucrats perceived the Regulatory Commission as trespassing their fiefdom and were resistant to the process. The IAS officers influenced the process of KERC formation which should have been independent.”*

The interviewee (IAS;1966) elaborates the kind of lackadaisical support provided by the senior IAS officers:

*“Chief Secretary and Power Secretary were not giving salaries to the staff members of the Commission. There was no support from the fellow IAS officers.”*

Here there is demonstration of the disintegration of the two most sacrosanct Codes of Conduct of the CoP-formation namely the support or ‘scaffolding’ provided to the junior IAS officer and the absence of ruthless pursuit of personal aspirations.

Surely there can absolutely be no CoP when the senior IAS officer perceives the junior IAS officer as a threat and someone to be kept at a distance. Personal

aspirations play a key role at the Secretariat level where there are plum postings to be acquired being close to the seat of power, and hence one of the important Codes of Conduct breaks down.

This is happening despite the social congeniality which exists between the IAS officers at the Secretariat level as explained in the earlier section. The researcher is of the opinion that irrespective of the bonhomie and social camaraderie existing the CoPs cannot function where the members do not support each other in performing the tasks and responsibilities or the Practice and perceive them as a threat. Clearly the success of a junior IAS officer does not bring immediate laurels for the senior IAS officer at the state Secretariat.

### 3.0 Relationship between Senior IAS & Junior IAS officers:

Particularly in case of the CoP of IAS officers there is a particular tradition and legacy of mentoring and senior IAS officers supporting the junior IAS officers in their execution of tasks and responsibilities. This has been termed as an important part of the Codes of Conduct of the CoP of IAS officers by the researcher. It would be worthwhile to consider the startling shift in that relationship between the senior IAS officer and the junior IAS officer at the Secretariat level vis-à-vis the District Administration. In case of another interviewee(IAS;1976) when asked if the researcher should speak with some of the former Chairperson of KERC there was a long silence and then a current IAS officer was recommended for further interviews. Astonishingly the previous Chairmen did not engage in the briefing to the same extent to their successors as evident at the District level. The researcher observed in conversations with the office staff that rarely any of the past officials drop by for a conversation or any form of discussion.

The contrast is sharper in the instance narrated by the interviewee (IAS;1976) when some of the junior IAS officers would call upon him for counsel or advice with regards to an energy policy matter:

*“they want to let's say do something like procurement of additional power or something else they telephone and say ‘Can we come over? We want to discuss something’ they come here and I invite my other colleagues(non-IAS including) in the Commission also and they informally place their problems before us. And We*

*would tell them what we think of the options they have, we don't pass any formal order it is 2 or 3 simple options. Think about it."*

Here the formal nature of interactions is clearly evident and glaring as compared to the District Administration where the discussions would have taken place in very informal settings without the presence of the larger team.

#### 4.0 Power-play & Intrigue – Durbar politics:

Most occurring explanation for the distancing of the relationship between IAS officers, both between senior and junior and the peers is this intrigue and power play which enters at the Secretariat level. The researcher has termed it as the 'Durbar Politics', the rough translation would be court-room intrigues and is a familiar term in the Indian common parlance.

Interactions within IAS officers posted at the Secretariat are constantly observed by the office staff and the rumour mills are running actively. This makes the interactions and exchanges restrictive even with the best intentions of the IAS officers working at the Secretariat unlike the District administration which is a world of the IAS officers removed from the glare of the power politics of the state Secretariat. In the words of the interviewee (IAS;1976):

*"The finance Secretary lets say he is having lunch with the Chief Secretary or Industries Secretary the 2 departments are agog they will think okay, they will notice it at least even if they don't discuss it...great animation The 2 departments will notice so the industries proposals will get cleared in Finance."*

This severely restrains the informal exchanges and interactions which is one of the building blocks of the CoP-based innovation network. The interviewee (IAS;1976) elaborates further the typical interactions between IAS officers posted at the Secretariat:

*"Something like that so it does not happen very frequently unless it is a structured event somewhere that even if they are friends."*

The researcher confronted adversity while attempting to secure interviews with some of the identified interviewees who politely refused being busy. In cases where they granted interviews the process was highly orchestrated with a sense emerging

of scripted responses keeping in mind the researcher's affiliations with their superiors.

### 9.5.2 STATE OF INNOVATION – HAPPENING AND ALIVE:

The case-study interviews and study of documents as part of the triangulation process revealed the implementation of two very interesting and important new ideas in practice.

Innovative ideas which were implemented by the KERC is as described:

#### 1.0 INNOVATION – 1

INNOVATION – ‘New ideas implemented in Practice’	Background Problem – Scenario	Implemented Solutions
Rationalization of purchase of power or electricity	Karnataka faced severe power shortages or crisis during the summer months. Most of the power is generated from Hydel sources and in periods of poor rainfall coupled with usually higher demand of power in summer months owing to air-conditioning there is a shortfall in supply. The state resorted to buying power or electricity at higher prices from other states in India during these months of shortfall thus raising the pressure on utilities and the end-consumers. Some occasions the utilities could not pass on the higher prices to the consumers thus creating financial losses for the utilities.	The KERC formulated a strategy to purchase power or electricity during the off-peak months when the price of power is not that high. This reduced the load on the utilities during the peak months when the demand is higher than usual. The spin-off of this solution was that the consumers were not charged higher tariffs and there was less financial pressure on the utilities.

INNOVATION – 2

INNOVATION – 'New ideas implemented in Practice'	Background Problem – Scenario	Implemented Solutions
Separation of the Power supply line to the Agricultural and the non-Agricultural consumers	<p>In the Indian states electricity or power supplied to the farmers is highly subsidized or free and hence non-metered. This encourages theft and inefficiencies of the utilities since there is no estimation of the amount of power supplied to the rural sector where the farmers are located.</p> <p>Although the rural sector has paying consumers for electricity which is lost in this process and utilities end up incurring losses.</p>	<p>KERC proposed the separation of the power supplied to rural areas into two separate lines; one for the agriculturists and the other for the non-agricultural sector. In this way the power supplied to the farmers could be accounted for and the power supplied to paying customers could be charged at normal tariff.</p>

**Table 23 – State of Innovation – source: developed by the researcher**

The theme which was of interest from the case-study perspective is the process of diffusion of innovation, which includes the implementation of the new idea, and here the scanner was on CoPs formed around Innovation, CoInvs and not the individuals engaged in innovation. Innovation in its own right is not interesting and relevant for the researcher and is only when it is facilitated by a CoP.

In this specific case-study research the mechanism of diffusion is facilitated by the CoPs hence the analysis is confined to identification of the factors leading to the fragmentation of the CoPs.

## **9.6 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS:**

The key conclusion of the analysis of this specific case-study of KERC as an instance of CoP-driven innovation is the clear fragmentation of a CoP, which leads it being a case-study of failure of innovation process facilitated by CoPs.

There is complete fragmentation of CoPs which stands out as the only and key conclusion of the analysis of this specific case-study of KERC. Innovation in its stand-alone position without any CoPs facilitating the process remains irrelevant for this particular research since the entire focus is to ascertain if the processes of innovation, implementation of new practices is facilitated by CoPs.

The researcher considered it important and relevant to identify the factors which led to the fragmentation of the CoPs as compared to the District Administration.

Importantly the fragmentation of the CoPs at the non-District level or Secretariat level is a broader phenomenon and not confined to the Karnataka cadre IAS as manifested in the KERC. The most astonishing dimension of the fragmentation of the CoPs is the reluctance of even the retired IAS officers from Karnataka cadre to engage in a conversation about their experiences in the KERC. This requires substantial discussions as to the rationale of this fragmentation which the researcher feels is contributed by the analysis of the KERC case.

### **9.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY:**

The results of the case-study on Karnataka cadre IAS officers discussed in this chapter clearly indicate the fragmentation of CoP-facilitated innovation, i.e. CoInvs. The case-site selected was the institution of KERC, which was an innovative measure for generation and regulation of energy and promotion of renewable energy, an new and developing form of energy which justified its selection for studying innovative practices. The researcher wishes to state in this context the process of innovation within the Karnataka cadre IAS officers was existent and alive with new practices being implemented and decisions made with respect to energy tariff mechanism and regulation of electricity but was not happening within the framework of CoPs. This is an unusual case-study analysis discussing the failure of the phenomenon being studied, here the CoPs as part of the investigation process. This case-study highlighted the stark differences of social reality at the Secretariats where the CoPs start fragmenting and disintegrating vis-à-vis the District Administration even though located within the same regional cadre. Participant-observation played a major role in data collection for the researcher for this case-study. Most important the chapter discussed the contradiction identified as part of this research on CoPs, that in locations where CoP-formation is highly expected given the nature of the tasks and responsibilities like the KERC, where the IAS officers are engaged in delivery of very modern and cutting-edge services, CoP-formation is not happening. CoP-facilitated innovation was expected to be the driving force for organizations contending with newer challenges like renewable energy but the results have been disappointing. The chapter explained and explored the possible reasons behind the fragmentation of the CoPs at the Secretariat level, here in this specific case, the KERC.

## **10.0 CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND REFLECTIONS:**

### **10.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION:**

This is the final and concluding chapter of the thesis and attempts to sum it up which includes the reflections on the research along with the personal reflections of the researcher. Broad key conclusions of the research are presented as a summary on the overall findings of the CoP-formation within the organizational context of IAS as the Indian administrative elite and covering both the cadres. This was felt important by the researcher to encapsulate the complexities arising out of applying a modern business management theory within a traditional civil service organizational context. There were some findings which emerged as relevant cutting across both the cadres, West Bengal and Karnataka and they have been discussed at length here. The findings on 'elite' research dimension have been discussed here with respect to the conceptual framework developed in the chapter on elites. According to the researcher though the elite dimension emerged with respect specifically to the case-study on West Bengal cadre IAS the elite dimensions of IAS needed to be discussed in the broader context of ICS legacy and tradition and representation of the Anglophone Indian upper-middle class society which influenced the elite character of IAS. In the concluding section the reflections have been discussed with the ending to this chapter with personal reflection.

### **10.2 KEY BROAD AND GENERAL CONCLUSIONS:**

The researcher feels that it would be absolutely necessary to summarize some of the key findings and conclusions drawn from this particular research. These conclusions pertain to both the case-studies and the IAS officers in general. The conclusions drawn here are related to the formation of CoPs amongst the IAS officers and the associated processes of CoP-facilitated learning and innovation.

1. The IAS officers do form a CoP in principle with shared meaning, shared identity and shared understanding across both the cadres studied, Karnataka and West Bengal.

2. IAS officers belonging to the erstwhile Presidency cadres, regions which were under direct British rule and governed by the ICS officers do form an elite group which influence their formation of CoPs. Their perceptions and behaviour display traits of an elite group which needs to be accounted for in the course of the study of an informal group formation. This is evident from the emergent findings from the West Bengal IAS cadre case-study.
3. The 'Practice' element of learning and innovation as delineated by the researcher is facilitated by CoPs formed by IAS officers as evidenced by the results of the West Bengal and Karnataka cadre IAS officers.
4. CoP-formation is fragmented and CoPs dissolve once the IAS officers start working at the State or Central Secretariat level. There is none or rather feeble CoP-formation at the Secretariat level as evident from the research on Karnataka cadre IAS officers case-study.
5. The CoP-formation and the associated 'Practice', the processes of learning and innovation is most vibrant, strong and alive with full energy at the District Administration level.
6. The key building block of CoP-formation amongst the IAS officers is the adherence to Codes of Conduct which is quite well-defined and explicit and is passed on as part of the folklore from one generation to another.
7. CoPs are formed by IAS officers only at certain locations and periods of time in their professional career so it is not a continuous process.
8. Senior IAS officers play a key role in nurturing and providing an enabling environment for the flourishing of CoPs. Most of the narration of the crisis-like situations and fire-fighting experiences draw upon the story of a senior IAS officer coming to the rescue of the junior IAS officer and being supportive. As a matter of fact most of the IAS officers refer to their senior IAS officers as my 'senior' rather than the boss or

superior which would be expected given the nature of the hierarchy of the service. This phenomenon is starker at the District Administration level.

Apart from the general conclusions some of the more specific broad findings will be discussed below as mentioned:

- 1.0 Transient Communities of Practice
- 2.0 District vis-à-vis Secretariat – CoP-formation at the District level
- 3.0 Exploring CoP-formation at the District Level – Romancing the District
- 4.0 Codes of Conduct – Lifeline of the CoPs
- 5.0 Influence of Elite Habitus on CoP-formation
- 6.0 Legacy and Tradition of ICS – Influence on CoP-formation
- 7.0 Elites and CoP-formation and Situated Learning– How do elites form CoPs?

### **10.3 TRANSIENT COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE:**

CoPs are expected to be in multiple forms in a tightly-knit group like IAS officers, an elite corps of administrative officers more akin to a governing class. This particular research indicates that it is not necessary that CoPs will be formed as one progresses in the service along the way, which is antithetical to the contemporary research literature on CoPs. Current conceptions of CoPs is something which can be formed at any given point in time between people with shared meaning, identity, understanding and a shared practice which is domain interest.

These research findings indicate that this relationship of supportive individuals enhancing the practice in mutually rewarding ways is akin to childhood friendships which are forged early on and in special circumstances of shared practice. The CoPs formed are within the least expected arena of District Administration rather than the State Secretariat where the modern management practices are most influential given their nature of engagement with policy in very modern domains like power, urban transportation and Information Technology. This is in contradiction to the contemporary research literature on CoPs which proposes that individuals form CoPs to confront newer challenges in their domain or practice where they need to pool resources to innovate. In this instance of IAS officers, the forces of globalization and economic deregulation

being anticipated to be the trigger for formation of CoPs to devise innovative practices.

Here, at the State Secretariat, CoPs are not formed randomly at any given point in time, the CoPs which one can detect and record through the case-study were formed during the years of IAS officers spent in the District Administration.

#### 10.3.1 CONTRADICTION OF CoP-FORMATION:

There is an inherent contradiction in that one expects a knowledge transfer mechanism to be formed in the context of the administrative structure of the Secretariat which is engaged in delivering services of the modern and contemporary nature like energy, power, urban transportation, higher education. In all these domains the IAS officers would require to be well-informed and be updated with modern trends and are exposed to forces of globalization, yet they do not form CoPs to extend their domain knowledge and enrich their shared 'Practice'.

In contradiction a vibrant, lively, enriching, empowering CoPs were formed at the District Administration level where nature of administration is 'timeless' like handling of floods, violent political trouble or dispersing cooking fuel to the villagers under the rationed scheme. These tasks and activities have been performed for over centuries and are still being performed by the District Administrators, yet they form learning communities which effectively transfer knowledge and information to the next generation. Remarkably the CoPs formed at the District level churn out innovative ideas and practices in dealing with natural calamities, political violence and rural development. Hence there is a contradiction in terms of CoPs being formed where one least expects and non-existent where one highly expects to do so i.e. at the Secretariat level. This is challenging the current research literature on CoPs and the associated facilitated processes of innovation and learning.

### 10.3.2 EXAMPLE:

The CoP existing between the Chairman of the Karnataka Energy Regulatory Commission and the current Chief Secretary along with the Energy Secretary was formed in the early years of their service during their district postings and first secretariat postings. However in the decision-making process on modified tariff mechanism this CoP was re-activated with new vigour when they happened to be working together on the Energy policy of Karnataka. At first glance it might be misleading to think of the CoP having been formed around the energy policy formulation for Karnataka in their current responsible positions but it dates back to earlier years of service.

As part of the understanding of the concept of an evolutionary CoP the researcher will explore the District Administration in detail as evident from the research findings. The factors which facilitate and encourage CoP-formation at the District Administration level need to be identified.

### **10.4 DISTRICT vis-à-vis SECRETARIAT - CoP-FORMATION AT THE DISTRICT:**

Clearly one of the key outcome of the research finding is that District Administration provides the most fertile ground of CoP formation. The District Administration is where most of the early years and training period of an IAS officer is spent, nearly good ten years since being inducted into the IAS. At the State Secretariat level there is complete fragmentation of CoP, practically no CoP-formation or rather feeble or weak ones in case they do form. CoPs formed at the District Administration are enduring, vibrant, energetic and performing in terms of their contribution towards the enrichment of the shared domain knowledge and practice.

The ambiance of CoP-formation is most conducive and visible at the District Administration level. Prior to arriving at conclusions regarding the factors which impede CoP-formation at the State Secretariat level and contrarily facilitate at the District Administration, the researcher feels that it would be prudent to consider few of the striking characteristics of the District Administration, particularly in

the life of an IAS officer as evident from the research. Some of the possible explanations drawing from the research findings are:

1. The social interactions which happen there and the cohesion which is built up through the socializing process are much stronger and durable.
2. A relatively hostile environment in terms of social isolation and the challenges being faced on a regular basis. This is clear from the interviews where the IAS officers seek each other's assistance in crisis situations with a population which is not entirely disposed friendly towards them.
3. A very active role of the senior IAS officer who is placed as mentor and is in-charge literally for the general well-being of the team.
4. Removed from the power politics of a state secretariat where gains are to be made in terms of promotion and perks, as mentioned by several IAS officers in their interviews. There is no real presence of political bosses and hence their routine tasks are removed from the general political discourse.
5. There is a clear benefit in mutually supporting each other since the results would benefit all concerned, a good flood relief work or effective curbing of communal violence would bring kudos for the entire district administration.
6. An existence of a rich legacy and tradition of the ICS officers with their diaries and memoirs about the glory and glamour of the district administration. This made the district postings glamorous which is unheard of in world history. A point which has been explained in detail in Chapter 2.

7. Existence of a tradition of mentoring by the ICS officers of their juniors in the induction of the service with quaint rituals like drinking in the circuit clubs and stern mentoring or 'shaping up of the junior'.

### **10.5 GLAMOUR OF DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION - ROMANCING THE DISTRICT:**

Districts have a very powerful and significant position in the Indian Administrative structure dating back to the ICS days. The head of a District Administration is associated with glamour, prestige and power, popularly known as the 'Collector Sahib' with the trappings of orderlies, saluting policemen and large sprawling residences (Sethi,2006). During the British Raj, the ICS officer heading a district was the emblem of the Imperial Government. Ramsay McDonald once described the Magistrate as 'the tortoise which support the elephant upon which rests the Government of India'(Gilmour,2005).

In post-independence India the administrative head of a District, invariably an IAS officer assumed the face of the government authority for the population. The image of a paternalistic, authoritarian District Collector has spawned literary works of fiction and non-fiction and is most glaringly evident in the memoirs of ICS officers. The IAS as a government service is distinguished from all other ones by the experience acquired in the districts by the officers, most of them spend their first 10 years or so of their service in the districts (Sengupta;2005).

In post-independence India the role of a District Head (termed as Collector, Magistrate or a Commissioner in different states) expanded to encompass responsibilities of economic development along with the traditional functions of law and order, disaster management like floods and revenue management. In this respect the contemporary IAS officer has far broader responsibilities than the ICS predecessor during their years as a District Administration head. The researcher wishes to affirm that the work done as a District Collector is cherished by most IAS officers despite having held significant portfolios at the State and Central Secretariat in their conversations, there is a sense of pride, nostalgia and emotional lingering for their days as a District Collector.

Hence the researcher coins the expression ‘Romancing the District’ with regards to the reflections about their life and work as IAS officers even in their retirement. One of the possible explanations is the great sense of accomplishment while serving as District Collectors for IAS officers, according to Sengupta (2005), ‘there is a feeling that the decision one takes will eventually affect the lives of the people and there is a great sense of power’. This precisely great sense of power and influence through their achievements is what defines their attachment and enthusiasm of the activities conducted during the District years and the notion that the IAS officer can have an impact on the development and well-being of the district (Sethi,2006).

In conclusion, the District Administration is a source of pride, joy, accomplishment and self-esteem for most of the IAS officers as evidenced from the research interviews and other sources of data.

The researcher wishes to infer that the formation of CoPs and the facilitated processes of learning and innovation is nurtured and nourished in sites where there is a ‘pride of practice’ (a term coined by the researcher) which is much beyond achieving targets, objectives and extending the domain knowledge but more of an emotional attachment. Hence one of the possible sources of fertile ground of CoP-formation would be ‘pride of practice’, in the sense of pride and satisfaction in accomplishments of tasks, achievements, attachment to the tasks and responsibilities and a higher sense of self-esteem.

#### 10.5.1 SOCIAL WORLD OF DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION – CONGENIAL & COZY:

There is a distinct theme which emerges pervasively through the entire research, which is the existence of a cozy and congenial social world in the District Administration. Bhaskar Ghose(2010) narrates his move to Delhi was ‘tinged with a little sadness’ after completion of his first few years in the District Administration as an IAS officer. As evident from the case-study interviews from both the state cadres, IAS officers mingle, socialize and interact at a far more humane level amongst themselves during their District years than the Secretariat. Senior IAS officers host parties and offer drinks to their juniors and regale them with spicy anecdotes and stories in the comfortable precincts of the

Collectors Bungalow or Circuit House, which are residences for political dignitaries visiting the district.

At this stage it would be worthwhile to mention the frequent reference to the legendary, colourful IAS officer, Ivan Surita of the West Bengal cadre by his juniors about his socializing with the juniors, including Ghose(2011) in his memoirs. District Administration is a 'self-contained little community' (Bhattacharya, 2007) where the officials and their families irrespective of seniority socialize with great pleasure and 'as human beings' in the words of an IAS officer of the West Bengal cadre who spent several years in the District Administration along with Secretariat postings.

The postings in Delhi were particularly recollected with disdain by the IAS officers where the bureaucratic icy and impersonal stifling hierarchies appear with 'grand and oppressive 'seniors' who seemed to be everywhere' (Ghose, 2011). The occasional IAS dinners and get-togethers recounted by Ghose (2011) and several of the other interviewees were unpleasant tales of snubs and snobbery. In conclusion, the social world at the Secretariat level in the State Headquarters or in Delhi is defined and marked by an aloofness, detachment and consciousness of official positions and hierarchies. Most important to state that this is marked by complete fragmentation of the CoPs at the Secretariat level both in the states and in Delhi.

The researcher wishes to infer that the formation of CoPs and the associated mechanisms of learning and innovation is nurtured and nourished in sites where there is a 'humane' socializing without the boundaries of position and power, where the individuals leave their 'days hard work' to mingle and interact and indulge in drink or meals. Hence one of the possible sources of fertile ground of CoP-formation would be 'humane' socializing between individuals engaged in any organization, the social world plays a key role in fostering CoPs. Social world should be bereft of conscious hierarchies and official positions.

### 10.5.2 CODES OF CONDUCT:

The researcher wishes to state that one of the key findings have been shared Codes of Conduct being one of the building blocks of CoPs. There are numerous instances of rapid fragmentation and dissolution of CoPs amongst IAS officers from both cadres once the shared Codes of Conduct are violated. This point being very significant have been discussed in the next section separately. However it is worth mentioning that the Codes of Conduct of IAS CoP-formation are adhered to far more stringently at the District Administration than at the Secretariat level.

### 10.6 CODES OF CONDUCT:

This has been a recurring theme which pervaded conversations with the IAS officers across both cadres, the adherence and respect towards a well-defined Codes of Conduct. The researcher wishes to emphasize the enormous significance of adherence to an unwritten, tacit Codes of Conduct in the formation of CoPs among IAS officers and the associated facilitated processes of learning, i.e. Situated Learning and Innovation. It is important to state that this is tacit in nature and not explicit in terms of a written text yet the rules are defined sharply and clearly by most IAS officers.

Codes of Conduct have been discussed in an earlier case-study on West Bengal cadre IAS officers but it does merit a separate discussion. The derived Codes of Conduct in a tabulated form has been repeated here at the end of this section given its significance for this research. The researcher wishes to state that the Codes of Conduct is equally relevant and valid for the Karnataka cadre as demonstrated by the example of the fragmentation at the Secretariat level. Hence Codes of Conduct as a forging force transcends cadres and is valid for the IAS collective in general. The fragmentation of CoPs driven by violation of the Codes of Conduct happens most pronouncedly at the Secretariat both at the Centre and the States but even in the districts.

However at the Secretariat level it is more widespread and in the words of one of the IAS officers 'seniors in Delhi employ the craft of simulation and dissimulation to the other's disadvantage and detriment. ....when they cannot damage politicians, they target their own juniors or peers'(Sethi, 2006).

There is a distinct and prolific celebration of sense of fair-play and an unflinching loyalty to the people of India embodied by the state as being the perfect ideal for IAS officers.

The state in the form of an IAS officer, particularly at the District Administration is desired to be guardians or custodians of the poor and underprivileged people of India. One can trace this back to the predecessor ICS days, in the words of R.P. Noronha, ICS in his memoir, 'A Tale Told by an Idiot' ICS were ordinary men who were set apart by the following qualities:

- 1.0 Dedicated sense of duty born of tradition and training
- 2.0 Independent outlook
- 3.0 Complete identification with the interests of the people of wherever they were sent to serve.

It would be worthwhile to explore few of the broad formulation of the Codes of Conduct which are the most widely discussed in the interview process and the textual and literary material of memoirs, biographies, journals and diaries.

#### 10.6.1 POLITICAL NEUTRALITY:

There is mounting concern about the current generation of District Administrators IAS officers who are perceived to be vulnerable to political pressures and are being manipulated to serve vested individual and political group interests rather than the general welfare of the people. The current IAS officers are perceived to be 'lacking the moral strength and stature to resist political pressures (Bhattacharya, 2007)'.

Rampant politicization of the IAS is perceived with great alarm and concern by many of the earlier generation of IAS officers who served in the early years of post-independence India (Sengupta, 2005; Ghose, 2011).

This unfavourable and unsavoury development is mentioned repeatedly in the recorded interviews and is attributed to being one of the main causes of breakdown of the collective community spirit of IAS officers leading towards the fragmentation of the CoP of IAS officers. Lack of political neutrality is one of

the identified factors leading towards the fragmentation of the CoPs at the Secretariat level and within the current generation of IAS officers, however the researcher wishes to state that this was evident even at the district level, and even in cases of some of the earlier generation of IAS officers. There is an instance in the interview data dating back to the 1960s of one of the interviewees (IAS;1958); where the flood relief work team was hampered by the desire of one of the IAS officers to engage political elements. Clearly the notion of political neutrality of the IAS officers is one of the fundamental essence of the CoP-formation and no CoP can flourish without this criteria being satisfied.

One of the admired qualities of a 'role-model' civil servant, the senior mentor who inspires the junior is his or her political neutrality as evident from the glorious description of his senior IAS officer by one of the IAS officers from West Bengal cadre, the senior IAS officer Mr. Banerji, Cambridge-educated and who was drawn from the Royal Air Force, being defined as 'absolutely fearless and could stand up to any amount of political pressure' (Sengupta,2005). Here the researcher wishes to broaden the notion of political neutrality of IAS officers to the cherished and glorious objective of serving the broader interests of the people. Political alliances and affiliation is frowned upon as a distraction from this noble objective of serving the public interests. The interesting aspect is the CoP-formation around this ideal of political neutrality amongst the IAS officers, and when this political neutrality disappears and IAS officers start adopting political sides the spirit of CoP breaks down.

The researcher wishes to emphasize the deep-rooted conviction of IAS as a body of adequately qualified administrators standing tall and above the political interests to serve the interests of the people, with the elected politicians and their agendas being treated with suspicion and mistrust.

In conclusion, one of the key Codes of Conduct forging the bonding within the CoP is the neutral position of the IAS officers from any political interests and only keen to address the general welfare of the broader sections of society.

#### 10.6.2 MAVERICK CAREER OPPORTUNISM:

If there is an absolute ‘must have’ evident in this research for the successful formation of a CoP of IAS officers and the facilitated mechanisms of Learning and Innovation is the lack of career opportunism amongst the members of the CoP. One of the trenchant criticism of politically-inclined IAS officers is that their position is geared towards obtaining favours from the political bosses to secure attractive positions of prestige and glamour. The researcher wishes to confirm that many of the politically-inclined IAS officers mentioned disparagingly in the interviews did eventually turn out to be politicians on their retirement from service.

This is a highly detested and despised quality of a senior IAS officer in the eyes of the junior IAS officer, and is one of the key causes of the breakdown of the CoP. Interestingly the researcher wishes to highlight the dismissal of CoPs formed around seeking of ‘self-interests’ as a pernicious informal network, in other words an undesirable CoP. Most of the interviewed IAS officers speak glowingly only of the Communities formed without any personal aspiration of career advancement, for instance no CoPs were spoken of being formed towards the purpose of exchange of information with respect to securing attractive postings at the Secretariat. In the words of Sengupta (2005) there is an unhealthy ‘cutthroat competition’ among sections of IAS officers in currying favour with the seniors and hankering for promotions through networking with the political elements. There was a disgust for the generation of IAS officers interviewed towards ‘manoeuvre’ for coveted postings and were never treated with respect by their junior IAS officers (Ghose, 2011).

Ironically this was a CoP formed of the elites where the driving force was not the propelling of self-interests or career-advancement but mutually supportive relationships in serving the broader ideals of the IAS; responsible discharging of the duties and responsibilities towards the people of India. Usually most of the CoPs or networks formed between the elites is geared towards their self-interests and not idealistic notions of ‘service before self’. The researcher wishes to state that this though might sound fanciful and romantic but the interview process did very vividly bring out this strong element of CoP-formation. Interviewees were

clearly very sincere and emotional in their disgust and revulsion when speaking about having career-opportunist IAS officers as seniors. Clearly the CoP fragmented with the withering of the shared spirit once the career-opportunism entered the ‘sacred space’ of IAS officers.

It would be worth mentioning an instance of fragmentation of CoP due to maverick career opportunism is the demise of a fine tradition of ‘Charge Notes’ which were so instrumental to the formation and sustenance of CoPs. ‘Charge Notes’ were one of the key artefacts of the CoPs being formed between IAS officers. This discontinued due to the malpractice of successor IAS officers passing on their predecessor’s notes to the politicians for currying favours (Sethi, 2006). For instance one of the interviewees (IAS;1958) mentions while recollecting his great delight in working with the army-recruits, i.e. IAS officers who were serving in the British Indian Army during Second World War and then later inducted into the IAS, and the incredible learning experience, mentions one of the reasons being their complete lack of interest in career-opportunism.

#### 10.6.3 CONSIDERATE TOWARDS JUNIORS:

This emerged as one of the key positive appreciated Codes of Conduct, the considerate and fair attitude towards the junior IAS officers by the senior IAS officers belonging to the same CoP. One of the highly admired senior ICS officers amongst the generation of IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre interviewed was R Gupta (ICS) who was known to have ‘pulled up in a gentle and affectionate manner’ any errant junior IAS officer. Most of the interviewees and the IAS officers in general regarded highly the seniors who would stand by their juniors in times of ‘dire crisis’ and offer support and ‘validation for their actions’. There are several instances where even when the junior was in the wrong the senior did not embarrass them in any public fashion or exposed them to the political bosses.

In conclusion, the researcher wishes to infer that the formation of CoPs and the associated mechanisms of learning and innovation is nurtured and nourished in sites where there is an accepted and well-defined behaviour governed by a tacit Codes of Conduct as manifest in this specific research. The presence of such a

tacit Codes of Conduct directs the behaviour of the individual members of the CoP and those aspiring to become part of the CoP. Hence one of the possible sources of fertile ground of CoP-formation would be existence of a tacit, well-defined Codes of Conduct which is left unwritten yet specified in words and action.

#### 10.6.4 CODES OF CONDUCT OF CoP OF IAS OFFICERS:

CODES OF CONDUCT OF CoP OF IAS OFFICERS:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Non-appeasement of political bosses in matter of decision-making.</li><li>2. Discouraging formulating favourable reports which are not reflecting the ground reality, the reports are sacrosanct and should not be tampered with.</li><li>3. Ability to speak the truth even when it is uncomfortable for senior IAS officers and the political bosses or the general public.</li><li>4. Not to be a self-seeker hankering for opportunities and postings.</li><li>5. Independent style of decision-making in crisis situations; being bold and courageous and not to bow down to any pressure. Independent stance not just with respect to political elites but even from rival communities. There is a strong notion of taking a stance.</li><li>6. Respect and regard for the general public, the notion of acting in broader public interest.</li><li>7. Humane approach to administration, keeping the public good in mind at all times.</li><li>8. To be firm and fair with the junior IAS officers; never reprimand them in public but only in private and always praise them in public.</li><li>9. Always support your junior IAS officer if they have done the right thing and taken the right actions, and 'support them to the hilt'.</li><li>10. Assist all the team members irrespective of IAS officers or not, and offer a patient hearing to their problems and sorrows and help to the best of ability.</li><li>11. Leading by example – for instance being there with the 'team' when flood relief work is being conducted</li><li>12. Adhere to the rules and regulations and operate within the boundaries and restrictions of the legal framework.</li></ol>

**Table 24 – Codes of Conduct - source: developed by the researcher**

## **10.7 ELITES AND CoP-FACILITATED MECHANISMS:**

This is a critical section of the general findings which explores, investigates, captures and records the elite issues relating to CoPs, the formation of CoPs and the CoP-facilitated processes of learning, i.e. Situated Learning and Innovation. Elite dimensions which emerged during the conducting of the case-study research of West Bengal cadre reflected broader notions of elites within the IAS collective and needed to be accounted for. The researcher developed a conceptual framework to ascertain the influence of elite characteristics on CoP-formation and the associated processes of CoP-facilitated learning, i.e. Situated Learning and Innovation.

With regards to Karnataka cadre the elite issues were irrelevant. In the developed conceptual framework the notion of ‘elite habitus’, the dimension of elite characteristic which might possibly influence the CoP-formation and CoP-facilitated learning, i.e. Situated Learning was proposed as a theoretical template for investigating elite dimension of CoP-formation and the associated CoP-facilitated processes of learning, i.e. Situated Learning and innovation. Here in this section the findings of the research study evaluated against the template of the conceptual framework is presented.

### **10.7.1 INFLUENCE OF ELITE HABITUS ON CoP-FORMATION:**

The notion of a habitus or tacit code which the members brought to the CoP is revealing and have been validated through this particular research. In this specific case the habitus is an ‘elite’ habitus and was most visibly pronounced in the West Bengal cadre IAS officers. This phenomenon of IAS officers bringing a particular inherited ‘habitus’ to the CoP after joining IAS is applicable to the collective as a whole cutting across all the state cadres as evident from the literary material of memoirs, biographies and autobiographies of IAS officers.

Prior to drawing conclusions about how the habitus influenced the CoP-formation it would be prudent to understand, investigate and identify the nature and qualities of this habitus or code which in Bourdieu’s words “the apparently most insignificant techniques of the body – ways of walking or blowing one’s nose, ways of eating or talking ... [reveals] the most fundamental principles of

construction and evaluation of the social world.” The researcher proposes to confirm in this particular research the ‘most insignificant techniques’ were indeed influenced by their socio-cultural background and was part of the habitus.

Firstly the elite habitus is defined along the lines of its relevance in the training of IAS officers and the mechanism by which it advantaged the socially privileged elite groups of Indian society, i.e. the Anglophone upper-middle class and finally how it influenced the formation of CoPs and the Participation in Practice within the CoP.

The key questions for this exploration of elite habitus and CoP-formation are:

- 1.0 What was the source of this dominant elite habitus?
- 2.0 What qualifies this as an ‘elite’ one? Why does one call this an ‘elite’ habitus?
- 3.0 To what extent the acculturation of this elite habitus drawn from the ICS officers era at the Training Academy designated it as a dominant habitus of the IAS officers world? Was there an institutional legitimatizing of this elite habitus as the preferred dominant one for the IAS officers?
- 4.0 How did this dominant habitus finally privilege the elite? Since not all habitus is elite in nature and privilege the elite group.
- 5.0 How did an elite habitus came to define the formation of CoPs amongst IAS officers in post-independence India?
- 6.0 How and Why did this elite habitus influenced CoP-formation amongst IAS officers?

#### 10.7.1.1 Role-Model Civil Servant – Source of the Dominant Elite Habitus:

The role-model of a civil servant celebrated was that of a proper pukka Burra-Sahib of the British Raj, the ICS officers, who were thoroughbred gentlemen and relished the pleasures of an occasional scotch and fine tobacco, with impeccable manners, refined in tastes and speaking in clipped English accents. The stories of pipe-puffing Anglicized Indian gentleman ICS officers wearing fine suits and speaking in immaculate clipped English accents abound in most of the conversations with the researcher; protruding as inspiring figures, role-models

for young IAS officers including that of the legendary Mr. A.N. Jha ICS who was the Director of the Training Academy in Mussorie. There was a clear mould of a 'pukka civil servant' which needed to be adhered to and lived up to in terms of expectations towards matching the ideal role-model. Most importantly the post-independence IAS officers aspired to conform to this model of a 'pukka civil servant'. Interestingly this role-model persisted for over 3 decades after Indian independence and according to the IAS officer (IAS;1963), 'For most of us the role-model remained that of an ICS officer even 20 years after independence.'

In other words IAS was proud inheritor of the legacy of ICS, the civil service structure of one of the world's largest imperial machinery managed by gentlemanly ethos and habits, which 'basked in the reflected glory of ICS'(Ghose, 2011).

This was a world of appropriate manners, nuanced behaviour replete with breezy confidence to have a proper evening drink in the sylvan surroundings of an exclusive club where liveried bearers served, enjoying horse-riding in the outdoors and holding conversations peppered with friendly banter. Holding the right knife and fork at dinner tables along with hosting gracious parties were highly valued qualities apart from the academic abilities. The anecdotes of Naval Singh, the horse-riding instructor at the Academy was regaled with great delight and pleasure in many of the conversations with the researcher. In conclusion, the world of an IAS officer was that of a quaint nature with elaborate and antiquated rituals given the rapidly changing social and cultural settings of modern independent India.

#### 10.7.1.2 Anglophone World – Elite Character:

The role-model civil servant like several other powerful professional metaphors emerged from the absorption of an 'ideal' of governance from British Raj. The grandiose notions of gentleman-professional were imports from Britain which were most readily absorbed by the Indian upper-middle class, they being most proximate to the ruling British administrative class. The ethos and ideals of the Indian middle-classes, particularly the upper-middle class were the creation of English-education, both university and schooling, emergence of modern

professions required in the service of the Empire like barristers and medical doctors, urbanization in terms of the rise of new cities like Calcutta and Bombay, known as Presidency towns and the transmission of cultural hegemony of everything being British best.

In post-independence India there was a powerful, influential and significant professional class holding elite positions in society who were Anglicized and shared attributes closer to the Europeans than the majority of Indians, derided in popular imagination as 'Brown Sahibs' (Sahib is a term which was usually reserved for the White English gentleman).

Hence the offspring who hailed from urban upper-middle class family were aptly suited for comprehending and appreciating the minutiae rituals of civil-service life like having a drink of 'scotch whisky' in the evening and playing billiards in the club. This is apart from the more substantial qualities like confidence, integrity, pride in public office, ability to command respect, leadership acquired through schooling and a notion of noblesse oblige. This was a world familiar to them and had been inculcated through their upbringing by the parents and immediate family, many of whom were professionals engaged in the British Raj. Besides parentage, education imparted at one of the exclusive English-styled public schools established in India were a key factor in generating and instilling these 'pukka-sahib' manners, habits and ideas. Particularly the schools modelled along the lines of English public school which were setup towards the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century in India and were managed by Europeans with British teachers, later known as the Anglo-Indian schools were known to be the 'nurseries of Anglophone Indian elite'. Some of the more exclusive schools, i.e. boarding schools were built in the hill-stations nestled on the foothills of the Himalayas.

In the perspective of this specific research, the Anglo-Indian school education proved to be a decisive factor in generating and acquiring the 'elite habitus', since these schools taught a very cultivated and correct accent of speaking English, articulation, confidence, leadership and social manners and graces. This education can safely be termed 'elite' by the criteria of exclusivity in terms of

access and the social context of being individuals holding responsible positions in the society.

Important to state that in the context of this particular current research, practically all the respondents from the West Bengal IAS cadre were educated in the Anglo-Indian schools and some even attended the exclusive hill-station variety. The few ones who did not attend Anglo-Indian schools did attend English-styled University colleges with westernized names like St. Joseph's or St. John's governed by Europeans. One of the distinguishing features of these schools were not the medium of instruction being English alone but the grooming which attempted to make 'Gentleman' and 'Ladies' out of the Indians in the truest English sense of the term covering all aspects like table manners, speech, basic etiquettes, leadership values, sporting abilities and taste of music.

One particular institution which would be worth mentioning here is that of St. Stephens College, Delhi which has been termed as the 'finishing school for Indian Anglophone gentleman' and churned IAS officers in large numbers prompting the joke, 'One could form a cricket team each year with the number of Stephanians joining the IAS'. There is a powerful metaphor associated with them image of a St. Stephens graduate joining the IAS and being posted as a District Collector in a remote district.

Significantly even most of the data deployed for triangulation, like memoirs, biographies, autobiographies were written by Anglophone upper-middle class Indian IAS officers and it is only in recent years that there are works which captures and conveys the impressions and experiences of rural non-Anglophone IAS officers belonging to a different social category.

According to the researcher the possible reason for the plethora of biographical literature being available of the Anglophone upper-middle class Indian IAS officers, is their grasp of the English language, confidence to tell their stories and the general acceptability of a certain style of English-writing in the Indian publishing world. In recent decades there emerged a more vernacular localized version of English-writing in the Indian context. It would be relevant to state

that the researcher attended one of the less exclusive Anglo-Indian schools in Kolkata and had some of the senior IAS officers as chief guests in sports ceremonies and prize distributions.

In conclusion, the elite habitus as evident in this specific research which the individuals brought to the CoP of IAS officers after joining the IAS were predominantly influenced by their schooling and mildly by family-background. This habitus qualified as an elite one by the very exclusivity and social positioning of the individuals possessing them, in other words this ornate way of life and habitus was limited to very small segment of Indian society. The family background of the IAS officers possessing an elite habitus was professional middle-class in nature, like university professors, medical doctors, government engineers, diplomats and civil servants with no inherited wealth or landed estate. Hence the CoPs under research scanner here is that of IAS officers hailing from the Anglophone upper-middle class India within the broader collective of IAS.

#### 10.7.1.3 Training Academy – Institutionalizing the Elite Habitus:

The most astonishing aspect of IAS officers training is the continuity with the ICS tradition in terms of ethos, ideals, values and identity in post-independence India (Potter, 1996). This continuity is not an ‘absent-minded fit’ incident of history but concerted efforts were made to incorporate parts of the legacies and traditions of the ICS into the post-independence India’s civil service, the IAS (Potter, 1996). This is nowhere more manifest than the curriculum at the Training Academy in Mussorie.

Training course for the freshly-inducted IAS officers at the Training Academy in Mussorie insisted upon acquiring knowledge in ‘Gentlemanly’ conduct and manners (Potter, 1996) and a significant focus of the training consisted upon being groomed to be ‘Gentleman’ and ‘Ladies’ in the truest sense of the term (Ghose, 2011; Sengupta, 2005). The researcher proposes to describe the specific skills required to be imparted on to the trainee IAS officers since they assume importance for this present research discussion pertaining to elite habitus.

The trainee IAS officers were expected to learn the following skills (Ghose, 2011; Potter,1996):

- 1.0 Correct and proper method of dressing, blazers and ties or suits and a formal dress(a dark suit with a closed-collar coat) for dinner, a tie absolute necessity during the week.
- 2.0 Proper use of knives and forks, soup spoons, soufflé spoons and managing napkins.
- 3.0 Basic etiquettes like ‘excusing’ oneself while leaving the dinner table
- 4.0 Norms relating to Social Calls, formal invitations.
- 5.0 Conducting conversations in social parties and dinners like making eye-contacts.
- 6.0 Horse-riding skills.

It was believed good manners, etiquettes and social graces lend confidence and charm to the personality of an officer (Potter, 1996). An appendix has been attached with extracts from the Academy Handbook on Manners and Etiquettes which might sound amusing to someone living in the reality of post-independence India. As one of the IAS officers remarked ‘it is ICS training – all dinner jackets, horse-riding, social niceties, and totally useless as a preparation for work in Bihar’ (Potter,1996).

In conclusion, the rituals and manners of a British Raj ICS officer were institutionalized in the IAS through the curriculum at the Training Academy in Mussorie and in turn was a cultural world shared by the Anglophone, urbane, upper-middle class Indian. Clearly the elite habitus acquired significance for contemporary IAS officers in their professional lives with this institutionalization through the Training Academy.

IAS officers who hailed from rural backgrounds and not from the upper-middle class Anglophone society did not feel at ease in these environs of strange rituals and habits.

Insisting on conditions of anonymity some of the IAS officers, hailing from rural and less privileged social background narrates their experience at the Academy

of being awe-struck and confounded. The rural and less privileged social background IAS officers needed to work towards being accepted and welcomed into this select group. Some of these IAS officers lacked the strong identification with the dominant culture and training at the academy, and interestingly most of the respondents who hailed from the Anglo-Indian educational background waxed eloquently about the ‘dinner jackets, horse-riding and neck-ties’ and those who did not have the privilege of an Anglo-Indian education failed to mention these aspects of training.

The impetus on the ‘manners and graces’ advantaged the upper-middle class Anglophone Indians who were most familiar with this habitus, in a way the Academy proved to be an extension of their upbringing at home and in school.

There is evidence that the Anglophone upper-middle class IAS officers instinctively formed a bondage based on mutual trust, confidence, shared values and understanding and has been discussed in a separate section in this chapter.

#### 10.7.2 ELITE HABITUS AND INFLUENCE ON CoP-FORMATION:

Mutch(2003) states that there has been lack of treatment in the research literature on CoPs about the dispositions that individuals bring into these CoPs from their life experience, and habitus would be a worthy means of pursuing them. The researcher attempts to highlight the influence of habitus in the CoP-formation. In this specific research literature on CoPs the focus is on the generative structure that emerges from participation in the practice in the CoP (Mutch,2003; Wenger,1999). This particular research contrarily investigates the generative structure which one brings to the practice prior to participation. The focus of this specific research is based on Bourdieu(1990) and Bernstein(1990), in that habitus is existent prior to practice and regulates and structures it. Following the fundamental principle of delineating the treatment of ‘Community element’ and ‘Participation in Practice’ of the CoP in this specific research, the researcher will consider the influence of the elite habitus on both separately.

#### 10.7.2.1 Influence of Elite Habitus on Participation in Practice:

Participation, in this context is not just a physical action or event it involves both action taking part as well as a connection (Wenger, 1998; Clancey,1995). In Situated Learning Participation differs from ‘mere engagement in practice’ and influences identity-formation and generating a sense of experiencing a feeling of belonging (Wenger, 1998).

The researcher wishes to emphasize that the notion of Practice here is the ‘social Practice’ as proposed by (Wenger,1998) and is about ‘doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do’. This is beyond the engaging in tasks and responsibilities assigned to an IAS officer as an administrator. This would involve understanding and engaging with tools, language, role-definitions and other explicit artefacts as well as various implicit relations, tacit conventions, and underlying assumptions and values (Handley, 2006).

The research question is the extent to which the elite habitus acquired by an IAS officer hailing from an Anglophone Indian upper-middle class background influenced the Participation in the social Practice of the CoP. In order to arrive at a reasonable answer the notion of ‘Embodied forms of Practice (Mutch2003)’ should be considered in the context of the IAS officers social world. Mutch (2003) defines ‘Embodied Habitus’ as the ‘centrally derived standard of practice’ or as the researcher defines the institutionally sanctioned ‘Preferred modes of Practice’ which can be called as ‘Preferred Habitus’ which the institution expects from the members who form CoPs as part of that institution.

In this specific instance the ‘Standard Practice’ of the IAS officers as expected practically and indoctrinated by the Training Academy would be ‘Embodied Habitus’. In all the cases individuals entered the CoP with their inherited disposition or generative structure would have influenced their Participation in the ‘Embodied Practice.’ When the inherited disposition is similar to the ‘Embodied Habitus’ then there is no conflict and the individual would confidently and comfortably participate in the CoP in a familiar world for its

habitus ‘it is like a ‘fish in water’ ... it takes the world about itself for granted’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

The researcher wishes to state that the Participation in Practice of the CoP was indeed influenced by the habitus, in other words the tacitly acquired regulative structures through their belonging to a particular social milieu which individuals brought when they joined the IAS. The researcher wishes to affirm that a durable ‘habitus’ was not starkly formed after active participation in the practice of a CoP of IAS officers but contrarily the IAS officers carried the ‘habitus’ to the practice.

It would be important for the researcher to state clearly that this Practice which favoured the habitus of the Anglophone Indian upper-middle classes, was purely the social practice. In other aspects of Practice, the more practical ones like adapting to rural conditions the individuals with an elite habitus were at a disadvantage. This elite habitus enabled them to actively Participate in the social Practice where their seniors, IAS and some ICS officers felt at ease and comfortable with their ‘inherited disposition’ and connected far more easily. Hence as far as Participation in Practice is concerned the elite habitus did influence or impact the process.

10.7.2.2 Influence of Elite Habitus on Identity-formation within CoP-Formation:  
In the identity-formation element in CoP-formation one finds the strongest and starkest influence of elite habitus. In CoP-facilitated learning mechanisms, i.e. Situated Learning, individual develops the practices, including values, norms, identities and relationships within the context of the CoP through Participation in Practice (Handley,2006).

Clearly it is evident that the Anglophone upper-middle class Indians gently and smoothly sailed into the world of IAS officers at the training academy. The training academy provided the right and appropriate ambiance for their absorption. A core notion of the IAS training academy was the fostering and developing of the ‘esprit de corps’ amongst the IAS officers which in the opinion of the researcher provided the building block for the formation of CoPs.

Here one finds the splintering of IAS collective into 'cliques' in the words of an IAS officer one that emerged visible and durable was that of 'public school boys who went on to St. Stephens College and who mix with their own counterparts' (Potter,1996). This is affirmed by Ghose(2011) when he mentions how the 'English-speaking lot' though they hailed from different parts of India forged a bond based on the language they felt most comfortable with; English. The instinctive bonding between the IAS officers is partly explained by Ghose(2011) as that built upon the shared rituals of scrupulous use of knives and forks which spring forth during times of crisis, and wryly mentions 'one is not saying that the use of cutlery helped stave off a riot or expedited the disbursement of relief'.

This notion of a camaraderie that exists among members of the IAS as an offshoot of the social graces that they imbibed and have in common by studying in the Anglophone India's elite institutions like St. Stephens College and opine it as a great virtue have come in for trenchant criticism from some quarters. Responding to these observations one of the civil servants of the early batches of post-independence India (IAS;1958), commented that 'this is a bonding of snobs which is contrary to the philosophy on which the IAS has been created and this notion of establishing camaraderie through elitist sartorial habits is doing a disservice to the IAS. The focus should be on serving the people of India.'

Reinforcing the training academy experience, individuals with elite habitus coalesced to instinctively form CoPs, Communities with shared meaning, shared identity and shared understanding. This was evident from the recommendations by selected individuals for interviewees for the researcher. It would be fallacious to assume that the non-Anglophone upper-middle class Indian IAS officers are excluded in a 'Weberian' sense from the CoP. There were individuals who did not hail from similar social backgrounds who were part of the CoP and were often admired and highly spoken of. However important to emphasize that the CoP-formation occurred with ease between the IAS officers sharing the habitus of the Anglophone Indian upper-middle class society. The researcher wishes to affirm from the results of the research that the dominant ethos and identity-model was that of an Anglophone Indian world where the rest were welcomed. In the

words of one IAS officer (IAS;1971) from West Bengal cadre, 'I think we never left our haw-haw English-speaking world of the Brown Sahib.'

The researcher wishes to state that the CoP-formation is instinctive and stronger within the Anglophone upper-middle class Indian IAS officers and there is a distinct significance and meaning attached to the elegant and quaint rituals of a British Raj ICS officer. For instance one of the Karnataka IAS officer who was identified as one of the respondents of the case-study animated in delight to speak about his anglicized college background and that he was an 'urbane misfit' in the rural district though there was reticence about energy policy in his conversation.

On a lighter note, there was more enthusiasm to speak redolently about 'good old college' days speaking in friendly banter and innuendos tinged with remorse about changing world of Indian society than CoP-formation in the domain of energy policy!! The researcher wishes to emphasize this 'self-image' of being an urbane, cosmopolitan Indian is strongest amongst the Anglophone upper-middle class IAS officer set which in the opinion of the researcher is a powerful cementing force for CoP-formation.

It would be prudent to expand the notion of 'Practice' beyond the social Practice and include the practical aspect of undertaking or engaging fully in a task, job or profession (Wenger, 1998). Here interestingly it is discovered that the elite habitus does not necessarily favour individuals possessing them in the Participation in Practice. Contrarily the elite background stood as a disadvantage for adapting to the rural conditions of a district life. The difficulty encountered by the Anglophone urban upper middle and middle-class boys and girls who joined the IAS in familiarizing with the rural district life was an often repeated theme in the interviews.

An interesting instance is that of an urbane St. Stephens-educated civil servant belonging to West Bengal cadre who had difficulty in adapting to the rural surroundings (Sengupta, 2005). This has been satirized in the novel, 'English August' by Upamanyu Chatterjee in the character of a St. Stephens-educated IAS

officer posted as a District Collector in a remote rural setting. In the words of one IAS officer the district training was ‘a real knock, like moving from boiled water to ice cold’(Potter,1996). It is obvious from interview data and other sources that the elite habitus did not prepare most of the IAS officers for the participation in the non-social aspects of the Practice within the CoP. Hence there seems to be a CoP-formation around the appreciation and endearment of the elite habitus in social terms.

The discussions can be tabulated as below:

ELEMENTS OF CoP	INFLUENCE OF ELITE HABITUS
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong in terms of providing bonding through shared rituals</li> <li>- Sense of shared meaning</li> <li>- Shared identity in terms of ‘self-perception of being a Burra Sahib</li> </ul>
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social Practice</li> <li>- Hindrance in practical aspects of Practice</li> </ul>
Participation and Negotiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Confidence in the role of self as IAS officer</li> <li>- Character of a certain type nurtured in English-styled Indian public schools</li> </ul>

**Table 25 – Influence of Elite Habitus on CoP-formation – source: developed by the researcher**

In conclusion, the important points which emerged with respect to elite dimensions as evident from the research conducted on the IAS officers is summarized below:

1.0 IAS officers were defined as an elite group based on their position as rulers or governors of the state (Burke, 1974) in the earlier chapter of this study. Apart from the positional status they held, the IAS officers emerged as an elite group in terms of the dominant habitus shared across them. The dominant habitus of the IAS was elite in terms of being exclusive from the rest of the Indian society.

- 2.0 The notions of IAS officers as an 'elite' group with a distinct 'habitus' is most predominantly evident in the IAS state cadres which are direct successors of the ICS legacy and tradition. The states which were part of the direct British rule, the Presidency regions, where the ICS officers were administrative heads, accord respect, status and privilege of an elite group to the IAS officers. This inherited dominant 'habitus' is that of an ICS officer which qualifies it as an elite habitus.
- 3.0 The dominant habitus of the IAS is instilled and enculturated at the Training Academy in Mussorie. Thus the elite dominant habitus of the IAS is institutionalized and legitimized through the years at the Training Academy.
- 4.0 The elite habitus which is prevalent among IAS officers is drawn from the social manners and conduct of the Anglophone Indian upper-middle class society. This elite habitus is shared between the IAS and the social milieu of Anglophone Indian upper-middle class which is acculturated at the Training Academy.
- 5.0 Importantly this elite habitus does not operate as a 'social exclusionary' mechanism but more an inclusive indoctrination of people who belonged to society outside the confines of Anglophone India and the Academy playing an active role in that process of enculturation of IAS officers hailing from all backgrounds.
- 6.0 The elite habitus which IAS officers bring to the CoP after their training academy does influence their participation in the practice of the CoP, primarily the social Practice.

### **10.8 ELITES AND COP-FORMATION AND SITUATED LEARNING- HOW DO ELITES FORM COPS?**

It is widely acknowledged that there is a dearth of research literature on learning mechanism amongst the business elites despite their privileged position within organizations(Beamish, 2005; Sherlock & Nathan, 2008; Thomas, 2012).

Thomas(2012) in the recent paper studied the learning of British business elites

within CoPs in the tourism sector. Most of the case-studies on Situated Learning, i.e. CoP-facilitated learning has covered professions but not specifically the elites, where the focus was to explore sharing of knowledge, problem-solving skills, best practices amongst the professionals executing the tasks and responsibilities. Hence the theme of this particular research is a relatively unexplored one and is expected to be one of the contributions of this research. Most of the CoPs discussed is more in the nature of a network of knowledge exchange and sharing of information (Thomas, 2012).

The distinctive nature of this research is the definition and categorization of 'elites' which is not purely that of individuals holding high positions of office and enjoying power and influence in their respective domains. In case of Thomas(2012) elites are defined by their 'level of seniority within a large commercial organization that enables the post-holder to make a direct and highly influential contribution to shaping corporate cultures and practices'(DeGroot, Kiker, & Cross, 2009; Elenkov, Judge, & Wright, 2005; Hambrick, Cho, & Chen, 1996). In case of Adler(2008) the elites were defined as military elites or strategic elites, individuals holding senior positions in these fields influencing the strategic direction. Clearly the elites here are qualified by their status and access to power which is unlike the case for this research.

Elites defined in this research can be broadly termed social and cultural elites apart from their positional prestige and influence, since the Anglophone India's influence extends well beyond the realm of Public Administration. The ICS legacy, which imparts elite status to the IAS officers of the West Bengal cadre, is an elite whose status was derived from Imperial glamour and prestige from the British Raj days. In case of Anglophone India the elite markers of prestige encompass attributes like ability to speak immaculate English and manners.

In conclusion, the elite status conferred on the IAS officers in this study extend beyond their positional status and access to power. This makes the treatment of elites forming CoPs and engaging in CoP-facilitated learning processes,

i.e. Situated Learning, a distinct research. There are more number of factors of consideration with respect to researching their elite status and position apart from their official position which have been dealt with through the conceptual framework of elite Habitus.

#### 10.8.1 CONTRADICTION OF ELITES AND COP-FORMATION:

In the context of this research there is an interesting contradiction with regards to the elites participating in a CoP sharing, assimilating and then translating knowledge and information acquired into practices. Elites owing to their privileged nature and position are rarely expected to make strenuous efforts to engage in learning tasks and responsibilities as part of their regular mandate and form CoPs, more in the nature of ‘occupational communities’ (Duguid, 2005).

Most of the CoPs formed by elites in the contemporary research literature has been towards the objective of acquiring ‘external knowledge’ (Thomas,2012) outside their regular routine mandate or ‘interacting with and influencing the practices relating to external reality’ (Adler,2008) but none with regards to learning routine tasks and responsibilities for dispersing their regular duties. In case of Thomas(2012) the objective of the CoP-formation was primarily networking in nature for cementing existing relationships and developing new ones with peers across the entire field. Besides in both the cases the elites interacted within the CoP as members of an elite group, the club of people at the helm, whereas for the CoP-facilitated learning amongst the IAS officers of West Bengal cadre when one observes the interaction it is far more practical between people engaged in routine tasks and responsibilities more akin to the CoP of photocopier service technicians.

Here the IAS officers of West Bengal cadre form a CoP, engage in a CoP-facilitated mechanism of learning pertaining to their routine duties and responsibilities as a District Administrator. The contradiction lies at the heart of this research, elites who occupy privileged position, hail from rather comfortable social, educational and cultural backgrounds yet they are engaged in very mundane practices in alien non-elite settings. This point in the opinion of the researcher needs elaboration further, if the IAS officers on being inducted were

posted at the glamorous locations like Prime Minister's Office in Delhi or the key ministries at the Central level like Finance, Power whether it would have been appropriate social settings for their elite background habitus and position. Contradictorily subsequent to learning the 'right cutlery and dressing skills' they are posted in very rural, hostile settings where they tackle very grass-roots situation of natural calamities and political violence engaging with the most deprived and backward sections of Indian society. As Ghose(2011) mentions 'one is not saying that the use of cutlery helped stave off a riot or expedited the disbursement of relief' which for the researcher very lucidly captures the contradictions of the IAS elite habitus and their practice.

It would be prudent to mention that some of the IAS officers interviewed were offered positions in the Indian diplomatic corps which would have suited their elite habitus and positioning and yet they opted for the 'rough and tumble' life of the district collector.

Here at the District Administration one can locate the vibrant, energetic CoPs formed with continuous learning facilitated by transmission of knowledge and skills. Interestingly one finds the senior IAS officers encouraging, motivating and empowering the junior IAS officers to discharge their duties towards the needy and poorer sections of Indian society with respect and sincerity. There are instances where the senior members of the IAS CoP punishes IAS officers who sound unfamiliar with the rural settings and are tutored in rather harsh, stern ways like being abandoned in the middle of a paddy field. Interestingly they meet in exclusive clubs where they sip drinks and chat and yet they discuss very practical and pragmatic issues relating to the work of an IAS officers posted in a district.

An elite group would have been expected to form a CoP to disregard the responsibilities and work towards migrating away from the grass-roots reality of Indian district life through networking towards securing postings at the Secretariat level.

The researcher wishes to offer few possible explanations to this contradiction:

- 1.0 Indian civil service elites the ICS, predecessor of the IAS were created as elites to be custodians of the poor and weaker sections of the society and hence this notion of responsibility and regard for dispensing justice, the ICS officers reveled in the ideals of broader service to people of India (Potter, 1996). This often contradicted with their positional role as the Imperial governing class and there were several instances of conflicts between the official position of the government of the day and that of the ICS officer. There was a celebrated notion of service to the broader people of India instilled in the ICS which finds its traces even today amongst the contemporary IAS.
- 2.0 IAS officers though forming elite group with distinct elite habitus also share some enduring values of service, self-sacrifice, character and discipline as part of that habitus inculcated in the English-styled Indian public schools and colleges which influence their approach to work at the District Administration level.
- 3.0 The senior IAS officers do not encourage forming a privileged group which would seek personal rewards and indulge in the joys of life, the spirit which is based on their commitment to the duty towards civil service. For instance though they may be sipping 'pink gin' in exclusive gentleman's clubs but they would discuss issues relating to disbursement of relief or handling a political riot.
- 4.0 Networking which is prevalent in elite CoPs (Adler; 2008;Thomas,2012) is highly frowned upon and is one of the impermissibles of the Codes of Conduct which is the building block for the CoPs amongst the IAS officers.

This is one of the major contradictions of this particular research, where elites who form CoPs and engage in Situated Learning engage in such CoP-facilitated learning process to perform routine tasks and responsibilities.

### **10.9 LEGACY AND TRADITION OF ICS – INFLUENCE ON CoP-FORMATION:**

There is one theoretical contribution which stands out from this particular research is the influence of institutional legacy and tradition on CoP-formation and the associated processes of Situated Learning. Situated Learning here being defined as CoP-facilitated learning process. Most of the research literature on CoPs and Situated Learning is modern in outlook with scant consideration of the influences of the past, since CoPs are supposedly forward-looking mechanisms propelling organizations into the future.

In case of this particular research there is clear evidence of influence of legacy and tradition of the ICS on CoP-formation of the IAS officers. It has been established drawing from contemporary literature on IAS officers that it is a continuation of the old ICS and many of the remnants of the old tradition are strongly embedded.

The researcher wishes to investigate the influence and role of ICS tradition and legacy on CoP-formation and the associated process of Situated Learning. It would be pragmatic and relevant to identify the specific dimensions or factors which influence the CoP-formation and the associated process of ‘Situated Learning.’

How to locate and identify the traces of legacy and tradition of the ICS being manifested visibly in the CoP-facilitated Learning mechanisms was the question which was being raised by the researcher.

According to the researcher the salient themes which have emerged from the research findings based on the interpretation of interview data and triangulation of other literary and textual material are:

- 1.0 Vibrant, Energetic formation of CoPs amongst IAS officers at the District Administration level. Fundamentally the only site of CoP-formation has been at the District level.

- 2.0 CoP-based learning mechanism, Situated Learning, playing a key and significant role in inducting fresh recruits IAS officers, the newcomers into the CoP and imparting them the skills and knowledge necessary to perform the duties of an IAS officer.
- 3.0 The special, personal, affable relationship shared between the senior IAS officer and the junior IAS officer at the District Administration level which facilitated the formation of CoPs and the process of Situated Learning.
- 4.0 The training imparted by the senior IAS officers at the District Administration were often subtle, tacit in nature with more being learnt by observing the senior and following their operations. Learning happened under the tutelage of senior IAS officers at the District Administration.
- 5.0 The early formative years of an IAS officer are spent at the District Administration, they nearly spend 10 years of their working life at the District level.

The researcher considered some of the above points from the perspective of legacy and tradition of the IAS, that which is being inherited from the British Raj ICS.

For the researcher since this is a significant contribution of this specific research work, the legacy and tradition of ICS influencing CoP-formation and Situated Learning it merits discussions to certain depth and detail.

In order to establish the influences exercised by tradition and legacy of the ICS on CoP-formation amongst the IAS officers the salient emergent themes needs to be identified which can be traced back to the ICS days. The researcher performed this task by relying on memoirs, research papers, biographies and books on ICS officers.

Here below is a table with extracts from memoirs of ICS officers compiled in a book, edited by a Kewal L. Panjabi(1965), titled ‘The Civil Servant in India’ categorized against the above salient analytic themes, both emergent and construct from the research findings.

Name and Batch of ICS officer	Extracts from the memoirs	Thematic Category
Shamaldharee Lall, ICS,1919.	In our service the principles of administration were evolved by trial and error. We had to learn our work while doing a job, and there were endless jobs. Under the guidance and supervision of the district officers, the district judge or the settlement officer, each recruit was made, so to speak, to go through the mill. The prevailing practice was to post a new recruit to the headquarters of as district and to leave him there for about a year under the care of the district officer. His attitude to me was exactly the same as that of any tutor at Oxford, always watchful of what I was doing, but interfering as little as possible and kind, sympathetic and helpful.	-Mentoring Relationship - Tutoring by senior ICS officers - Special relationship with seniors - Learning by Participation (LPP-model)
KPS Menon, ICS, 1921.	It is often said that the career of an ICS man is made or marred by his first Collector.	- Mentoring Relationship - Special relationship with seniors
C C Desai, ICS, 1923.	H. M. Crofton, my Deputy Commissioner, also believed in putting a junior officer through the mill. A little hardship early in one’s career does more good than harm.	- Mentoring Relationship

C C Desai, ICS, 1923.	It hardens you for the vicissitudes of life, and let it be remembered that life is no bed of roses even for the chosen few of the ICS. I was fortunate in having as my Deputy Commissioner, a man who took special pride and interest in the training of his junior officers and probationers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Special relationship with seniors</li> <li>- Learning by Participation (LPP-model)</li> </ul>
K L Panjabi, ICS, 1922.	I was attached to J.B. Irwin, Assistant Collector at Shikarpur, who was frank and friendly, with no racial complex. His war service had made him a strict disciplinarian, so much so that the very first evening, while relaxing after dinner at the cosy fireside, he handed me a copy of the Bombay Land Revenue Code, saying: ‘Not a day to be lost; begin with it today. Tomorrow morning we start on our tour to the villages. I have arranged for you tents and a camel until you can get a horse.’”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mentoring Relationship</li> </ul>
G D Khosla, ICS, 1925.	At the very beginning of my service I learnt that the first duty of a senior officer is to help the junior novice in becoming a knowledgeable, self-confident and efficient civil servant. The District Magistrate with a sort of paternal indulgence, told me not to be unduly agitated about the matter and, sending for the lawyer who had asked for bail, reprimanded him for misleading an inexperienced judicial officer and gave him a short and sharp discourse on forensic ethics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mentoring Relationship</li> <li>- Special relationship with seniors</li> <li>- “Scaffolding” – support to the juniors</li> </ul>
V Isvaran, ICS, 1933.	There was an intimacy between senior and junior members of the Service, which is now becoming less and less. The training of the newcomer was accepted by the senior Civil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Mentoring Relationship</li> </ul>

V Isvaran, ICS, 1933.	Servants as their special responsibility. Merely watching the senior at work was instructive. There were innumerable discussions outside the office – at the senior;s house, or the club, or on the field of sport. Valuable pieces of advice were handed over in a casual manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tutoring by senior ICS officers</li> <li>- Special relationship with seniors</li> <li>- Learning by Participation (LPP-model)</li> </ul>
J M Srinagesh, ICS, 1928.	Training, however, was conducted mainly as “on the job” training, largely under individual personal supervision. A young officer was expected to take up important tasks at an early age, under the general guidance of his Collector or Commissioner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learning by Participation (LPP-model)</li> <li>- Mentoring Relationship</li> </ul>

**Table 26 – Extracts from Memoirs of ICS officers – source: developed by the researcher**

Clearly the distinct themes which emerge as part of the legacy and tradition are:

- 1.0 Relationship with the Senior officer in the District Administration
- 2.0 Learning by Participation in the early years – according to LPP-model
- 3.0 Shaping the Successor – Charge Notes

The researcher wishes to discuss the influence of these elements of legacy and tradition of the ICS in the CoP-formation of the IAS and the associated mechanism of Situated Learning in the context of this particular research.

### 10.9.1 RELATIONSHIP WITH SENIOR IAS OFFICER IN DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION:

The key facilitating mechanism in the CoP-formation and the processes of Situated Learning is the very special relationship enjoyed by the IAS officers with their senior IAS officers in the District Administration. The researcher wishes to propose that this can be safely termed as one of the 'building blocks' for the formation of CoPs of IAS officers at the District Administration level. This emerges from the literary and textual material as part of the long tradition of ICS officers freshly recruited to serve at the District level, in the words of Bonerjee(1970), one of the distinguished ICS officers, 'My Deputy Commissioner, A.B. Reid, one of the kindest and most conscientious of men, hospitably gave me a roof over my head for as long as he remained in the District.' In his encapsulation of the ICS officers posted in the District, Bonerjee(1970) mentions that '..there was always the father-figure of the District Officer to correct and guide.'

Similarly Gilmour(2005) mentions 'Many griffins(ICS trainees who have never been to India) undoubtedly owed much to the tutelage and hospitality of a sympathetic Collector.' This cordiality can be traced back to the need to smoothen and ease the tensions of working in the strange and uncertain environments for the trainees, i.e. the new recruits into the ICS, the connections were sought and made with persons who could provide or offer some security, support and understanding about the strange world, which in most cases were the Collector (Potter,1996). This process of bonding and offering mutual support occurred between ICS men and some even shared their dwellings.

Here there is a clear continuity in the tradition of senior officers engaged in the District Administration being hospitable, kind, generous and paternalistic towards the junior officers, both in the cases of ICS and IAS. Important to state that the senior ICS and IAS officers were strict disciplinarians without extending leniency in terms of performing their duties in the assigned roles and responsibilities as evident from this specific research interview data and the literary and textual material.

In conclusion, the congenial relationship between the senior and junior officers in the District Administration plays a significant role in forging the personal ties for forming the CoPs. As evident from this particular research the congenial and cosy relationship between senior IAS officers and junior IAS officers is a key building block for CoP-facilitated learning, i.e. Situated Learning and is starkest at the District Administration level. This disintegrates at the Secretariat level which in turn leads to fragmentation of the CoP and this factor can be traced back to the inherited legacy and tradition of ICS.

#### 10.9.2 LEARNING BY PARTICIPATION IN EARLY YEARS – LPP MODEL:

Learning by Participation in Practice of the CoP is one of the significant theoretical considerations of Situated Learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Here interpreting from the extracts of the memoirs of ICS officers, learning by participation in practice of the CoP was an important facet of their training or ‘rites of passage’ into the world of ICS officers. It would be interesting to refer Mason(1985) in his book on ICS officers, the counsel offered by a wise Commissioner to his junior ICS posted in a sub-division responsible for trainee ICS officers posted as SDOs, ‘Don’t try to do your SDOs work; see that they do it themselves but give them a chance and don’t weigh yourself down with detail.’ Expressed in the words of an ICS officer about the learning experience of an ICS officer fresh recruit ‘...a young man knows nothing when he first gets into the Civil Service.....what constitutes a good bureaucrat is something he has still to learn, and it can only be learnt by experience, for it is a lot of things which never get into book (Potter, 1996).’

In convergence with idea of Situated Learning the Participation in Practice of the CoP extended beyond the related tasks and responsibilities to social and cultural aspects of CoP, in case of CC Desai(ICS;1923), his British senior ICS officers tutored him in ‘high-brow’ social customs of the day, like gentlemen staying behind after dinner when the ladies retired to the drawing room which he was unfamiliar with as a raw Cambridge graduate (Potter,1996).

This emphasis on Learning by Participation in Practice of the CoP is alive and widely celebrated in the contemporary context as evident from the research

interview data and literary and textual material. The researcher wishes to propose that one of the most fascinating findings of these specific research case-studies have been the incredible convergence of the training experience of fresh recruit IAS officers with the LPP model; Learning by Participation in Practice.

In conclusion, the Learning by Participation in Practice has been a powerful residual characteristic of the legacy and tradition of the ICS in the contemporary IAS collective and influenced the CoP-facilitated learning mechanism, i.e. Situated Learning enormously.

### 10.9.3 SHAPING THE SUCCESSOR – LEGACY OF CHARGE NOTES:

There were considerable efforts expended to shape the successors, ICS trainee officers by their seniors on joining the District Administration. This is evident from the memoirs of most of the ICS officers, and the notion of ‘shaping’ the junior ICS officer spawned interesting anecdotes and tales. In words of Potter(1996), ‘Most of the ICS men have a vivid recollection of their first encounters with their first Collector, and most of the time the senior ICS officers took them under their tutelage and watched the Collectors life at close quarters and most tried to model on the example of the seniors.’ Asok Mitra, another ICS officer recalls fondly the glorious example set by his English ICS seniors in administering the District and serving the people at large(Bhattacharya,2007). Clearly the seniors paid close attention to the shaping of the fresh recruit ICS officers and in turn their successors, there was a sense of pride in passing on the mantle of district administration. The District Administration was something of a prized possession which needed to be passed on to a successor, with a clear notion of inheritance.

A very tangible artefact of this legacy and tradition was the existence of Charge notes, notes prepared by an ICS officer who was District Magistrate with details of his experience and the affairs of the District. This was embedded in the ICS District Administration culture as ‘Part of a systematic tradition and some of the officers left elaborate, incisive charge notes’(Sethi,2006). In words of Sethi(2006) successor notes ‘were the finest examples of this institution and its

officers who had meticulously passed on their insights in an attempt at good governance’.

The new ICS officer who took charge of the District as the Administrative head added to his learning process through the existence of ‘Charge notes’. Apart from providing specific knowledge about administration of the District it added to the ‘lore about the place and its past’. Increasingly this tradition has become scarce to the extent of being obsolete and consigned to the shelves of history and as Sethi(2006) expresses remorse about the fading of tradition of Charge notes, ‘The ICS tradition has become a relic of a bygone era’. The researcher wishes to state that with regards to the West Bengal cadre IAS officers interviewed the tradition seems to have been alive and cherished till the mid-1970s, when the youngest of the interviewees joined the service and served as a trainee in the District Administration.

In conclusion, the tradition and rich legacy of ‘shaping the successor’ in the ICS District Administration has been followed to the current IAS collective in post-independence India. This has very substantially influenced the process of CoP-facilitated learning, i.e. Situated Learning, with the ‘mentoring’ tradition ethos playing a key role in forging ties and bonds towards forming CoPs amongst the IAS officers.

Here the three above themes which were emergent and ‘construct’ can be located within the legacy and tradition of the ICS embedded within the current IAS collective.

Hence the current section demonstrates the role played by institutional legacy and tradition in assisting and facilitating formation of CoPs, a very modern organizational structure steering relatively modern notions of Situated Learning.

### **10.10 CURRENT RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS - THEORETICAL:**

This particular research aims to contribute theoretically by integrating its findings in the existing theory ‘gaps’ in CoP literature. The theoretical gaps were identified earlier in the thesis based on the work of Roberts (2006) and are stated as below:

1. Socio-Cultural Context and influence on CoP-formation
2. Organizational Context and influence on CoP-formation
3. Communities of Innovation – CoPs steering innovation

The ‘gaps’ pertained to formation of CoPs, in other words the influence of the contexts as mentioned on the formation of CoPs, and hence this particular research had lot to offer potentially given the case-studies were being conducted in India, in different regions with their particular historical and cultural backgrounds.

The theoretical contributions of this particular research can be summarized as below:

Theoretical ‘Gaps’ – Identified	Research Contribution – Factors influencing the formation of CoPs
Socio-Cultural Context	<b>HISTORICAL</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Presidency cadre</li><li>- Direct ICS rule</li><li>- ‘Elite’ habitus of Anglophone Indian Upper-Middle Class</li></ul>
Organizational Context	<b>CODES OF CONDUCT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Legacy and Tradition of the ICS</li></ul>
Communities of Innovation(CoInv)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- fragmentation of CoPs even when innovative practices occur</li></ul>

**Table 27 – Theoretical Contributions of the Research - source: developed by the researcher**

In the opinion of the researcher the most significant contribution to the theoretical literature on CoPs, are the identified influencing factors towards formation of CoPs. These factors which have been identified to influence the formation of CoPs and their sustenance in the context of this specific research on IAS officers.

These three factors which influence the formation of CoPs are:

1.0 Codes of Conduct

2.0 Elite Habitus – in this specific case the Anglophone Indian upper-middle class

3.0 Legacy and tradition of the ICS

As discussed in a separate section in most of the contemporary research literature on CoPs the role played by legacy and tradition inherited by an organization is neglected. CoPs are vehicle for knowledge transfer, collective learning and innovation in a very modern context and hence it is least expected that legacies and tradition will play any significant role.

A few words about the specific contribution of each of the influencing factors towards formation of CoPs.

Influencing Factor for CoP-formation	General Remarks/Observation
Codes of Conduct	<p>Witness the very significant role played in the formation of CoPs, and when violated by any member or individual belonging to the CoP immediate fragmentation happens.</p> <p>Interestingly the sites where the Codes of Conduct are fragile and weak the CoP-formation is non-existent.</p>
Elite Habitus	<p>This was a key factor in the formation of CoPs, the building blocks for the CoPs formed between IAS officers. Though important to state the non-elite members were welcomed and integrated through transmission of the habitus.</p> <p>In a way this elite-based CoP is peculiar in a sense not exclusionary but the predominant habitus is that of an elite nature.</p>
Legacy and Tradition inherited by the organization	<p>In opinion of the researcher this is the most important theoretical contribution of this specific research study. In this specific case the legacy and tradition of ICS transmitted to the IAS influences enormously the formation of CoPs and the associated processes of CoP-facilitated learning and innovation.</p> <p>The sites of active, vibrant CoP-formation happens to be where the legacy and tradition is the strongest, in this specific case the District Administration.</p>

**Table 28 – Influencing factors towards formation of CoPs – developed by the researcher**

### 10.10.1 UNDERSTANDING CoPs FROM HISTORICAL DIMENSION – LEGACIES & TRADITION:

The current research contribution to the existing repository of research literature is limited to the highlighting of the boundaries and limits of the application of theories of CoP-formation and not any new definition or understanding of CoPs. The researcher worked with the four predominant theoretical frameworks of -Lave & Wenger(1991), -Brown & Duguid (1991), -Wenger(1998) and Wenger, McDermott & Snyder(2002) which have been defined by Cox (2005) to be the dominant prevalent ones which provided research direction which has been explained in the section 3.2 in Chapter 3.

The research work did not anyway contribute towards a better understanding of the definitions which have been termed and often been criticized as nebulous, filled with ambiguities, ‘hardly coherent’ and is ‘still evolving’ (Handley, 2006; Lindkvist, 2005; Mutch,2003). Definitions and understandings of the CoPs as prevalent in these above-mentioned four canonical works were adapted and pursued throughout the current research.

This research on CoPs within the IAS officers belonging to West Bengal and Karnataka cadre demonstrated the significance of contextuality as argued by Cox (2005) and (Johnson, 2001) explained in section 3.2 of Chapter 3 hence the limits and boundaries of application of the concept of CoPs have been adequately demonstrated. Here the limits and boundaries of the application of the theories of CoPs are the contextuality and the specific conditions under which CoPs form. The theoretical contribution arising has reinforced and validated the notion that contextuality plays a key role and significance in grasp and comprehension of CoP-formation, particularly while conducting case-studies in organizations.

The contextuality in this specific research is the ‘historical dimension’ of the organization which is being studied, the legacies and traditions which have been passed down generations. In this research case-study on IAS officers the legacy and tradition inherited is that of the ICS officers of the British Raj era. While

conducting the research case-studies the researcher investigated, captured and recorded the specificities of that legacy and tradition influencing the CoP-formation, The most glaring instance being the tradition of mentoring the young fresh recruit ICS officers at the District Administration level by the senior District Officer. The researcher investigated to what extent this tradition persisted into the contemporary IAS collective.

The next most significant aspect of historical dimension of the organization influencing the CoP-formation is the adherence to the prescribed Codes of Conduct which again have been passed down generations to the current corps of IAS officers. This legacy and tradition has been discussed elaborately in section 10.9 of Chapter 10. Most importantly the research contribution lies in explaining the fragmentation of CoPs when these Codes of Conduct are violated or transgressed. The fragmentation of CoPs and their reasons is often left unexplored in the research literature on CoPs according to the researcher.

The key theoretical contribution of the research has been the demonstration of the limits and boundaries of the application of the theories of CoPs in terms of the contextual conditions, which is the historical dimension of an organization, i.e. the legacies and traditions inherited by the organization. These legacies and traditions influence the formation and nurturing of the CoPs.

In conclusion, the key theoretical contribution in terms of a historical understanding of CoPs is as follows:

- Understanding the historical dimension of the organization being studied, i.e. the origins, development and evolution of the organization will influence contemporary formation of CoPs. Hence the present CoPs need to be placed in the context of a historical understanding of the organization.
- Legacies and traditions which have been passed on to the next generations will influence the character and formation of the CoPs as in the specific research being that of the Codes of Conduct.

- Traditions as manifest in the historical contexts will facilitate or hinder the formation and nurturing of CoPs in the current organizational context. In this specific research is the instance of that of the District Officer mentoring the junior fresh recruit District Officer treating this task as being a key responsibility of his role as an administrator.
- Legacies and traditions playing a role in fragmentation of CoPs in contemporary context. There are two interesting instances in this research which lead to fragmentation; one the long-standing apathy towards Secretariat dating back to the days of Kipling and the violation of Codes of Conduct which trace their origins about a century back.

#### 10.10.2 METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION:

According to the researcher this particular research contributes in a modest manner to the methodological aspects of elite research. The elites research dimension emerged mid-way through conducting the research study and hence the adaptation of methodological modifications were incorporated later based on contemporary elite research literature.

The two specific contributions to the elite research methodology from this particular research are stated as below:

- 1.0 Confrontational approach is often recommended by current research literature on elite interviewing to elicit responses from the respondents on uncomfortable topics and themes. Based on the experience of the researcher this process can be mitigated by deploying a sense of humour and wit which is familiar to the charmed circles of the elites. Though the researcher is aware that here the elite shares the Anglophone cultural trait of self-deprecation and ironic humour which may not be shared across elites hailing from other cultural backgrounds.
- 2.0 The issues of access and interviewing the elite respondents which has been identified as a major challenge can be smoothed by understanding and appreciating the nuances of the social world, cultural tastes and the habitus of

the elites being researched. It is important for the researcher to familiarize themselves with the rituals of the elites, in case of this specific research like being recommended by their inner circle members and never knocking on their apartment doors directly but rather being chaperoned by one of their orderlies.

### **10.11 LIMITATION OF THIS SPECIFIC RESEARCH:**

There were several limitations given the nature of organization being studied, a political and elite one with restricted access for research, the subtle legacies and traditions embedded and the influence of modernity like market-economy forces and globalization.

Some of the key were as below:

- Community of Practice literature review was followed part-way in the study by another review on Elites and the methodology of elites research which is a rather non-conventional observational route.
- The research and the case-studies were conducted on two specific cadres and not the other key geographical ones like Uttar Pradesh which is the most populous and politically-critical state.
- There was no research conducted in the national capital, New Delhi in the central ministries and Prime Minister's Office which would have provided a different perspective.
- No ICS officers were interviewed since none were alive when the researcher embarked on the interviews and yet they have such a strong influence on the impressions of several senior IAS officers.
- Sample size could have been larger which was restricted by access issues.

### **10.12 FUTURE RESEARCH POTENTIAL:**

This particular research does leave a few interesting and enriching directions for future research. The broad direction of the future research potential would be in the context of IAS as an organizational entity; to explore the emergence of IAS as a site of contestation of social equity reflecting the democratic aspirations of the disadvantaged sections of the Indian society through adequate representation based on caste, class, language, gender regions and other forms of identities. In the Indian context IAS has emerged as a platform where adequate participation by different under-privileged sections of society like the backward castes indicate and convey a sense of empowerment and emancipation. There is a vibrant ongoing debate and discourse in contemporary Indian society about IAS being platform for the fulfillment of the aspirations of the disadvantaged sections of society.

Here it would be prudent to explore, investigate, capture and record the trajectory of experience of civil services in similar post-colonial democracies for instance Pakistan which inherited the same British-Raj ICS framework after its independence in 1947. The key most important research question would be the reason why these post-colonial civil services did not adapt and modify to reflect the aspirations and voices of the disadvantaged sections of society through adequate representation as an instrument.

The directions are arising from the findings and the ongoing conversation which the current research boundaries could not exceed:

- Gender dimension of IAS officers with women IAS officers offering a very interesting and refreshing perspective of their experience of induction into the IAS and the CoP formed around gender.
- Changing social composition of the IAS recruits with less urban and upper-middle class backgrounds being aspirants for IAS and the impact on the CoP-formation. There is less percentage of IAS officers hailing from Anglophone Indian upper-middle classes.

- CoP-formation specific to the new social groups entering the IAS through the relatively recent affirmative action programs to encourage higher participation of backward castes in the IAS.
- Modernity and its impact on the District Administration like that of globalization and market-economy forces.
- Recruitment of non-IAS officers i.e. the State Civil Services into the administration and the impact on formation of Communities of Practice.
- Impact of national missions headquartered and managed from the capital, New Delhi on the formation of Communities of Practice.
- Quantitative research study exploring the differences in formation of CoPs comparing the Presidency cadres and non-Presidency cadres based on the current research work.

### **10.13 REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS:**

Reflexivity is often suggested as a method to enrich an ethnographic case-study. Here the reflections will cover the following aspects of the conducting of the research as stated below:

- 1.0 Influence of the Researcher on the Research process
- 2.0 Methodological Reflection – Case-Study research
- 3.0 Ethics issues – sensitive issues and protection of privacy
- 4.0 Theoretical Reflection

#### **10.13.1 INFLUENCE OF THE RESEARCHER ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS:**

In qualitative research the question of researcher influencing the study has been widely accepted and the modes and mechanisms of researcher influencing the study is what is often expected to be explored and explained (Pierce, 1995; Kleinman & Copp, 1994). Researcher needs to acknowledge and recognize the possible influences of the researcher's background like nationality, social and

cultural background, gender and ethnicity on the research process and is a significant dimension of reflexive account (Silverman, 1993; Seale, 1999).

According to Wallerstein(1999):

‘We need to understand our personal biographies of race, educational and social status, gender and other identities; how these inform our ability to speak and interpret the world.’

This is more relevant in elites research with the asymmetrical power relationship, vulnerability of the researcher to be overwhelmed and the feeling of awe and charisma in their presence after securing an access rather with much effort and the high social status associated with the interviewer vis-à-vis the researcher (Thomas, 1995; Adler & Adler, 1990, Punch, 1986; Warren, 1988).

Hence the researcher needs to account for the influencing factors while conducting the research. Some of the details have been discussed in the chapter on elites research methodology.

Here the focus will be on the ‘status’ of the researcher as an insider given the shared social and cultural world with the respondents in both the cadres; that of the Anglophone India which has a distinct elite habitus and world-view. The paramount question is if the insider status owing to the shared social world influenced the research process. The researcher wishes to mention that several steps were adopted to neutralize that influence for an objective collection and interpretation of data.

#### 10.13.2 METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION – CASE-STUDY RESEARCH:

Case-studies have often been projected as poor cousin among the social science methods for its limitation of generalization of results and subjectivity.

Generalizing the results of a particular case-study to similar contexts is limited and is one of the criticisms of the method. The issue of generalising the findings to other contexts was not of paramount importance given the complexity of the institution in terms of its cultural context, historical and traditional legacy and the very insular nature of respondents making access difficult. This present research did not foray to develop conclusions about CoP-formation and the

associated processes of CoP-facilitated learning, i.e. Situated Learning and Innovation extendable to other similar or dissimilar contexts.

Case-study results depend to a large extent on personal interpretation of the collected data, and the research process is heavily influenced by the researcher as a person.

This concern is legitimately expressed with regards to high degree of personal influence and involvement of the researcher conducting the study. Hence the personal biases, integrity and sensitivity becomes of paramount importance in presenting the results of the case-study.

In case of the present research adoption of the case-study method provided insights into the context and flexibility which have been often been projected as the strengths of the method. This specific research being descriptive in nature with an interpretive stance, the researcher was able to study and investigate the phenomenon with a creative approach.

The researcher found the case study approach, in its widest sense, a helpful way of thinking about the predefined research targets; and that this is notwithstanding the argument that Tight makes (2010) which was reviewed subsequently to finishing the study, that the term case study itself was not helpful, and that a more general term like 'small scale study' would suffice.

Tight (2010) makes a mention about the porous nature of boundaries in case-studies which was highly appropriate according to the researcher for this present study. The researcher was all along keenly aware of the 'shifting boundaries' of the two defined case-studies, since the IAS officers as a collective were not restricted to the cadres selected, and were considered part of the Anglophone Indian upper-middle class. This very porous nature of the boundaries in case-study research permitted the necessary flexibility for the researcher and was highly appreciated.

### 10.13.3 METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION – ELITES RESEARCH:

This section explains the different forms of personal engagement of the researcher in conducting the elite research on West Bengal cadre IAS officers

and is linked to the different stages of conducting the research in terms of terms of quality access, data collection while conducting interviews and then finally interpreting the data collected through the incorporated methodology of triangulation in research design.

The different stages in terms of the researcher's personal engagement in the research process were:

1.0 Socialization – Social Immersion

2.0 Reflexivity

3.0 Distancing from Social World – Analytic Phase

The process depicts the role of the researcher and different forms of his personal engagement in different phases of conducting the elite research specifically on West Bengal cadre IAS officers. The researcher felt this needs to be explained as an important aspect of conducting the elite research study since the influence of the researcher is significantly important in case of elites research as mentioned in an earlier section of this chapter with the asymmetrical power relationship, vulnerability of the researcher to be overwhelmed and the feeling of awe and charisma in their presence after securing an access rather with much effort and the high social status associated with the interviewer vis-à-vis the researcher (Thomas, 1995; Adler & Adler, 1990, Punch, 1986; Warren, 1986). Besides in qualitative research the question of researcher influencing the study needs to be explored and explained to add rigour to the study (Pierce, 1995; Kleinman & Copp, 1994).

This process has been linked and explained with respect to the different phases of the PhD and each phase had its own priorities hence the researcher engaged in very different forms or avatar with the research process. For instance in the first phase the researcher engaged to ensure access to the elite group to enable him to conduct the interviews and obtain enriched information and data.

The different priorities in each phase and the personal engagement of the researcher are encapsulated as below:

PHASE – 1: In this Phase the task was Data Collection and pre-Data Collection networking to establish contacts with the potential respondents. Here research priority was to obtain access to the elite group and obtain enriched information and data. The form of personal engagement by the researcher was Social Immersion or Socialization.

PHASE – 2: In this Phase the task was Data Collection and Data Collation where the initial sketches of transcripts were being formulated and verified by the respondents. Here research priority was to obtain valid and quality data and collating objective information. The form of personal engagement was Reflexivity.

PHASE -3: In this Phase the task was Interpretation and Recording of the data in the form of a research thesis based on the interview data and the triangulated data, the concluding phase of the doctoral research. Here the research priorities were objective and astute interpretation of the data collected and collated by adopting a neutral and independent position of the researcher. This neutrality towards the data obtained from the research on the elite group of IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre was an important position prior to interpretation. Below are described specifically the measures adopted and the different forms of personal engagement by the researcher.

#### 1.0 SOCIALIZATION – SOCIAL IMMERSION – DATA COLLECTION

##### PHASE:

At this stage having identified the elite group to be researched the most important priority was access and as Nader (1972) noted that most common objection to doing ‘studying up’ was restricted or limited access. The entire focus of the researcher was access and how to gain quality access where the respondents offered time and adequate attention necessary for capturing the data. According to Thomas(1995) ‘how to gain access had been identified as a key question for conducting elite research. To attain the access the researcher felt the priority was to create sense of familiarity with the social landscape and its norms which would facilitate the process of research through support and candid conversations (Workman Jr., 1995). As Van Maanen notes: ‘Fieldwork usually

means living with and living like those who are studied.’ During this phase of the research, where the data collection was dependent on quality access it was imperative to be established as an ‘insider’ which draws into the notion of ‘outsider/insider’ and an often explored in research literature on elite interviewing (Desmond,2004; Herod,1999; Sabot,1999; Becker,1995).

This insider status in turn established a smooth comfort zone with the researcher’s first elite respondent and a key trustworthy insider contact (Hirsch,1995;Gurney,1990 Kleinman,1990;Shaffir,1990;Gurney,1990).

Here socialization as defined by the researcher is the familiarity with the conduct, manners and daily quaint rituals of the elite group being studied i.e. IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre. This was more of an inherited predisposition through the years of growing up in Kolkata, that of the familiarity with the social world. Hence the socializing required not any additional effort but more of an activation of the old memories and knowledge of the rules of conduct. Immersion happened naturally through living amidst the group being studied and the old familiarity resurged in the mind and the researcher went ahead and connected with the group being researched.

## 2.0 REFLEXIVITY:

While conducting the research data collection the researcher was aware of one of the pitfalls being the reliability of the data which was based on the interactions between the researcher and the respondent. This pitfall alerted the researcher to ensure that the processes of data collection and collating, the personalized interview data was scrutinized for any interference by personal engagement of the researcher with the respondents, the researcher having been socially immersed. There were primarily three key areas of concern with regards to the validity of the data being influenced by the personal role and engagement of the researcher in this elite research; objectivity of the truth, powerlessness of the researcher and the effect of the charisma and adoration of the elites on the data collection and collation process. The objectivity of the truth has been addressed by the social constructivist philosophy of the research explained in sections 7.10 and 7.11 of Chapter 7 which renders the concern not entirely relevant for the objective of this research. With regards to the powerlessness of the researcher

vis-à-vis the respondents, this was not considered an issue of significance in this research precisely because of the ‘social immersion’ through the shared social world between the researcher and the respondents as explained in section 7.15 of Chapter 7. The researcher felt that the issue of charisma deserved attention and explanation due to possible influences of the researcher’s shared social world with the respondents. There needs to be acknowledged that the researcher held personal admiration for the elite group being studied, i.e. IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre and hence the charisma or ‘halo effect’ (Thomas, 1995) which would have influenced the interview process without realizing it and affected the data collection. Adequate measures were adopted to mitigate this potential effect on the interview data collection process as explained in the section 7.16.2 of Chapter 7. Here in this section the researcher will only focus on the reflexivity which was initiated as a mechanism of considering the personal positioning of the researcher since an elite group was being studied along with the ‘safe distance’ factors which were considered repeatedly to ensure that the researcher was considering the interview data from an analytic objective perspective. For instance the possibility of exaggerated claims of achievements on the part of the elite group, i.e. the IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre during their early years as a district administrator which would have influenced data collection.

This process was initiated while collecting and collating the interview data, collating here means the initial transcribing of the interviews like drawing a brief sketch of the interview data after each interview. The full transcribing occurred at a later stage when the researcher started building on the data collected from all the interviews. Here the most important toolkit was constant reference to the research questions, research framework and the goals and objectives of the interview process, where the researcher remained connected to the end-objective of the entire research process. The simple paramount question being put forth was ‘are the research questions being answered?’ or ‘are the parameters of the research framework being adhered to’.

### 3.0 DISTANCING FROM SOCIAL WORLD – ANALYTIC PHASE:

The influence of the researcher and his background like nationality, gender, ethnicity, cultural and social background on the research process needs to be accounted for and recognized and has been discussed in section 10.13.1 of

Chapter 10. Here particularly of relevance is the shared social and cultural background of the researcher with the elite group being studied; IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre which needs to be mentioned. This shared social world between the researcher and the researched, the elite group, i.e. the IAS officers belonging to West Bengal cadre has been explored in an earlier section 7.15 of Chapter 7 about the different dimensions along cultural lines of this shared world. Here at the analytic phase the issue of interpretation assumed importance and was reinforced with reference to Wallerstein(1999): ‘We need to understand our personal biographies of race, educational and social status, gender and other identities; how these inform our ability to speak and interpret the world.’ For the researcher this personal background ‘informing’ the ‘ability to interpret the world’ assumes paramount importance at the analytic phase where the process of interpretation occurs. The researcher was alert to the possibility of the shared social world background impacting and influencing the interpretation of the collected and collated data, i.e. the individual respondent interviews and participant-observation. The measures minimizing the impact of the shared social world prior to this stage of research focused on ensuring adequate, proper, reliable data collection. Being objective was important to the extent of being vigilant to any possibility of assuming the ‘voice’ of the respondents which being an elite group would have had a clear tendency to trumpet their achievements and glory and not strictly adhering to the objective of capturing relevant answers to the research questions.

At the analytic stage however the challenge changed to being one of interpretation of the gathered and collated data in an objective and rational manner and not be dissuaded by the shared background by expressing empathy. For instance being alert to the possibility of a CoP being formed around the shared social and cultural background of being an Anglophone Indian upper-middle class rather than the shared domain of district administration or CoPs being site of nepotism being ostensibly expressed through a shared community of learners.

In order to ensure an astute, objective, independent in the sense of assuming a neutral perspective as a qualitative researcher, the researcher enforced a certain ‘distancing’ from the shared social world of the elite group being studied, i.e. the IAS officers belonging to West Bengal cadre. This ‘distancing’ was important to

be achieved at the analytic phase prior to the commencing of interpretation of the collected and collated qualitative data relating to the elite group being studied.

The mechanisms of distancing adopted by the researcher were as follows:

- 1.0 Geographical location – the interpretation was executed mostly in London, UK which provided that necessary geographical distance of perceiving things in an astute manner, in another light of logic which might not have been possible being physically close to the social world of the respondents. The researcher wishes to emphasize that the geographical distancing did assist in imparting that ‘distant gaze’ devoid of any romantic redolent notions of IAS in West Bengal.
  
- 2.0 Triangulation – at the analytic phase the researcher decided to closely read the textual and literary material of biographies, memoirs, diaries, journals from a detached perspective, which was the second round of reading of the textual and literary material. At this stage the researcher attempted to understand and interpret the textual and literary material in a stand-alone manner independent of the interview data with a reflexive approach. For instance reading about the CoP-formation during major events like riots, floods which were mentioned in the interviews in the memoirs and dairies and then making notes and constructing a sense-making structure and then comparing them with the interview data. In this specific case the elite aspect was explored and analyzed thoroughly based on a careful reading of the textual and literary material and compared to what had been obtained through personalized interviews and participant-observation.
  
- 3.0 Lapses of time – there was a time gap of nearly 6-8 months since the last interviews were concluded and the process of final analysis, i.e. the period of final composition of the text of the doctoral thesis. This time lapse allowed for a reflection on the material collected and collated through the qualitative interviews of the individual IAS officers of the West Bengal cadre.
  
- 4.0 Supervisory interactions – this was a crucial stage where the supervisor feedback on the interview transcripts provided direction to the researcher about the validity of the interview data collected and collated.

5.0 Reflexivity – this was the constant companion in the research tool-kit for the researcher for conducting elite research. It is important to mention that reflexivity had to be nurtured and cultivated by the researcher constantly by pondering over the key research questions and the research framework. Reflexivity in this specific case of the researcher conducting research on the elite group of IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre involved the following steps:

- Revisiting the research questions
- Being skeptical of the main themes emerging from the interview data and participant-observation and pondering over them
- Being conscious if the researcher is emerging their ‘voice’ i.e. of the respondents in this case the IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre
- Placing the data against the ‘elite pitfalls’ as mentioned in an earlier section (7.6) in this chapter and considering the implications for the final text of the thesis.

The research focus remained to ascertain whether social and cultural background of being Anglophone Indian upper-middle class rather than the shared domain of district administration is being expressed through formation of CoPs. In other words the question was whether CoPs are being formed around shared domain interest or shared social and cultural world.

In order to ensure an astute, objective, independent interpretation and analysis in the sense of being neutral from a qualitative research perspective the researcher enforced a certain ‘distancing’ from the shared social world of the elite group being studied, i.e. the IAS officers belonging to West Bengal cadre. This ‘distancing’ was important to be achieved at the analytic phase prior to the commencing of interpretation of the collected and collated qualitative data relating to the elite group being studied.

#### 10.13.4 ETHICS ISSUES – SENSITIVE ISSUES AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY:

In the context of this particular research given the sensitive nature of topics being discussed pertaining to public administration the issue of research ethics was important to be accounted for. The researcher followed the statement of Punch(1986) regarding the ethical issues needed to be considered by researchers in social sciences:

‘The avoidance of harm, fully informed consent and the need for privacy and confidentiality.’

In accordance with the research ethics statement above the following measures were adopted:

- 1.0 All respondents were interviewed with fully informed consent and a briefing was offered prior to the onset of the interview about the topics to be discussed.
- 2.0 Anonymity of the respondents were protected through by not referring to them by their names but as IAS officers belonging to a particular batch, the year of joining the IAS and not their names in the main thesis discussions.
- 3.0 Audio tapes were kept confidential by the researcher.
- 4.0 Hard copies and electronic copies of the interview transcripts were stored in confidential protected environment in the research office.
- 5.0 Names of individuals have been mentioned in the interview transcripts with the due permission of the respondents. In case of highly sensitive and explosive political information the names have been protected at the discretion of the researcher.

#### 10.13.5 THEORETICAL REFLECTION:

The theoretical literature on Communities of Practice needs to be reflected upon by the researcher within the context of this particular research, particularly the impact of on the research literature. According to the researcher the notion of CoPs and the Situated Learning, which is CoP-facilitated learning remains relevant and beneficial for studying organizations with clarity of approach and setting of contextual boundaries. The researcher wishes to state drawing upon the experience of conducting this research that contextual boundaries and exploration of the specificities of the organizational context like historical traditions and legacies are very important. Situated Learning occurs in very

specific settings with specified rules and Codes of Conduct. The researcher has emphasized that the key role of traditional legacies played in formation of CoPs and the CoP-facilitated process of learning, i.e. Situated Learning is often ignored in the research literature on CoPs.

The researcher wishes to diverge from the attempts in the burgeoning domain of research literature on CoPs to trumpet the CoPs concept as an ‘instrumentalist’ application seeking to maximise learning and knowing through CoPs (Amin & Roberts, 2008). It is precisely this proposition that CoPs can be replicated across board and sponsored by organizations which have come under criticism from some quarters including Duguid(2008) Lave(2008) and Amin & Roberts(2008). The researcher wishes to concur with this criticism of attempting to remove the ‘contextual’ or ‘situated’ character of the CoPs which is in a way fundamental to the very essence of Situated Learning and CoPs. The researcher wishes to question the notion of individuals coalescing into a CoP with the objective being of very practical reasons of countering new challenges when exposed to external realities. This is contradicted by the fact that the CoPs do not flourish where it is most expected, i.e. the Secretariats where the IAS officers are facing the challenges of policy-making in very modern and novel themes like renewable energy with high amount of global exposure.

Here the CoPs are located in settings most unexpected, the quintessential District Administrations where the need for innovation is supposedly far less pronounced than in modern delivery systems like energy and urban transportation.

In conclusion, the research literature on CoPs offers flexibility, direction and guidance to organizational learning research but only when approached with clarity of definitions, setting of contextual boundaries and exploration of the specificities of the organizational context being studied.

#### **10.14 CONCLUSION – LAST FEW WORDS:**

The concluding part of the thesis would be an apt section to encapsulate the personal reflections of the researcher, the journey traversed over this period of time spreading through different geographical locations in India. The researcher plays the role of an interpreter who recognizes and substantiates new meanings

in qualitative research (Stake,1995). Interpretation plays a key part of the qualitative research and the researcher's works towards 'refinement of understanding'. In this specific case, the researcher wishes to envisage the personal reflection in the form of a journey with different phases, holding different promises, different meanings and most importantly the researcher being in different modes of thinking, or mental frames. At each stage the research progressed and with one surprise of the 'elite dimension' being manifest when initiated with the West Bengal cadre. The drawn conclusions from this particular research can vividly captured and recorded through personal reflections.

The personal journey has been defined as the 'Odyssey' and can be described in four phases:

Phase 1 – Pragmatist Dreamer

Phase 2 – Cautious Optimist

Phase 3 – Redolent Romantic

Phase 4 – Guarded Cynic

Phase 5 – Rational/Practical Analyst

Phase 1 – Pragmatist Dreamer:

The research journey for the researcher has been a truly incredible and enriching experience. This specific research was embarked upon at a momentous time of changes in his life; the researcher decided to settle down back in India after a long spell of working, living and studying in the Western world; North America and Europe including UK. The work experience spawned engagement with modern, dynamic institutions like engineering companies and business schools with their sights set on the future. It was a sort of 'reckoning', a 'home-coming' laden with all the impressions of modern, dynamic business world and academia with progressive, outward-looking thoughts and ideas about the world and how it should be governed.

It is precisely this 'dynamic' 21<sup>st</sup> century outlook which triggered the interest to investigate, study, capture and record the existence of the phenomena of CoPs, a cutting-edge, avant-garde learning and knowledge-transfer mechanism within the institution of IAS. IAS as a collective was quite familiar to the researcher and

endeared when he left India as a student at an Indian university. The pursuit of a career in the civil service as an IAS officer still held the charm and attraction for the young, urban educated Indian. So it is against this backdrop of an Indian exposed to the world of dynamic, western business theories and management concepts that the researcher initiates the study.

#### Phase 2 – Cautious Optimist:

This phase corresponds to the conducting of the initial pilot-study.

The initial pilot-study research exposed the researcher to the IAS world and reconnected him to them as personalities to be studied and explored. The units of analysis specifically were defined as the IAS officers trained through Academy at Mussorie. Initial results did not indicate a very modern institution with an outlook of the corporate world but more akin to a traditional legacy institution contending to come to terms with the new emerging reality of modern India. Negotiating with the modern Indian reality of market economics, deregulation of the state and vocal civil society was perceived to be a challenge for many initially interviewed.

The initial pilot-study did indicate the existence of a CoP with defined parameters of the theoretical literature on CoPs being actively present like shared meaning, identity and understanding. So there was no disappointment initially but more a cautious optimism since the concept of CoPs were evident and vibrant within the IAS collective.

This stage left the researcher positive and optimistic about the future of the research study since the notion of CoP was not alien to the IAS collective. There was an uncanny contradiction which left the researcher puzzled, existence of a legacy and traditional institution, i.e. the Indian civil service structure, where the most modern business theories could be located. This contradiction was present through the entire research study.

#### Phase 3 – Redolent Romantic:

As the study progressed to encompass case-study research in West Bengal, the cautious optimist gave way to a sentimental dose of romantic redolence. The

cherished memories of childhood days staged a comeback, it all flashed back with vigour and vengeance. Tales were narrated between potential respondents and the researcher of old school days and the arduous sports-ceremonies where one had to salute marching past the visiting dignitaries, mostly IAS officers.

The soporific and pontificating lectures about the ideals and values of a student who should contribute to the greater good of the nation and society with all their sincere efforts. Future was painted in very serious terms in annual prize-distribution days by role-model civil servants who are now potential respondents for the researcher. Here nearly 2 decades later the very same 'role-model' dignitaries of the yesteryear, i.e. the IAS officers of West Bengal cadre, now living and leading a dignified retired existence were research 'subjects' of the researcher.

The old romance of IAS officers as an elite group, the horse-riding civil servant storming through districts rendering justice and in the evenings retiring to the club for a drink of pink gin reappeared in the mental horizon of the researcher. Suddenly the world which seemed so remote was there to be reflected upon. The world seemed so much more romantic, redolent, elegant, sweet after the hard-nosed brutal years of existence in the modern, competitive business-world, where time was perpetually in short supply. Impressions conveyed during the first round of conversations were soothing in nature and the researcher felt at home in Kolkata, West Bengal after nearly two decades. This idyllic world initially charmed the researcher beyond all thrills and expectations.

Importantly there were few rounds of conversations over steaming cups of Darjeeling tea prior to the conducting of the final interview. The interviews were not granted in most cases in the first instance and only after establishing a comfort-level with the respondents, i.e. the IAS officers of West Bengal cadre.

The conducting of case-study research on West Bengal cadre was the most, pleasant nourishing experience for the researcher in the entire research process.

The researcher ensured an objective process without any possible biases given the intimate relationship of ‘shared social world’ between the respondent and the researcher.

The respondents, i.e. the IAS officers of the West Bengal cadre were very astute, focussed in their conversations once they settled down for the interview. This was ironic for this particular research process; though the IAS officers were enjoying the plush surroundings of the exclusive clubs of Kolkata with its oak-panelled interiors, heavy ornate furniture they spoke animatedly about addressing relief work for natural calamities and containing political violence in the most backward parts of India. The settings were elite in nature but their lives, their work were located in a different world which they held with pride and esteem.

Finally the case-study research drew to a close with the completion of the data collection, i.e. the interviews with the IAS officers belonging to the West Bengal cadre.

#### Phase 4 – Guarded Cynic:

The disappointment with the challenges confronted while conducting the Karnataka case-study balanced the cherished memories of the West Bengal cadre. The constant refusal of interviews and recalcitrance to engage in conversations added to the woes of conducting a complicated case-study.

The researcher kept up the ‘playing the game’ spirit and pursued the research data collection. On deeper reflection the ugly insight was revealed the elegant world of West Bengal cadre IAS was soon going to be confined to the annals of history and the new social reality of Indian civil service will be more akin to that of the fragmentation of the CoPs at the Secretariat level.

#### Phase 5 – Rational/Practical Analyst:

As the capturing and recording of the data progressed with accompanying partial textual interpretation the world seemed to ‘come full circle.’ The redolent romantic settings and conversations were rich with emergent fascinating insights which corroborated closely with modern management theories and practices.

The legacies and traditions of ICS started making sense in very contemporary management terms beyond ‘haw-haw’ English and sipping ‘pink gins’ at the club.

The phenomena of knowledge-transfer and learning processes of Situated Learning embedded in a legacy institution within a rapidly changing political setting was evident. The fragmentation of the CoPs revealed interesting emergent themes about CoP-formation and the role played by old-fashioned Codes of Conduct. In other words CoPs exist and thrive where individuals believe in ‘fair-play’ and defined ‘rules of game’. Sometimes the researcher wondered if CoPs were designed keeping in mind the Indian Civil Services, both the IAS and its glorious predecessor ICS. The extensive and generous support of the academic supervisors provided the ‘scaffolding’ to the entire process.

Summing up, the researcher confronted the onerous task of interpreting a modern, progressive business theory within a complex traditional institution whose legacy dates back to the days of an administrative structure of the world’s largest empire, the British Raj, now currently governing a democratic polity of enormously large and diverse human population in terms of caste, creed, religion, ethnicity spread over a vast sub-continental landmass.

**Annex 1- Interview Format with Purpose**

We set out to record both elicited life stories through semi-structured interviews to provoke storytelling:

Type of Interviewee	Purpose of the Interview	Parts of life in focus
Retired	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evolutionary process of being a senior IAS officer from a student writing the civil service exams</li> <li>• Identity formation in the Mussorie academy and in the initial years of service</li> <li>• Capture the meaning of their roles as ‘administrative elites’ in their lives and society</li> <li>• Identity work when at the pinnacle of career</li> <li>• Shared Understanding as evident about the wider world through discourse</li> </ul>	<p>Pre-IAS days in university and school, family and friends</p> <p>Early years of IAS and the service tenure</p> <p>Ongoing and the active years</p> <p>Senior position and close to retirement</p> <p>‘looking back’ when retired and ‘looking ahead’ into the future</p>
Active Senior Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evolutionary process of being a senior IAS officer from a student writing the civil service exams</li> <li>• Identity formation in the Mussorie academy and in the initial years of service</li> <li>• Capture the meaning of their roles as ‘administrative elites’ in their lives and society</li> <li>• Identity work when at the pinnacle of career</li> <li>• Shared Understanding as evident about the wider world through discourse</li> </ul>	<p>Pre-IAS days in university and school, family and friends</p> <p>Early years of IAS and the service tenure</p> <p>Ongoing and the active years</p> <p>Senior position and current role</p> <p>‘looking ahead’ into the future</p>
Younger Recruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evolutionary process of being a senior IAS officer from a student writing the civil service</li> </ul>	<p>Pre-IAS days in university and school, family and friends</p>

Younger Recruit	<p>exams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identity formation in the Mussorie academy and in the initial years of service</li> <li>• Capture the meaning of their roles as ‘administrative elites’ in their lives and society</li> <li>• Identity work when at the pinnacle of career</li> <li>• Shared Understanding as evident about the wider world through discourse</li> </ul>	<p>Pre-IAS days in university and school, family and friends</p> <p>Early years of IAS and the service tenure Ongoing and the active years</p> <p>‘looking ahead’ into the future</p>
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**Annex 2 - Tabulation of Research Results – Preliminary Study of Life Histories:**

Characteristics of a CoP		Empirical Evidence		
		Retired IAS officers (born prior to 1945)	Senior IAS officers – active (born after 1950)	Young recruit (born after 1970)
Shared Meaning	Being a Civil Servant (IAS officer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ‘charm of public life</li> <li>- the idea of being an important participant in the nation-building</li> <li>- problem solving for the citizens</li> <li>- important and significant person in the society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ‘charm of public life</li> <li>- problem solving for the citizens</li> <li>- important and significant person in the society</li> <li>- doing something for the community they belong to or in general the society</li> <li>- monetarily not lucrative but great exposure to different facets of polity and society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ‘charm of public life</li> <li>- problem solving for the citizens</li> <li>- just a good job with lot of perks and lot of generalist exposures, the thrill of being a generalist</li> <li>- being powerful and important in the community they belong to or in general the society</li> <li>- monetarily not lucrative but great exposure to different facets of polity and society</li> </ul>
	Joining Civil Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- career opportunities</li> <li>- natural progression from college days, ‘just like being in college’ with alumni as role models</li> <li>- humanities leaning on broader concepts of society and service</li> <li>-inspiration from family</li> <li>- earlier recruits were drawn mostly from urban middle class and some observed the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to be important in the community and the family</li> <li>- inspiration from family</li> <li>- technical expertise which can contribute to the society and nation</li> <li>-career opportunities</li> <li>- no role models whatsoever</li> <li>- witness the district collector and his aura of power and authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- inspiration from family</li> <li>- technical expertise which can contribute to the society and nation</li> <li>-career opportunities</li> <li>- no role models whatsoever</li> <li>- witness the district collector and his aura of power and authority and being inspired to join the civil service</li> <li>- use the specialist skills and expertise acquired through education</li> </ul>

Shared Meaning		changes happening in recent years		
	Active role in the civil service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- finding solutions to vast majority of problems</li> <li>- tense relationship with political masters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- highly challenging and demanding</li> <li>- stressful situations often interacting with the political masters</li> <li>- finding solutions to vast majority of problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- highly challenging and demanding</li> <li>- stressful situations often interacting with the political masters</li> <li>- finding solutions to vast majority of problems</li> <li>- locating specific problems and then finding technical solutions</li> </ul>
	Ideals of public service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integrity, honesty, rule of law</li> <li>- neutrality from political bosses</li> <li>- ‘service before self’</li> <li>- humane approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- accessible to public</li> <li>- human face to every problem</li> <li>- dynamic and reasonably honest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- accessible to public</li> <li>- human face to every problem</li> <li>- dynamic and reasonably honest</li> <li>- integrity, sincerity and hardworking</li> </ul>

(Continued):

Characteristics of a CoP		Empirical Evidence		
		Retired IAS officers (born prior to 1945)	Senior IAS officers – active (born after 1950)	Young recruit (born after 1970)
Shared Identity	Academy days – transformative effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generalist orientation</li> <li>- responsible citizens of India transcending the barriers of caste, creed and ethnic groups</li> <li>- certain degree of ‘reserve’ cultivated for some trainees</li> <li>- strong accent on ‘role model’ and mentoring</li> <li>- highly academic training with no practical exposure</li> <li>- debating and lots of extra-curricular activities like horse riding</li> <li>- great friendships built during the training period</li> <li>- some was just being like in the college days</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generalist orientation</li> <li>- responsible citizens of India transcending the barriers of caste, creed and ethnic groups</li> <li>-service orientation</li> <li>- training with practical exposure</li> <li>- debating and lots of extra-curricular activities like horse riding</li> <li>- great friendships built during the training period</li> <li>-multi-dimensional and multi-faceted with departure from specialist expertise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generalist orientation</li> <li>- responsible citizens of India transcending the barriers of caste, creed and ethnic groups</li> <li>-service orientation</li> <li>- training with practical exposure</li> <li>- debating and lots of extra-curricular activities like horse riding</li> <li>- great friendships built during the training period</li> <li>-multi-dimensional and multi-faceted with departure from specialist expertise</li> <li>- more people-savvy orientation and being able to handle stressful situations</li> <li>- lot of exposure to different aspects of society like the armed forces</li> </ul>

Shared Identity	Role of an active civil servant – early years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- assist people in solving their problems</li> <li>- someone people respect and admire in society for administering rules and laws</li> <li>- constant attempt to find solutions for the poverty and illiteracy challenge</li> <li>- ‘human element’ being most important</li> <li>- learning from seniors and developing relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- assist people in solving their problems</li> <li>- someone people respect and admire in society for administering rules and laws</li> <li>- constant attempt to find solutions for the poverty and illiteracy challenge</li> <li>- ‘human element’ being most important</li> <li>- learning from seniors and developing relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- assist people in solving their problems</li> <li>- someone people respect and admire in society for administering rules and laws</li> <li>- constant attempt to find solutions for the poverty and illiteracy challenge</li> <li>- ‘human element’ being most important</li> <li>- learning from seniors and developing relationships</li> <li>- finding prompt solutions to problems</li> <li>- dealing with very diverse groups of people</li> <li>- paying attention to the needs of the political bosses and learning about the rural realities</li> </ul>
	Being at the helm – for retired and senior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- being in the spotlight from society</li> <li>- constantly learning about new themes</li> <li>- negotiating the reality of globalization</li> <li>- working with multilateral international institutions , World Bank, UNESCO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-communicate across the spectrum to different stakeholders including World Bank, UN</li> <li>- stressful situations with high work pressures</li> <li>- lots of political demands and no time for socializing</li> <li>- acquires specialist knowledge about different themes</li> </ul>	NOT APPLICABLE

(Continued..):

Characteristics of a CoP		Empirical Evidence		
		Retired IAS officers (born prior to 1945)	Senior IAS officers – active (born after 1950)	Young recruit (born after 1970)
Shared Identity	Role model of a civil servant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- willing to be creative and working around the system for find solutions</li> <li>- engage in dialogue with political masters productively</li> <li>- listen and accommodate different interest groups and enhance the welfare of citizens</li> <li>-render justice with a fairness but a firm stance</li> <li>-simple, honest and conscious about India’s poor</li> <li>- passion for scholarly pursuits for the sheer pleasure and not just career advancement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- willing to be creative for finding solutions with new specialized skill sets</li> <li>- manage audience political masters</li> <li>- communicate and engage with different interest groups</li> <li>-simple, honest and conscious about India’s poor</li> <li>- passion for scholarly pursuits to enhance their skills base and knowledge about specialized topics like stock-markets and energy</li> <li>- more awareness about global events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- willing to be creative for finding solutions with new specialized skill sets</li> <li>- manage audience political masters</li> <li>- communicate and engage with different interest groups</li> <li>-simple, honest and conscious about India’s poor</li> <li>- constant learning to enhance their skills base and knowledge about specialized topics like stock-markets and energy</li> <li>- more awareness about global events</li> <li>- be able to handle different stakeholders and address the needs of the people through strict monitoring</li> <li>-better project management</li> </ul>

Shared Identity	Importance of a cadre –	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- defines an ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ in terms of the IAS community, the phrase ‘insider’ was used by one of the participants</li> <li>- seek assistance from your ‘batch mates’ in the cadre, who are the first port of call for any solutions to a problem</li> <li>- lots of mutual social interactions in informal settings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- defines an ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ in terms of the IAS community, the phrase ‘insider’ was used by one of the participants</li> <li>- seek assistance from your ‘batch mates’ in the cadre, who are the first port of call for any solutions to a problem</li> <li>- far less mutual social interactions in informal settings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- defines an ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ in terms of the IAS community, the phrase ‘insider’ was used by one of the participants</li> <li>- seek assistance from your ‘batch mates’ in the cadre, who are the first port of call for any solutions to a problem</li> <li>- far less mutual social interactions in informal settings</li> </ul>
Shared Understanding	Legacy and tradition of the IAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- legacy of ‘service before self’ and distributing justice to the needy and poor</li> <li>- fairly rigid in the past with the ICS and now flexible</li> <li>- seniors taking interest in young trainees and building ‘mentoring’ relationships which is perceived to be fast disappearing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- legacy of ‘service before self’ and distributing justice to the needy and poor</li> <li>- administrators taking an interest in the welfare of the citizens beyond their defined remit</li> <li>- seniors taking interest in young trainees and building ‘mentoring’ relationships which is fast disappearing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- legacy of ‘service before self’ and distributing justice to the needy and poor</li> <li>- administrators taking an interest in the welfare of the citizens beyond their defined remit</li> <li>- friendly and casual relationship with seniors and learning about routine tasks and responsibilities</li> </ul>

(Continued..):

Characteristics of a CoP		Empirical Evidence		
		Retired IAS officers (born prior to 1945)	Senior IAS officers – active (born after 1950)	Young recruit (born after 1970)
Shared Understanding	Legacy and tradition of the IAS	- lot of personal relationships with hands-on training imparted by the senior officers with invitations for dinners and drinks	- seniors taking interest in young trainees and building ‘mentoring’ relationships which is fast disappearing	- legacy of ‘service before self’ and distributing justice to the needy and poor - administrators taking an interest in the welfare of the citizens beyond their defined remit - friendly and casual relationship with seniors and learning about routine tasks and responsibilities
	Influences of the ‘burra sahib’ era trappings – the ICS Raj era	- fading mostly in the post-independence era but still remnants - ICS experience conveyed to all that the ICS men were all a ‘distinct administrative class’ above the rest of society with responsibilities - social origins of ICS men were all upper-middle class	- none and no awareness - some of the ICS men did lot of good things and wrote great books like Philip Mason, “The Men who ruled India” - ICS introduced public administration in India	- none and no awareness - some of the ICS men did lot of good things and wrote great books like Philip Mason, “The Men who ruled India” - ICS introduced public administration in India

Shared Understanding	Looking ahead to the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-challenge of the private sector and accommodating private capital for job creation and growth</li> <li>- working with different stakeholders like NGOs and citizens groups</li> <li>- infrastructure building with roads, ports, power plants a major challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-challenge of the private sector and accommodating private capital for job creation and growth</li> <li>- working with different stakeholders like NGOs and citizens groups</li> <li>- infrastructure building with roads, ports, power plants a major challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-challenge of the private sector and accommodating private capital for job creation and growth</li> <li>- working with different stakeholders like NGOs and citizens groups</li> <li>- infrastructure building with roads, ports, power plants a major challenge</li> </ul>
Gender dimension – female IAS officers	None interviewed	None interviewed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no visible discrimination from fellow IAS officers or seniors but sometimes need arises to be tough with rank-and-file employees</li> <li>- sensitivity training at the academy about gender issues</li> </ul>	Gender dimension – female IAS officers

## ANNEXURE – 4 – INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS -1

### INTERVIEW WITH IAS OFFICER– WEST BENGAL CADRE

Current Status: Retired

Batch: 1963.

#### MEMORIES OF EARLY YEARS IN CIVIL SERVICE:

Right at the beginning

I would go back to my training period in Mussorie where our director was one senior Assam ICS officer from Assam Mr. S K Dutta, where I used to do lot of things which were not related to my training itself, like extra-curricular activities, like my singing Tagore's songs something which stayed with me all my life.

I remember one night, moonlit night when I was sitting on the lawns in front of the Director's bungalow in the academy singing a particular song of Tagore and halfway through the song, my friends were around me a few friends of mine, a quiet still night. I found a pipe-smoking very English gentleman walking out of the Director's quarters coming and standing behind me and listening to me singing and after I finished the singing the song there was a round of applause which he led.

That I found it very inspiring since it had nothing to do with my being a prospectively good or bad IAS officer, or anything else I was just a trainee and I did what every body else were doing.

But later on I had found that that particular incident had created an impression on him,

Because my Directors assessment which were added on to my shall we say academic results, during the training period we had lot of examinations to pass, law and various subjects, English whose marks were added on to our IAS examination results. I don't know whether the same thing is done now, those days there was something called Director's Assessment. I don't know how it is these days, those days there was something called Director's Assessment. That DA was so good, that it enabled me to jump from 20<sup>th</sup> position in the merit list to the 13<sup>th</sup> position. Although he did not specifically mention in my assessment that because I sang well. Somehow he probably he saw one aspect of me the singing which he thought might be useful to me as a civil servant. But he appreciated my singing and somehow he thought might be of use to me...I cant say that it really have been that way..

Been able to carry this forward ...and continue to sing for the rest of my life.

THAT'S ONE IMPRESSION

Another impression I would say, one about when I was SDO, I think already mentioned this to you, when I was SDO, at the time in a place called Contai in East Midnapore district, those days it was one sub-division with 11 level blocs. Today that sub-division has been broken up into 2 sub-divisions Contai and Ogra.

My first regular posting with independent charge as an IAS officer.

Now those were the days there were no control orders, or there were no regulatory measures against black-marketing in essential commodities, for example Kerosene.

There was no Kerosene control orders as it were, and Kerosene was in short supply.

Kerosene poor mans lightning medium, also for cooking medium and was in short supply. What used to happen is that these tank lorries bringing kerosene into the subdivision from as far away as Haldia, not even Haldia further afar but from Rajbhansi in Burdwan district, because Haldia did not exist those days, it used to come via Kharagpur... A long road journey which was stopped and siphoned out by black marketers and hoarders in different places along the route, a long route, road route.

And then what we started doing is creating roadblocks within my subdivision escorting these kerosene lorries with police help, little bit of police help to the nearest police station and then distributing against cash and card, that was the kind of scheme which came about later on. That time there were no control order laws or regulatory orders which would validate such an action on my part, so I was always worried that people whose tankers I intercepted and made them or brought and decant their product, because I did not deny them their due though but only prevented them from black-marketeering their product. I thought I might run into trouble...

So I kept my DM, Gregory Gomes informed about my move.

And he was a Christian, promoted officer from East Bengal from state civil service and was my superior.

And I rang him up and said and I have done this and I hope don't get into trouble and these people may take me to court. The he said

"SDO doesn't have to bother about laws and rules when he knows he is doing the right thing, in support of people, the people whom he is expected to serve".

Then I thought...very deep you know that is the kind of thing which many of us seem to have forgotten over the years... we look for legal validation for whatever we are doing, but sometimes social validation is more important than legal validation.

**QUESTION: CAN YOU PLEASE ELABORATE THIS NOTION OF SOCIAL VALIDATION? IS IT THE COMMUNITY OF IAS OFFICERS OR FELLOW IAS OFFICERS WHO USUALLY PROVIDE THIS??**

No No, not necessarily the Community of IAS officers, community of civil servants would not support and encourage social validation Community of of IAS officers would probably shy away from taking a measure which does no have legal validation, find a legal basis for, we were really concerned about this, maybe youngsters today would be inclined not worried about the legal consequences about any decision. Certainly Social validation was important factor in many cases, something which the good old ICS officers would do, or for that matter the earlier generations of civil servants actions based on social validation who were our seniors.

For example there was a man called MAT Iyengar, an ICS officer who was District Magistrate of Bankura, and is still a legend in Bankura who used to do similar kind of thing. MAT Iyengar did a lot of work through voluntary labour

provided by the villagers, like those early days where the water supply was scarce in Bankura and was a dry district, not having brought DVC canal water into many parts of the district and how would be digging of wells, of ponds where rainwater could be stored and that through voluntary labour with the help of one instrument he had at his command as something known as treasury rule 25 which enabled the collector to draw up to an amount of 5 lacs of Indian Rupees which was even applicable in our time when we did flood relief and that kind of work, that is the kind of thing you know, where there were no budgetary support for such programs there were no national programmes, rural employment programs where the funds come from government of India.

So that is what I mean by social validation

Make people around him understand that something must be done for their own benefit and that it could be done by the people themselves....

**QUESTION: WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE ROLE OF SENIOR IAS OFFICERS IN THIS SOCIAL VALIDATION?? SINCE YOU HAVE MENTIONED EARLIER ABOUT SOME OF THE SENIORS WHO ENCOURAGED SUCH ACTIVITIES**

Frequently very sceptical, Frequently very sceptical except for some people like Mr. Murshed who themselves have done it and there are others who would point out the pitfalls for seeking social validation for your action.

**QUESTION: WOULD YOU SAY MORE OFTEN IT WAS BE A SENIOR THAN PEER IN WHO WOULD GIVE APPROVAL FOR TASKS OF SOCIAL VALIDATION WHICH ARE NOT THE ROUTINE TASKS??**

Would approve of it and mostly the people themselves would approve, the target group....YES more often from a SENIOR than a peer in execution of the tasks and encouraging one to do so.

**QUESTION: COULD YOU PLEASE SHARE SOME STORIES OF SOCIAL VALIDATION AND HOW YOU WENT ABOUT EXECUTING IT??**

OK I will give an example of a collector under whose charge I served as an Assistant Magistrate before I took independent charge. His name was Jatin Sengupta an IAS officer from the early batch.

My first posting as an Assistant Magistrate, Jathin Sengupta, early batch IAS officer under whom I served in my posting in Midnapore district. I travelled with him most of the time. He did the right the thing by ignoring me most of the time during the training program so that I went running around talking and interacting with clerks, sub-divisional officers in the collectorate learning about how the revenue munshi worked.

Once I went with him to what is now known as the junglemahal of Jhargram subdivision and one part of that subdivision where there was lot of land upland land so to speak where the soil was absolutely stone hard and it could be broken with a plough with some Sessile plantation on the fringes to it and there was a drip tubewell right on the top which poured down water to the lower reaches which was intended for getting it to the top of the Cecile plantation. No water could settle at that level.

But it all went down to the lower reaches to the foots of these uplands where the land was getting irrigated and where local mahatos cultivated produced and got prosperous and did not benefit for the ones intended.

I saw it for the first time, my collector, Mr. Sengupta left me there for a night, I can say abandoning me so that I can have a better understanding, supposed to stay over there in a place called Belpahari and those days didn't have the money, I later on realized that he left money with the chowkidar so that I can get 2-3 meals a day. Also instructed the local SDO, who was one year my senior on his way back to Midnapore, I should be provided with transport after 2-3 days when I finished my work to take me back to Midnapore.

Now once I produced a report which I guess is naive by today's standard, I wrote the truth. I went and produced it to my District Magistrate and I said the irrigation is total farce and is helping the wrong people, and the not the people it intended. The alignment of the water channel was wrong inclination of the irrigation pipes are all wrong. Even to me sounded to me like a very very shall we say naïve kind of report and did not expect anyone to take it seriously and to my surprise my senior, my collector sent the report to the government of West Bengal irrigation department as his own report without any editing or comments or remarks on it fully endorsing what I have said.

This is the kind of support one receives and felt the validation of my work. Did not expect to take it seriously and without editing and had sent it to the Govt. of West Bengal I expressed anger and anguish in that report and did not expect a senior IAS officer, a District Magistrate who was on the verge of becoming a secretary in the WB to take a young man's view on the subject seriously and send the report without any extra remark or comment as his own report to the government for redressals and action.

**QUESTION: CAN YOU ELABORATE MORE ON SUCH STORIES....**

I have generally enjoyed a lot of support from my seniors all my life and in fact I have received all my life some and most of them become part of the shall we say pantheon of my if not gods, heroes, whom I remember all my life, many of whom have crossed over and are no more, for example a man like J C talukdar known as chowki talukdar, who was from the Royal Airforce one of those war recruits into the IAS and he was my transport commissioner when I was deputy secretary(transport). And much later,

2-3 years later when I was District Magistrate in Howrah he volunteered and he had no business to do so, he came along and decided to add himself to my flood relief team, assist in my relief operations, and inadvertently take charge though peripherally without interfering with my work.

He would arrive early in the morning in t-shirt and shorts and a huge hamper of sandwiches made at home and crate of chilled beer, travelling with me see what I was doing. Even bring another gentleman called Biren Bhattacharyya with walkie-talkie those days in the 70s and then I realized why he was doing this, since he knew where we would be going and he could be of assistance since he himself was a District Magistrate of that district long ago. He also has done flood relief work in his own time. Howrah is a peculiar district, some parts of the district are prone to man-made floods during the rainy season. There were some canals, DVC canals which were open up into the land and not connected to the rivers and any time there was heavy rain in the shall we say catchments area of the DVC canals the water has to be released. They come and open up the

canals open up into two villages. So excessive rain in the catchments area of Bihar (neighbouring state of West Bengal) will produce floods in sub-divisions of Murshidabad or Howrah districts. It still happens after 35 years of flood control!!

I tell you this man was a great inspiration to me apart from the sustenance that he provided with in the form of sandwiches and chilled beer. Here was a man leading and not interfering with my work and yet providing a lot of emotional support and as we talked about social validation for whatever we were doing. His one example of providing social validation to what we are doing by being actually there. Also agreeing with what we were doing.

There are many such instances, much later on in life, no I slightly earlier in life when I became Assistant District Magistrate of 24 Paraganas, I had a District Magistrate called Rathin Sengupta, who later on became Home Secretary and Chief Secretary who died few years ago, Rathinda(da is referred to someone senior affectionately in Bengali language). As an ADM I never felt for a minute that I was not in charge of the district, I was ADM-Development, ADM-Judicial, ADM-Planned Reforms everything. At no point of time during these two and half year I was made to feel that I was not in full and independent charge of the district and it was his way of making me understand that he would not interfere in whatever I was doing. Later on I was District Magistrate of that district 24 paraganas.

This was undivided 24 paraganas.

**QUESTION: CAN YOU SHARE SOME ANECDOTES OF INFORMAL LEARNING DURING THOSE EARLY YEARS?? BEER AND SANDWICHES...**

Yes of course there are plenty. There was another man, a legend of course in his own time many people know of him in this club called Raghunath Bandhopadhyay, Raghunath Banerji. He was our Divisional Commissioner for sometime who was known as the ICS of the state civil service officer, he was Bengal Civil Service who later on became IAS officer. He was an unconventional person who would go on thana (police station in Bengali) inspection at 4'o clock in the morning and catch hold of sleeping sub-inspectors by the hair and expected people like us to accompany him.

A great man.....

**QUESTION: CAN YOU SHARE SOME STORIES ABOUT YOU AN MR. SENGUPTA SINCE THE RELATIONSHIP AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL BETWEEN YOU AND HIM SOUNDS FASCINATING.....**

I will tell you, I will give you examples, he will come to your rescue whenever one was in trouble. For example I used to travel a lot into the interiors of Sunderbans(dense tropical forests) and we had a spate of steam launches like Mississippi steam boats and they had names like Nancy, Esther, double-decker with sleeping accommodation upstairs and downstairs. One I remember I was in the vicinity of what is now known as the tiger territory like Jharkali, Chamta etc,...and the launch conked out. I just got married and my wife was in Calcutta and I went missing since there was no radio communication also so nobody could connect. For 48 hours I went completely missing and was out of touch

with the rest of civilization. This gentleman Mr. Sengupta himself organized a search party and kept assuring my wife that 'all is fine' and 'nothing has happened' 'he hasn't been swallowed by the tiger'. Ultimately he sent a relief launch which was a police launch which was a motor launch rather than a steam launch brought me back not really tiger territory. But it was remote and normally people would not venture out there.

There are other cases; once I remember there was a cinema license which had been issued for a newly built cinema hall. It was about to be inaugurated with a newly released Bengali movie I remember, the licenses were issued under the signature District Magistrate but as an Assistant District Magistrate I was in-charge of that department.

I happen to be in that part of district and so I went to visit the about to be inaugurated cinema hall as matter of curiosity and found that a lot of things were wrong with it. I found that the fire-fighting equipment were not placed properly on the walls, the distance between two rows of seats were not as prescribed and then I found that something was wrong with the alignment of the bottom floor with the top floor, excessively sloping balcony. So I wrote out a note and there itself produced a notice closing down the cinema hall. And mind you my District Magistrate issued the notice so I came back to my office and with the notice.

The owner was in a quandary with all the publicity being given about the new cinema hall. I was sitting in my office in Alipore the next day, when a portly gentleman in a white dhoti and a white kurta with a very prominent thick chain, gold chain around his neck and sought an interview with me. He came into my room and found was carrying a small bag not very small but a kind of last-minute bag. I asked him about what he is doing and he said it will take at least week to ten days to get my cinema hall ready and my cinema hall is supposed to open tomorrow and I will be ruined.

He said please lift that notice closing down the cinema hall. I said can't be done and said how you got the license and maybe the District Magistrate whoever issued the license didn't know and you must have bribed the inspector or somebody other.

Then he put that sort of last-minute bag on my table and opened the zip and there were stacks of banknotes and I don't know much money was there, but he has sort of come in to bribe his way through. So I rang up the District Magistrate who was sitting in the next room and said "Rathinda maybe the news haven't reached you, you have issued the license for this new cinema hall opening and I have gone and decided to close it down till these things are corrected. On top of that the gentleman has come here to offer me some inducements, financial inducements. What do you think I should do now?"

He said "Hold on and call the police". As I was about to call the police this man started crying picked up the bag. I called some other people who were hanging around that you people are witness to this man trying to bribe, please admit that you were trying to bribe me. This man then scooted like a rabbit.

Then I had a good laugh with my District Magistrate and asked him "what should I do you tell me...how can this man be compensated?" "I will go by your decision and I can keep the cinema hall and there are safety issues" then the District Magistrate said sternly "No that cinema hall will never open again".

This was not right on our part to be arbitrary maybe, but thereafter he had to

defer the opening. There was another inspection where he had set things right. You know things like these which were difficult decisions. There were other things as well so far back in time.

**QUESTION: WERE THERE OTHER ANY OTHER EXAMPLES WHERE YOUR SENIORS CAME IN SUPPORT OF YOUR DECISIONS??**

I don't think so, not really when you come to think of it, it's only in early period, in the training period that people like Jathin Sengupta, Rathin Sengupta would provide support and encouragement.

**QUESTION: YOU HAVE MENTIONED MAT IYENGAR AT THE START ABOUT THE NOTION OF SOCIAL VALIDATION...IM CURIOUS DID YOU GET TO WORK WITH HIM??**

No I came to know him as a young man when I was in college, one of my brothers was a forest officer in one of the divisions in Bankura district who used to live on the periphery of the Collector's Bungalow there. I was in college at that time. He was such already a legend that I wanted to meet him on one of my visits and went across. He was again in Calcutta when he was posted in the Secretariat, living next to Calcutta Boy's School, Waverley Mansions, and I met him again. He was a fine man, very fine man. Totally egoless, and full of stories about tribals.

MAT Iyengar very very tamil Brahmin in his habitus, not English at all.

This particular class of tambrams, Tamil Brahmins in ICS, I have met many of them like Mr. B Shivaraman, later on planning commission member, Chief Secretary, Orissa, whose son-in-law was my friend in Contai and would come across to visit him, since it's across the border. To see him in that place one would hardly imagine that he was a chief secretary, in those days Chief Secretary was very very important. There were others also, when I was posted in Contai like PBR Vaidyanathan, who came back to his old district where he had served before and started looking for his stables and horses and I had a horse allowance for about 35 Rupees. I said that we don't have horses anymore!!

Very interesting people this particular community, Tamil Brahmin civil servants somehow despite being very valuable to the British Raj they retained a degree of shall we say ethnicity about them which was quite engaging.

**QUESTION: WOULD YOU SAY THAT THERE WERE LOTS OF LEARNING FROM SENIORS IN YOUR EARLY YEARS??**

Very much so...many of us would moderate ourselves along the lines of our seniors. our seniors

For a large number of years, initial 10-15 years one emulated, actually emulated, actually shall we say imitated the mannerisms also of some of our seniors.

My senior Rathinda was shall we say dressing with style, shall we say, he was a handsome man, shall we say flamboyant style of dealing with politicians, shall we say, he spent a lot of time as a deputy secretary in the political Home department, so he knew the background of most of the politicians, right, left centre, all categories.

Having seen him at work, I have seen the absolute trepidation with which even senior party leaders would come into his room, they were afraid of his spilling

the beans, or saying or recounting some inconvenient truths of their political careers of lives in front of an audience. So I mean

At the same time he could put juniors completely at ease within a few minutes, these are the things you learn from which I have been trying to imitate, shall we say bring it to one's own being, one would try to assimilate, make it part of our own's make-up. This business of putting one's junior at ease, dealing with politicians in a free and frank manner without either trying to sort of embarrass them and at the same time telling them that they only have that amount of importance and no more. These are some of the things they inculcated in us. Yes certainly they were our role-models from whom we learnt. Some of them indeed had unique styles of writing, presenting a paper. Mr. Murshed is one person from whom I think benefited greatly in terms of writing notes, in terms of analyzing a particular problem especially if it had a legal aspect to it... these are things which, there was an attempt.. ..truth to be told now...I know this part of an interview and you are free to use it or not to use it.

When I was the transport secretary there was a sinister attempt by the then powers that be the Left-Front government who had been in power for seven or eight years 1980 of trying to pay the British shareholders of Calcutta Tramways corporation a second round of compensation beyond what was paid in 1968 or 1967 at the time of acquisition. For that purpose they removed about 14 pages of the note sheet of that particular file the original agreement, wherein an opinion to the same effect that you know double jeopardy was pronounced by the advocate general of the time. Those pages were removed from the file and the file was reconstructed and you know these advocate general otherwise a good man and some other weren't, the then Transport Minister who tried to introduce a validity for the second payment because a fresh claim has been made by a man who represents the British shareholders of the Calcutta Tramways Corporation. So I did not have any ways of countering this without some papers so I went to Mr. Murshed who was deputy secretary at that time when the takeover has taken place.

Fortunately for me he has kept a set of copies of all the notices of that entire episode and he said that something like that would come up later on.

He helped to write a note, about 18-page note where we brought out all the aspects of it and we reintroduced those missing 14 pages of the copies of note which Mr. Murshed had retained himself which have been removed to the embarrassment of these people. I took the file to Mr. Jyoti Basu who was the Chief Minister of the time, kept the file for a week those were the days when he still used to read the government files and he read the notes and set aside the opinion given by the then advocate-general who was a close friend of his, Mr. Snehangshu Acharya.

Then he told me "Dodo (nickname of Mr. Acharya) has written incorrectly and we all will be in trouble so please show this file to Somenath."

I showed the file to Mr. Somenath Chatterji and who read the file and said there is no case for second-round of payment for compensation at all. And the government kept quiet....

These are instances where our seniors are actually helping us in setting things right which would not have been possible on my own. Here was a man who expected some trouble to take place.

**QUESTION: YOU WOULD SAY YOUR ASSIMILATION INTO THE WORLD OF IAS WAS MADE EASIER BY FOLLOWING THE SENIORS AS YOU HAVE MENTIONED EARLIER THE NOTION OF EMULATION OF SENIORS**

Yes Very much so, very much so, as I said life in the beginning from the Mussorie days till I was a District Magistrate, from 1963 till 1973 till I went to New Delhi.

The first ten years of service, one constantly received support and advice the shall we say the practical application of experience from my seniors, not necessarily the seniors under whom one worked directly but generally people who are in other departments. Thereafter when one went to Delhi, actually I went to Delhi on an unusual posting, as a special Assistant to a Minister, where you know my friend N K Singh who is now Rajya Sabha member, and we both worked for Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya.

He needed guidance as much as we needed, you know he was a soft-spoken professor of philosophy from Jadavpur University who got catapulted to the position of Commerce Minister. Ms Gandhi took 2 people from Bengal at the behest of Siddharth Shankar Ray(Manuda), the other one was a man called Pranab Mukherjee.

So that kind of thing, at that time one had to learn the very hard way, one had to read through files, seek the opinions and actually seek the help of joint secretaries and secretaries of ministry. I went straight from district and my NK friend was already there he knew something more about it. I found it very desolate to seek the opinion of senior secretaries and joint secretaries and senior official and they would not volunteer because they thought we were some kind of people the ministers have brought in, they very poorly of the young toffs as ministers personal secretariat.

So we had to go out and seek their help which was not there.

**QUESTION: HOW WAS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH SENIORS IN DELHI VIS-À-VIS THE DISTRICTS?**

Ultimately it became very good, very good, initially there was an element of mistrust

because I went to work with a Minister, kind of a Minister's shadow so to speak, in fact I wrote a whole series of articles in The Statesman, (newspaper) called Minister's shadow. We were part of a new breed of officers who came up in the early 70s, as special Assistants we were called to the Ministers which were above the private secretaries dealing with the files on a regular basis. Our purpose was to help the minister to suggest the ministers what he should minute in the particular file.

Say 40 pages of notice we would digest and then suggest a course of action which the Minister could minute. There was a shadow note which we put up and the minister sign on the shadow note and then the suggested minute to the minister was transcribed on the main note and so that was going on.

Therefore we were looked upon by the standard secretaries.

We were acting as a kind of filter between the minister and the secretariat of the ministry and joint secretaries would come frequently who were much senior to us, we were 10 in service and some of them were for 17-25 years.

Joint secretaries would park in our rooms and try to curry favour with us and collect information.

In District relationship much cosier and closer.

In Delhi of course there is no outside social contact outside the secretariat, very few they live in different colonies, different campuses.

Here in the district you are put together, live in the same kind of civil lines, bound to be more social contact and I believe that doesn't exist anymore. But in our times certainly it was during the day we worked and had a drink together in the evening.

**QUESTION: IF YOU CAN ELABORATE ABOUT THE INFORMAL INTERACTIONS IN DISTRICT YEARS, THIS EXCHANGE OF DAY'S HARD WORK OVER DRINKS, HOW MUCH OF IT FACILITATED LEARNING??**

Well I would say, shall we say unbending over a glass of beer or bottle of whisky certainly helped this process of learning, sort of one let one's hair down and one would be much freer.

During the day you would be involved in meetings with your subordinates with the formal structures of the administration whether in normal times or abnormal times where there were floods, riots naxal movements which need to be tackled. Evening when we were there, maybe we still talked shop to some extent, talked about the day's experiences, about what to do in the next few days but laced with that there was shall we say a deeper interaction at a human level between the people involved.

The people would talk about their personal lives, about how their children growing up, about what they thought of the world in general. We would have frequently guests from outside and in a district like Howrah we would have poets, musicians who would drop in to see us. Ustad Amir Khan was a frequent visitor and who would arrive with a bottle of whiskey and poet Shakti Chattopadhyaya who was rolling drunk anyway. These evening discussions may not have touched upon what we did for living. The discussions would be tempered by the fact that we met as human beings, not as officials, or seniors or juniors, met as co-sharers of a problem.

## ANNEXURE – 5 – INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS -2

### INTERVIEW WITH IAS OFFICER –WEST BENGAL CADRE

Current Status: Retired

Batch: 1973

**Question: When you do have a doubt who is the first person would call in your service career?? Who knows what...is there a directory ready at hand???**

**Is there one specific person who is constantly asked questions???**

Whom would I call?? I would call myself, I might ask for information....but Why would I need to call up anybody?? See I mean Our service IAS is very hierarchical if you are at the lower end you have to call up your boss and discuss that and if you are a senior, a secretary of a department if you have a doubt, you would call your next person, your junior.

So it's I mean you can certainly ring up.

It's a very tough question I must say...see if I have rung up any number of people for information and at the end of the end of the day you have to balance and take your own decision, the story of me ringing up people so I used to ring up people daily.

#### District Years – MEMORIES

Many of the most critical situations I have been, been in the District, when you have to react in split-seconds timing to the situation, like law and order situation, like there is a communal riot, floods. Almost all my consultations have been with the team

either with the juniors or the seniors, like if I were the additional DM I would talk to the DM, and if I were the DM I would talk to the ADM, it was more discussions with the team, discussions on a broader level it would have been the peer group. I don't recollect going in much for mentor guidance either would have been my team or more peer group. I would discuss with the team, my DM, my ADM. I don't recall going for much for this mentor guide.

For instance in 1978 floods, 1978 is a long way off, for me but that is the most critical situation I have ever faced in my life, slew of floods, flood which was created artificially. DVC collected water to the point that it became absolutely imperative to release it otherwise the river would have burst, and they released it all of a sudden some millions and millions of cubic meter so that you woke up in the morning with the water all around you. So it was just teamwork all the way. I was ADM at that time, ADM at Midnapore, so we were talking with the DM and the junior officials, and we discussed the situation and we took split-level decisions, whether to send relief to Y area, X area, and how much, what to do, how to control the crowds getting violent, how to defuse the situation, there wasn't too much time to analyze things in depth and discuss much things.

You had to take decisions in ten seconds, fifteen seconds, otherwise the situation would be too late, feedback came in, if someone came in with a message and you had to react on the spot and at best would use the local telephone line to talk. We didn't even consult the state government level very much except keep asking for

funds, that was the most critical situation I ever faced. DM was very supportive but at the end of the day I think I had to fend for myself, I was talking more to my juniors than him because he had to do all the coordination with the state government. We were giving feedback and asking for more money, men and material and would send the daily report to him, which required a lot of fine-tuning because a lot of rubbish came in from the field, when it came to reporting, unless you really skinned the data you would end up indicating absolutely absurd figures.

We didn't have computers so he was more responsible for coordinating activities and keeping in touch with the state government. While the other DM and me were sort of doing the baton, we were there out there, facing the public and getting feedback from the lower levels.

But if your thesis is how you interact with your service colleagues then certainly I would say a knowledge about their behaviour patterns, what kind of people they were,

these are very critical factors. I mean I can't imagine an outsider coming in and doing the job, I mean if you hire someone from private sector and would come in and sit in my chair and take it over a day, you can't, you have to have that thing in your head right from day one. You have to be brought up in the system to be able to handle the situation, no outsider can do it, nobody from outside that system would be able to do it, can't handle it.

**QUESTION: YOU HAVE MENTIONED THE WORD OUTSIDER AND BROUGHT UP, COULD YOU PLEASE ELABORATE HOW YOU ARE BROUGHT UP IN THE SYSTEM?? AND WHAT IS AN OUTSIDER??**

By outsider by the way I don't mean Bengalis and non-Bengalis, I mean the service, the government servant angle, but the IAS. When I said the outsider I didn't mean the IAS my term comprised many diverse sections of the government servants, the state service, there would be the engineering people, the medical people, but the fact is one knew how they operated. One knew their mindset, how they would react in a given situation, degree of reluctance, exactly how much you have to browbeat them to get them to perform. How much you cannot over-browbeat them there is a point at which if you overdo it they will not cooperate. You have to use the right amount of stick, after that you don't its not all bullying there is lot of cajoling also.

To get anybody into to drag a man out of his house in the middle of the night, and you start putting him on to a truck and taking ten tons of food grains into an area where its going to be transported by labourers on their head through waste water and you plucked him out of the house. To be able to persuade him to go like that is a very difficult job, you learn how to do it through a very long and arduous process of training and you have to know them individually

And I think that's why we have state cadres the same person effective in West Bengal will not be effective in Tamil Nadu not because of the language, but because you have to know your team, you have to know how much to press a person, when not to press a person, how not to overdo it.

How to appeal to his sense of duty? How not to overdo it? How not to expect him to do something you wouldn't do? You have to lead by example, so these are things you learn from your peers, from others. I mean I wasn't born with these qualities when I was a junior officers I observed my seniors, I observed my seniors working and picked up tips from them. It need not be by a process of

dialogue and me ringing up the phone but more a process of osmosis I observe. I learn I think at the very critical moment you don't ring up your mentor, memories come back to you from past incidents, from stories, and I think you learn a lot from just anecdotal stories. You were in a party and you were talking to somebody else that person tells their life's stories and you pick up all the lessons from them. And I am sure when I have been speaking to my juniors about the floods they would have picked up things from me and I wouldn't have known that I have been imparting a lesson to them but they would remember.

I have a very nice story which I have told many people it has nothing to do with learning from seniors just a story but there is a lesson in it. We had a lot of dead bodies floating not only animals but also human beings. So we had to engage dogs, you know what dogs are, scavengers. So they acted very pricey, the background is that when I was ADM I was very very tough I mean 2 rupees stolen and I would have a fit, I mean I was a greyhound going around sniffing ensuring that money should not be stolen. And the lower level staff knew it and they found it funny they all had to deal with younger officers who started behaving you know like very senior people, you know and the elderly find it very funny, the elderly underlings find the spectacle of a strutting junior very very funny but they can't laugh to the face. Ok.

So they thought had a nice way to make me eat a humble pie, so this junior came and told me that these dogs are very reluctant to remove the dead bodies, they have announced that unless they are given a bottle of rum they are not going to do any work at all, they looked at me and I could see that half-smile.

They thought that this ADM, this lady ADM is going to throw a fit, saying I won't give anything and the whole operation is going to be derailed and we will have some fun and games. I didn't say yes immediately actually it wouldn't have done it, it doesn't matter what I thought of misusing government money, there is no rule in government for buying booze for workers. I said you give it to them, he looked aghast and said how will I account for them?? I said that's your headache, I said I know how you people account for things I am not going to teach you guys how to account for things, you do it on your own, you have been accounting for so many things without consulting me, I mean so many things there are so many things which you have been buying for flood relief which are not there in the rules, why do you ask me, you go and do your job and then he left like a punctured balloon.

Now my reaction, my reaction was not something I was born with, my reaction was definitely honed and it came to my mind because I have been observing my seniors and how they reacted in other situations and now if you ask me who I learnt it from I wouldn't be able to tell you, at that point in time.

At that point in time in 1978 I had five years of service, I must have observed a large number of seniors, I must have listened to a large number of stories, at parties, at get-togethers, at tea meetings, at coffee breaks during meetings somewhere down the line I learnt this lesson that if you are in a crisis, you can't stick to the rule-book that the greater good is more important than your you know accounting. It's not such a formal kind of mentoring isn't it it's totally informal, it's absolutely informal.

**QUESTION: I AM FASCINATED THAT YOU MENTIONED INFORMAL LEARNING AND STORIES...CAN YOU PLEASE ELABORATE HOW THAT TAKES PLACE IN THE IAS CAREER AND MORE SO IN YOUR CASE??**

I think all our lessons, I mean a large part of our lessons come from stories, I think one learns much more from anecdotes than lectures, in fact I don't know if it's my phrase or somebody else's but I like using it that "Almost all IAS officers are in their anecdotal age, they won't stop babbling, if you give them a chance they will tell one story after another after another and it's absolutely like that".

**QUESTION: THEN MADAM CAN WE HEAR SOME OF YOUR ANECDOTES AND ONES YOU HAVE HEARD FROM OTHER IAS OFFICERS??**

Well when I was an Assistant Magistrate in Midnapore also, I mean I served in that district quite well, now Assistant Magistrate means you are a trainee. I used to stay in the circuit house and that was a miserable existence because I used to get booted out every 7 days 8 days when the circuit house would be taken over by legitimate users. My DM told me since you on training I will allot you quarters and you set up your own household, engage the cook.

I said I am not going to anything like that kind, I am not into housekeeping and cooking and I am a trainee and I wish to be a free bird and stay in the circuit house.

He said I will keep throwing you out of this bungalow to that bungalow, circuit house is the VIP accommodation, if the minister comes or the governor comes they stay there. I said no problem!!

Now anyway when I was staying in the circuit house one of the joys of staying there was every time a secretary, whether to the government of India or the state government will come they would stay there and in the evening would send for the AM, and have them gobble-eyed while they would held forth on the world. They would like to have an audience and over a cup of tea would tell a lot of stories and with 3-4 juniors around all would be gobble-eyed.

So I remember one of the best stories I heard during period from a chap called Kushari, he told me a nice story, he told me that you know we have to wear so many caps. Kushari said "when I was secretary transport prepare a proposal for buying new CSTC buses, you know what CSTC buses are, so I send the proposal for buying 100 buses, I prepared it meticulously and explained why government should subsidize it etc etc...anyway as luck would have it after sending off the proposal I got transferred and was made Secretary-Finance." I meaning him, "so I went off to as Secretary-Finance and in about 2 days time this file came to me, my own proposal came to me and I was told by my team, finance team, that there was no money, there was no question of subsidizing anybody's bus-buying. If you don't generate your own revenue then you don't buy a bus and I wrote on the file, Mr. Kushari says I wrote on the file 'the idiot who has prepared this proposal obviously does not understand finance at all, this proposal is rejected' and I marked it Secretary-Transport and sent it back.

"So Secretary-Transport called him up and started moaning and groaning and said 'how could you do this?? This is your proposal' and I said no, I am wearing a different cap I wrote this as Secretary-Transport...find it absolutely idiotic and I have right the reject to it"!!

So what...I find this a fascinating story, you know you wear different caps.....look at from different angles, so that's another story for you.

**QUESTION: COULD YOU THROW SOME LIGHT ON BEING 'BROUGHT UP' IN THE GROUP?**

So it's not only the IAS group which deploys stories, including the state people as well. Basically you learn what can be done and what cannot be done. On the one hand one hand you might start losing your flexibility and might becoming a pessimistic and that nothing can be done.

By and large IAS officers don't become like that because we have a saving grace, we also go off to work with the Central government, we don't become that hardened in our groups, you stay in one state all the time and don't get to see the broader picture and that's the difference between the state civil service and the IAS. State civil service don't get to interact with other people, we do, even we don't serve in Centre just by going to Delhi meetings, and meeting other people, other states and listening to other's stories you get a wide frame of reference. Not only other states I mean senior officers go abroad for meetings also, they serve in all kinds of organizations also. We really have a broad view of the world, of the state, of the country, of the region that gives you a lot of flexibility. Now you might say why can't a private sector person just come in and jump into that chair?? Certainly as far as talent is concerned they certainly can, but to get that grounding it takes a very long time. And you know when you recruit laterally you are recruited relatively senior person and that senior person will not sit around humbly and listening to stories.

Like Mr. Kushari told that story to an Assistant Magistrate now, he is not going to tackle someone of his age-group have him listening to this story. Now you know that hierarchy which we find so dead, that same hierarchy allows you to listen and to learn. Learning only from your peer-group is not the only lesson which you learn, you talk somebody will listen you cant do that if that person is your equal. I mean you can but its different process of learning, there are different processes of learning; learning from your seniors, learning from your juniors.

I mean I have learnt from my juniors I have been lucky to have some very vociferous independent-minded juniors who have taught me many things. In fact I will tell you another story about a junior I got who was an absolute born-lawyer. I have had a joint-secretary when I was secretary of a department who was from Midnapore, again my famous Midnapore, and people from Midnapore are known to be very argumentative and very irritating. Now this chap walked into my room and seeing him I got irritated since it was seven in the evening, and I said 'why have you come?' and I hope you appreciate in a culture you go home at five-thirty seven in the evening is pretty bad. I felt most annoyed that he should have come when I was going home so he said "this pet file of yours, pet proposal of yours can't be done". So I said well if it can't be done it can't be done and I am going home already. "No" he said "You have to listen to me, I have worked it out:" For half-an-hour I sat and listened and tore my proposal, tore it to shreds, absolutely and after half-an-hour I said 'I agree with you, I am upset with you but your have worked it out conceptually right.' Then this Mr. lawyer, he was not a lawyer but a promoted IAS officer said "But I have found a solution." And I said 'Will kill you if you found the solution, why did you waste half-an-hour telling me it can't be done when you have found the solution?'

He says that “If you did not understand the difficulties you will not understand the solution.” The next half-an-hour he explained the solution to me and how actually it could be done.

The fact of the matter is that the fellow was extraordinarily intelligent, really analyzed it well and found the difficulties and he had found the solutions. He was really junior to me, at least ten years junior to me so I mean one has to respect that kind of person. You don't really only learn from your seniors. This is a situation I really learnt from this chap, although at that point I felt like killing him because when I left that room it was eight-thirty in night. And at Writer's sitting there till eight-thirty is really a painful experience.

People go home by six or six-thirty by evening.

**QUESTION: JUST GOING BACK TO YOUR EARLIER POINT ABOUT BRINGING AN OUTSIDER AND PARACHUTING IN A POSITION ..YOU THINK THE STORIES PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN THE EVOLUTION OF THE IAS OFFICER??**

Also Observing, also Observing...there maybe situations where no words are exchanged just observe. I will give you an example when I was in Bankura as a District Magistrate I had an Assistant Magistrate(AM) who was from Rajasthan who used to follow me around like a ‘Mary had a little lamb’ that was his job. He was to observe me and to learn, so we had a law-order problem, police officials, I and the AM we went off to the spot and we called a meeting. It was a communal riot and usually mostly these are about burial grounds and it's a bone of contention.

Hindus said this is a playground and the Muslims said this is a burial ground and we have not used it for ten year. Anyway so I and the police official asked them, the locals to speak and the crowds abused us left and right.

At around nine-thirty we announced that we will be sending a land survey team and closed off the land area. When I was returning the AM asked me “how did you allow these people to abuse you so ghastly as if they were your boss?” and I said ‘that's how you operate in Bengal, you allow the public to shout and scream and after sometime they get tired and agree to your solution. Didn't you notice they agreed to our solution?’. He said “I did that but in Rajasthan no DM would agree or tolerate”. So that's the work culture I would not be able to work in Rajasthan if I don't act high-handed. I m talking about the eighties and the situation may have changed now but there is a certain work-culture you have to understand.

Of course this AM completely absorbed the work culture of Bengal, by the way I am not saying it's a bad thing, maybe it's a bad thing because in Bengal there is no work-culture people don't work. Maybe the word is not work-culture I think the correct thing is ethos, ethos of that place, the word needs correction, when I said work-culture it was not a correct formulation.

You have to understand the ethos, you know the ethos of that place, what makes the people tick, what appeals to them and what does not appeal to them. As Assistant Magistrate he learnt only by observing, I did not really give him much of a lecture

There was no time to sort of expand on that theme.

You see its totally informal, not a structured thing, if you try to structure it then it slips and slides away, a very intangible, a very nuanced kind of thing. That you learn from experience of others, and its transmitted through stories and not stories as kind of fiction. These are experiences-related, people talk about

experiences and you learn from them. Because of the variety of the work it becomes important, if it was a same kind of drill you could have read a manual and you know it!! In the IAS there is no end to the kind of situations you are exposed to, so there are many stories, there are many angles, and the lessons you learn are many.

The stories

Its not military rule that you bark at people and get things done, there are tricks of getting the public cooperate with you, you have to understand them, you have to know them, you have to know their culture and understand them. You know this insider/outsider, in my view this is a technical term, technical outsider becomes an insider through the process of osmosis, he also was an outsider. He understands the inflection of body language and what happens.

**QUESTION: GENDER DIMENSION OF IAS DID IT INFLUENCE THE COMMUNITY OF STORY-TELLERS, THIS RITUAL OF SITTING AROUND DRINKING AND TELLING STORIES – IS THIS A MALE METHODOLOGY OF BONDING**

Its not restricted to drinking buddies, I have had never had any difficulty in bonding with my male colleagues. In fact there have been situations when people have told me to shut up when I have complained about my being a woman. By and large women have been able to adjust very nicely I think it would apply to the military set-up. I think there are many women who drink and many men who don't drink.

Naturally the women IAS officers do bond well but its not very overt or exclusive like if a male officer came we wont tell him to get lost. Like there are some situations which men wont understand or react like any working women with child has a very special problem which only a woman could understand.

**QUESTION: A RATHER PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTION; LOOKING BACK HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE THE INTER-PERSONAL EXCHANGES BETWEEN IAS OFFICERS IN YOUR DECADES OF SERVICE FOR SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE?? ARE THE DISTRICT YEARS MORE COHESIVE THAN SECRETARIAT??**

Definitely, you are isolated, you have less of a social community, many of these places you don't get to know other people, there is a lack of interaction with other people because they are completely different. Whereas in metro or the state capital you interact with wider circle and also socializing is much more in a district. Even then up till now most people stay in residential quarters of IAS officers where you interact with other service colleagues even outside. I spent most of my time in residential colonies of the civil services, but over a period of time this gets diluted.

Most of the IAS people have married fellow IAS officers or sister services, as people marry more and more outside the IAS circle the community spirit gets diluted.

With the processes of urbanization, self-government becomes more and more the responsibilities of the DM will get distributed.

But at the end of the day there has to be a mechanism between the elected representatives and the people which will coordinate and every small self-government body cannot discharge responsibilities. At the end of the day, IAS is a coordination mechanism, isn't it...

In the future IAS will be diluted, I mean don't want to say diluted but will evolve in new directions.

## **ANNEXURE – 6 - QUESTIONS FRAMEWORK FOR THE INTERVIEW:**

When you do have a doubt who is the first person would call in your service career?? Who knows what...is there a directory ready at hand???

Is there one specific person who is constantly asked questions???

Early years of posting....can you give an example where you needed to call someone for clarification of doubt, CONFRONTING A SITUATION either a fellow IAS officer, or senior....

Provide an example of few actions in your first posting which makes you feel delighted and proud as an IAS officer??

Younger days in the service .....instances of seeking counsel and advise and solving difficult problems

Mention one of the few things which you need to perform or engage while receiving your postings after completion of the training???

What sort of informal interactions you had in your early years of posting?? Were there exchanges about the day's hard work during these encounters.....

How often would you call up for some counsel or suggestion your old senior IAS officer under whose tutelage you served in the district administration?

*Where you need what kind of information or reference??*

Do you find some of your fellow IAS officers supportive in your routine performance of duties and work???

When you assumed office, who were the people you turned to for initial briefing and comprehension of the tasks?? IAS officers how many of them did you call and interact amongst your immediate circle of individuals for understanding the mandate??

Amongst your fellow IAS officers do you have someone you tend to rely on for clarifications of unknowns??

Amongst your counterparts and working colleagues who is the most trusted and reliable one i.e. where you can express your apprehensions and doubts without any hesitation or reluctance???

Whom do you feel most comfortable to openly admit some of the things which are not clear to you with no fear of ridicule or rebuke??

How often you would call the previous serving Chairmen for any clarifications???

Territory

How often you would call the previous serving IAS officers in the Regulatory Commission for any clarification and knowledge seeking???

A rather philosophical question; looking back how would you define the interpersonal exchanges between IAS officers in your decades of service for sharing of knowledge and expertise???

Amongst the IAS officers would you say that the seniors are usually more supportive and relaxed about offering counsel?? Is the process of clarifications and being exposed to new ideas more prevalent amongst them vis-à-vis peers or colleagues???

## Annexe 7



### CALCUTTA CLUB:

Calcutta Club is a social club located on Lower Circular Road in Calcutta India. It was established in 1907 and the first president of the club was H H The Maharajah of Cooch Behar. Although not the oldest private members club in the city, it is notable because it was formed at a time when the existing Bengal Club only admitted whites as members. Lord Minto, the Viceroy of India at the time, had wished to invite Rajen Mookerjee to dine at the Bengal Club and, when the discriminatory policy was thus exposed, a decision was taken to form a club with a membership policy not dictated by race. The Calcutta Club remains a popular social hub for the wealthy in the city. Ironically, despite its origins as a reaction to discrimination, the club has historically restricted membership to men. However, this was changed in 2007 and the club started admitting women members.

### CALCUTTA CLUB AND IAS OFFICERS –NEWS ITEM:

**Kolkata:** The 100-year-old Calcutta Club has finally broken with its controversial tradition. At an Open House, members of the all-male bastion voted for allowing women to become members. According to club president Dr Dipak Mukherjee, “The decision to have women members has been passed by an overwhelming majority. From now, women can apply for membership as individuals.” Like men, the primary criterion to become a member would be excellence in their professional field. The rest of the criteria, too, while screening for membership, would be the same as men. The president ruled out giving an edge to daughters and spouses of existing members. Till Sunday, however, no women has applied for membership, said Mukherjee. But, a beaming Mukherjee said, “It was the best gift me and my committee members could have given to the club on its 100th birthday. It feels great.” Another club member, **West Bengal home secretary Prasad Ranjan Ray**, said, “The wind of change is blowing everywhere. Our gender bias was ethically and emotionally wrong.” While speaking at the Open House, he had apparently referred to Governor

Gopalkrishna Gandhi to set right this 100-year-old rule.

**GOVERNER'S GROUSE OVER NO-ENTRY FOR SPOUSE**

Gandhi had refused to participate in the club's commemoration day programme on February 3, 2006 because his wife, Tara, hadn't been invited because the dinner was strictly a stag party, as per club traditions. Gandhi had sent a letter to the club authorities in December, requesting them to amend their rules to allow ladies.

Controversy was triggered in 2005 when the club drew flak from **IAS officer Kalyani Chaudhuri, then principal secretary of PWD**. She sought an explanation about gender discrimination and even refused to renew the lease of the land on which the heritage club building was built. Even chief minister was in favour of a change in the archaic club rule of denying membership and voting rights to women.

**ANNEXE- 8:**  
**HANDBOOK ON ETIQUETTE AND MANNERS – ‘SRISHTACHAR’:**

Institution: Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration  
(LBSNAA)

Location: Mussorie

Purpose: Training for IAS officers

Objective: Guide for proper behaviour and conduct for IAS officers

Source: India’s Political Administrators, From ICS to IAS by David C Potter,  
1996, Oxford University Press.

**EXCERPTS:**

These are excerpts from the Handbook designed for IAS officers at the Training Academy in Mussorie.

**Introduction:**

Good manners and etiquette lend confidence and charm to an officer’s personality, often help smooth the sharp edge of authority and ease the course of personal relations; the idea underlying the patterns of form and behaviour suggested in the following pages are courtesy, politeness and consideration for others.

**Section on ‘Drawing room manners’ (page 2-4):**

- 1.0 Gentleman officers will rise when they are introduced. Shaking hands on being introduced is quite normal but not with ladies unless they make the first move. Otherwise, a *Namaste* or an equivalent word in any other Indian language is in order.
- 2.0 Do not sit aloof but conduct a conversation with your neighbours. As far as possible, avoid ‘talking shop’. As educated young officers you should have sufficiently wide interests to start and sustain a conversation on many subjects.
- 3.0 Do not be condescending. Do not monopolise the conversation or express your views too vehemently. Speak softly but clearly...
- 4.0 Avoid effusiveness, gossip or over complimentary or disparaging talk about others. Do not boast of either your attainments or your connections. Avoid personal queries about family and income.

**Section on Table Manners and the Use of Cutlery:**

- 1.0 Sit on your chair from the right and leave it from the left. Place your napkin half-folded on your lap.

- 2.0 Curry and rice may be eaten with spoon and fork or fork alone in right hand. Use the back of the fork to push the rice into the spoon.
- 3.0 The larger knife and fork are intended for the meat dish or its vegetarian equivalent. With the help of the knife in the right hand, build up the food on the back of the fork.
- 4.0 Forks are used for sweet dishes where these are solid. Liquids or semi-liquids are taken with a small spoon. On completion of the course, put the spoon down on the plate below the ice-cream cup and not in the cup itself.

Correct Behaviour:

- 1.0 Arrive on time – punctuality is politeness and should be cultivated as a habit.
- 2.0 Never speak to your seniors with your hands in your pockets.
- 3.0 Never stare, especially at a lady.
- 4.0 Natural functions like belching, yawning, sneezing and coughing, clearing of throats, noses etc. should be done as silently as possible with an ‘excuse me’ id in company – if possible, use a handkerchief to sneeze or cough into.
- 5.0 As a junior officer, be observant, try to catch the eye of your senior officer and greet him; never be seen avoiding a greeting and never permit this with your juniors or subordinates.

## **ANNEXE – 9:**

### **EXTRACTS OF SPEECH BY SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL:**

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, independent India's first Home Minister made a speech with regards to the continuance of the ICS in independent India to the Constituent Assembly.

This speech extract below is quoted from 'Constituent Assembly Debates X, 1949, PP.33-53.

This speech is extracted from David C Potter: India's Political Administrators 1919-1983, (Clarendon Press Oxford:1986).

“As a man of experience I tell you, do not quarrel with the instruments with which you want to work. It is a bad workman who quarrels with his instruments. Take work from them. Every man wants some sort of encouragement. Nobody wants to put in work when every day he is criticized and ridiculed in public....So, once and for all decide whether you want this service or not. If you have done with it and decide not to have this service at all...I will take the Services with me and go.

The Union will go- you will not have a united India if you do not have a good all-India service which has the independence to speak out its mind, which has a sense of security...If you do not adopt this course, then do not follow the present Constitution. Substitute something else. Put in a Congress Constitution or some other Constitution – whatever you like – but not this Constitution. This Constitution is meant to be worked by a [...] Service which will keep the country intact.”

**NOTES:**

- (1) The term 'steel frame' with regards to the ICS was coined by former British prime minister David Lloyd George, which he mentions while Speaking in the [House of Commons](#) in 1935, and said of the ICS that it was "the on which the whole structure of government and of administration in India rests". **Source:** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian\\_Civil\\_Service](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Civil_Service) *Parliamentary debates: Official report*, Volume 300 (H. M. Stationery Office, 1935), p. 767

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