Election is the time when the strengths and pitfalls of democracy are visible, especially in the backward rural confines of erstwhile composite Adilabad district.

The voters of the far flung tribal habitations of Metiguda and Dubbaguda, 70 and 40 respectively, make one believe in the strengths of democracy as they continue to undertake the 6 km of tormenting trek over steep hills to reach their polling station at Khatiguda in Sirpur (U) mandal of Asifabad (ST) constituency in Kumram Bheem Asifabad district.

Their plight, however, also reveals the negligence on part of the powers that be. These villages, and many other similar habitations seem to have not been a part of the scheme of things of successive governments.

“Bathi jhel hid avastha (how long should we suffer these travails),” lamented octogenarian Athram Mankubai, the eldest of the Raj Gond Adivasi voters in Metiguda as she laboured over the steep incline of the first hillock. As always, she led a group of voters from her village on the journey to exercise their franchise.

“Until 2014 election, we used to trek for 12 km to the polling station at Pangdi,” recalled Pendur Shankar, the village Patel or head man. “No public representative or officer has ever shown interest in solving our problems especially laying a proper road between Kerameri and our village,” added Kursenga Telang Rao, village elder.

Poor connectivity

Metiguda and Dubbaguda are actually located closer to Kerameri mandal headquarters, the distance being 5 km, but most of it a difficult dirt track. In order to reach Khatiguda by road, the voters of Metiguda would have to travel for 35 km and those from Dubbaguda about 30 km.

The residents aboriginal people of the two villages cover the same distance to fetch their monthly rations from the public distribution system as their ration shop is located in Babjipet. “And if there is a delay in delivery of rations to the shop, we have to make the trip once again,” pointed out old Kudmetha Bheembai.