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The inception of the Panchayati Raj in Gujarat in 1963 was a great event in rural development in general and the administration of primary education in particular. When this happened, District School Board constituted under the Bombay Primary Education Act, 1947 was the principal administrative agency to look after the expansion and development of education, the inspection and supervision function still being vested in the Department of Education of the State. The non-official leadership had emerged, but the leverage still rested with the officials of the Education Department. The decentralisation of administration of primary education had taken place, but it operated largely at the district level, and effective set-up at the taluka level and the village level did not exist in actual practice.

The Gujarat Panchayats Act, 1961 which created this new democratic set-up at all the three levels - Gram, Taluka and District - was an event portending a great future in rural self-government in education. Around a decade has passed since this crucial development took place in Gujarat. A decade's time is not too short a span to look back to the

goals previously set and to evaluate the changes and achievements that were stipulated when the experiment of the Panchayati Raj Administration in democracy and development was launched and the changes and achievements that have actually taken place. This can better be done by adopting a diagnostic and remedial approach borrowing these two terms from the field of educational evaluation and measurement. This is what is intended to be done in the present piece of research.

The main focus of the research is to examine the role played by leadership in the Panchayati Raj bodies at all the three levels, particularly in the Executive Bodies of Gram Panchayats and Taluka Panchayats where there are no Education Committees to look after the administration of primary education and of the District Education Committee. The study of the effectiveness of the popular rural leadership as reflected in the Panchayati Raj bodies has become very significant because it has now gained leverage over the officials and it has better scope and opportunity to set in motion, and also to accelerate the speed of providing equality of educational opportunity to the weaker sections of rural society, facilities for making primary education in the age-group of 6-14 universal, free and compulsory and taking sincere and pains taking measures to improve quality and standards of primary education. The study of the role of Panchayat leadership in the context

of primary education has become the central point in this investigation.

The research designed is projected in the backward district of Panchamahals which may be described as East Gujarat. This has been done because the two studies done so far on the educational administration in the Panchayati Raj in Gujarat State cover North Gujarat and South Gujarat. The present investigation reviews, assesses and suggests dimensions and directions of change in the administration of primary education by the Panchayati Raj popular leadership.

For completing this study, the investigator has done considerable field-work. He met and discussed with several categories of persons actually connected with Panchayats or who know closely about them to be able to make general or specific assessment. The investigator has tried to make the study as objective and scientific as possible. But the study has also theoretical dimensions. He has surveyed and studied considerable published literature on Panchayati Raj, rural Sociology, leadership, administration of primary education and problems and needs of rural community in regard to primary education.

The study was commenced in November, 1972 and was completed in December, 1974. It was sharply focused and intensive with

prepared schedules in advance. The field study posed many difficulties and problems as the Panchamahals is a hilly and forest type area inhabited by backward tribal people whose behaviour become^b unpredictable in remote inhabitations. There were many hazards involved in visiting some tribal habitations. But the investigator did the job as a venture of faith which gives researchers, missionaries and social workers inner strength.

In this challenging work, the investigator has received precious guidance from his research guide, Professor D.M. Desai, Head, Department of Educational Administration and Dean, Faculty of Education and Psychology of the M.S. University of Baroda. As a college administrator, university Syndic^{ate} and member of several advisory and expert education committees at the State and National level, Professor Desai is an extremely busy man. Still he found time to guide this research by devoting considerable time and energy to it. The investigator's deep gratitude and thankfulness to his scholarly guide !

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The investigator would like to end this note of gratefulness by thanking profusely all the respondents who cooperated so well in this study; but for their written or oral responses this investigation would have remained only a hope and not an accomplishment.

It is hoped that the findings of this investigation would be helpful in streamlining and strengthening the Panchayati Raj leadership in the administration of primary education in general and in the Panchamahals District in particular !

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