

CHAPTER - I

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It is the base that should take these decisions. Panchayati Raj should be considered as a matter of faith and conviction and democracy in India can only survive if power emerges from below. The objective of Panchayati Raj is to generate in the local people the capacity to take initiative in dealing with problems of their economic and social development..... The real purpose is to awaken rural India and generate a feeling of confidence and self-reliance in the people. With a view to restoring self-confidence and utilizing their talent, energy and potentialities, a decentralised apparatus with necessary financial and technical help from the government to the people had to be arranged. This was the genesis of Panchayati Raj.

- Iltija H. Khan

(in 'Government in Rural India')

CHAPTER

ONE THE PANCHAYATI RAJ,
LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATION

1.1 Introduction

As the present study primarily relates to the problems of leadership operative in the Panchayati Raj bodies, it is necessary to examine, in some details, the structure of the Panchayati Raj, the organizations in it, the executive personnel in each organization, their duties and responsibilities, their mode of operation, the infra-structural relationship, the links in the operation machinery, the coordination and the operative personnel. The importance of the role of leadership in organizations of any type or character is self-evident. It is the leadership that moves an organization, sets a direction for its operation, creates climate for work, builds up staff morale, influences its inputs and is mainly responsible for the size and quality of the output of the organization. While it is true that

an organization and its infra-structure as well as functions delegated to it largely determine the scope of the functioning of the leadership, it is the quality of leadership which mainly determines to what extent the organization and leadership act and react on each other and influence the effectiveness of each other. It is not enough to have a sound ideology, well knít structure and clearly articulated organs for an organization, it is equally crucial to put the operation of the organization in the hands of the right type of executive - well selected leaders.

1.2 The Panchayati Raj : Ideology and Structure

The Panchayati Raj denotes democratic decentralised units of government. It is the further extension and development of the local self-government institutions developed during the British rule. The District Local Board and municipalities were such local self-government units. The district was developed as a strong unit of public administration during the British period. The provincial governments functioned vesting some of their executive powers at the district level. Even after the attainment of independence, the district continued to be the unit of State administration and government.

After the attainment of political independence in 1947, a climate soon began to gather up for the achievement of economic and social development. Ideology began to be put forward for social change, modernisation and economic development. This further developed into the ideology of community development. To initiate the process of planned economic development and to give meaning and content to the political freedom, the Planning Commission was set up in 1950, and an era of five-year planning was ushered in from 1951. In October, 1952, the Community Development Programme began. The aim of this new programme has been to bring about an integrated development of rural India covering the social, cultural and economic aspects of community life. A Block including a group of 100 villages, covering an area of about 400-500 sq. km. and having a population of 60,000 to 70,000 became a Community Development Block.

In the second Five-Year Plan (1956-61), the Planning Commission recommended that the Local Self Government institutions should be constituted in the District. The recommendation of the Planning Commission carried the germs of the Panchayati Raj:

"The proposals of the Planning Commission for the Second Plan, as accepted by the Parliament, stressed the need for creating, within the district, a well organised democratic structure of administration, in which village panchayats will be organically linked with popular organisations at the higher level. In such a structure, the functions of the popular body would include the entire general administration and development of the area, other than such functions as law and order, administration of justice and certain functions pertaining to revenue administration."¹

The recommendation of the National Development Council in 1958 gave an edge to the recommendation of the Balwantrai Mehta Committee on setting up democratic decentralised institutions. It observed : "State Governments should accelerate the process for the establishment of democratic decentralised institutions functioning either at the block level or at the taluka level or district level. The process of democratisation should be completed as speedily as possible."²

The Standing Committee of the National Development Council had already recommended in January 1958 that the decision on the pattern of decentralization would be better left to State Government in the light of their conditions and requirements.

In 1958, Gujarat was an integral part of the then bi-lingual Bombay State. The Bombay Government had passed its Village Panchayat Act in 1958. Different types of local Self-Government institutions like Village Panchayats,

District Local Board, District School Board, District Village Panchayat Mandals and Municipalities existed in the State. An advisory body called District Development Board also existed in each district. Though these popular bodies functioning at the district level had limited powers and resources, they discharged the duties and responsibilities delegated to them fairly well.

It appears from the speech of the then Minister for Village Panchayats made while presenting the Bill for Village Panchayats in the Bombay Legislative Assembly, that the proposals of the Balwantrao Mehta Committee were well received in all parts of the Bombay State. The State Government, too, had accepted the principle of democratic decentralised administration within a district. But it did not take any decision as to how and at what level the democratic decentralised units be constituted. It thought it better to leave this issue to be decided by the governments of the two new States of Maharashtra and Gujarat which were in the offing then.

The Gujarat State was carved out of the erstwhile bilingual Bombay State on 1st May, 1960. In July, 1960, the Gujarat Government appointed a Democratic Decentralisation Committee under Shri Basikbhai U. Parikh, the then Minister, Public Works Department and Rural Development. Some of the recommendations³ of this Committee, which are

pertinent to this study were as under :

- (1) Strong and efficient democratic institutions of elected representatives of the people at the district level, the taluka or block and the village level ~~be~~ established.
- (2) These democratic bodies should be organically linked; the State administration should be decentralised and responsibilities should be duly developed on these bodies.
- (3) These institutions should become parts of the arrangement and work according to their own lights in their own fields and at the same time supplement and complement each other.
- (4) These institutions should be closely and organically linked with each other. Higher institution should be constituted through the lower one.
- (5) The Taluka or Mahal should be accepted as a proper unit and level, above the village level, for the establishment of a popular institution. This popular body may be called "Taluka Panchayat".
- (6) Whenever one Block contains two taluk^as or mahals, each of them should be given 1/2 Block with one Block Officer each. Extra expenditure should be incurred.
- (7) Strong popular body at the district level should be established to which should be entrusted the duties, responsibilities and resources of all the present bodies at the district level and delegated to it adequate powers and necessary financial resources entrusting to it such other responsibilities as may be feasible at that level. It should be called "District Panchayat".
- (8) The Village Panchayat, being an institution working chiefly for development of a village, should put the interest of the village above all other interests. The constitution and election to the Panchayat should, therefore, be based on this aspect.

On the basis of the recommendations of this Committee the Gujarat Panchayats Act was passed in 1961. The Panchayati Raj was introduced under this Act in all the districts of the State, excepting the Dangs District, in 1963.

In the next section, an attempt will be made to build up the conceptual frame work of the Panchayati Raj in terms of the principal ideology and task-expectations.

1.3 The Gujarat Model of the Panchayati Raj

Panchayati Raj is an administration or government by popular institutions called Panchayats. During the British Rule, the district, a revenue unit or sub-division of the State, had come to be established as an unit of administration. District Local Boards as institutions of local self-government had been functioning in many parts of India over a period of half a century. Therefore, a political as well as public image of democratic institution of administration synchronised with the District Local Board. In some States a school Board functioned in every district to administer, finance, and control primary education. This School Board was a statutory, almost autonomous body. Therefore, in the pre-Panchayati Raj period, the conceptual as well as operational model of democratic decentralisation was the District Local Board in spheres of public activities and programmes and the District School Board in the sphere of the admini-

stration of primary education. This model had meaning to people in terms of delegated or decentralised powers and responsibilities and revenue. Hardly any meaning was attached to this model in terms of community developments in social, economic, educational and other integrally allied fields.

In the early years of the fifties, the Community Development Programme began through National Extension Centres. The basic objective of this revolutionary programme has been "to secure the fullest development of available material and human resources on an area basis and thereby raise the rural community to higher levels of living with the active participation and as much as possible on the initiative of people themselves"⁴. "Towards the closing years of the fifties the Balwantraji Mehta Study Team, appointed by the Central Government, with a view to taking a decision, on the working of the Community Development Projects and on how this important development programme could be made successful through the people and popular institutions gave its epoch-making report. From this report, the concept of the Panchayati Raj came out. The concept referred to the Constitution of a Panchayat Samiti from amongst the Village Panchayats established in that area and to this Panchayat Samiti the delegation of all executive authority in connection with all the development activities of the Block was to be delegated.

The conceptual model that came to be built up by the Balwantrai Mehta Committee rested on the base of a dispersal of administrative machinery and devolution of authority. Structurally, the model rested on a three tier institutional framework to be set up at village, block and district levels. Ideologically, it rested on the principle that specific decision-making powers supported by appropriate financial resources in matters relating to the management of local affairs be entrusted at each of the three tiers. Administratively, the three tiers are to be organically linked up, they should be autonomous in nature and they should be constituted through election by popular majority vote. Thus, the model that the Balwantrai Mehta Study Team had suggested included the constitution of Panchayati Samiti at the Block level as the Key functional institution, a Jilla Parishad or District Panchayat at the district level in an advisory role and the village or Gram Panchayat at the village level, as the executive agent of the Block level Panchayati Samiti.

This model was closely followed by Rajasthan and some other States like Andhra Pradesh, Bihar etc. In Gujarat, as also in Maharashtra, this model came to be altered in some crucial details. This was as a result of certain important recommendations of the Democratic Decentralisation Committee of the Gujarat State (1960).

In the Balwantraai Mehta Committee model, the Jilla Parishad at the district level had an advisory role. But in the Gujarat Model, the District Panchayat is a strong body. To this popular body the functions and powers formerly held by District Local Board, District School Board, the District Village Panchayat Mandal and the District Development Board have been transferred. The Democratic Decentralisation Committee of the Gujarat Government (1960), therefore, had recommended⁵ that a strong popular body at the district level should be established to which should be entrusted the duties, responsibilities and resources of all the present bodies at the district level and delegated to it adequate powers and necessary financial resources entrusting to it. Each other administrative responsibilities as might be feasible at that level should also be entrusted at the district level. The Committee expressed itself against making it only an advisory committee as was the case in the Balwantraai Mehta Study Team Model. The Committee observes :

"In view of the responsibilities which are being discharged by the statutory bodies in different fields at the district level in Gujarat to day, it would be a retrograde step to abolish them and to create in their place only an advisory body of the type of the District Development Board only for supervision and co-ordination at the district level."⁶

Thus, in the Gujarat Model, the District Panchayat is a strong popular body having important duties, responsibi-

bilities and resources.

In the Balwantrai Mehta Study Team Model, the Block Panchayat Samiti is the key functional institution. This position and status are enjoyed by the District Panchayat in the Gujarat Model. In the latter, the Taluka Panchayat is the intermediate statutory body above the village Panchayat and below the District Panchayat. The Gujarat Democratic Decentralisation Committee⁽¹⁾ had recommended that the Taluka Panchayat should be organically linked with the lower level Village Panchayats by having all the Sarpanchas of the Gram Panchayats within a taluka to be the ex-officio members of the concerned Taluka Panchayat and it should also have organic link with the upper level District Panchayat by providing that the Presidents of all Taluka Panchayats within a district become ex-officio members of the District Panchayat. However, this system of indirect election did not work satisfactorily in Gujarat between 1963 and 1973. The ex-officio membership of the Sarpanchas of the Village Panchayats at the Taluka level and of the Presidents of the Taluka Panchayats at the District level developed into strong obstructive pressure groups which operated to the detriment of the interest and welfare of rural communities. Therefore, this kind of organic linkage through indirect election was done away with from the Gujarat Model by the Amendment Act, 1973, of the Gujarat Panchayat Act, 1961.

In the Gujarat Model, as in the original Balwantrao Mehta Study Team Model, the Village Panchayat is the Grass-root level body in the three ~~tier~~ structure. The village Panchayat tier in the Gujarat Model has undergone significant change in the course of the last ten years. The Panchayati Raj was introduced in Gujarat under the Gujarat Panchayats Act, 1961. For each gram or a group of grams (not less than five in number) the constitution of a Gram Panchayat was provided. To be a gram, the population of the local area should not exceed 10,000.

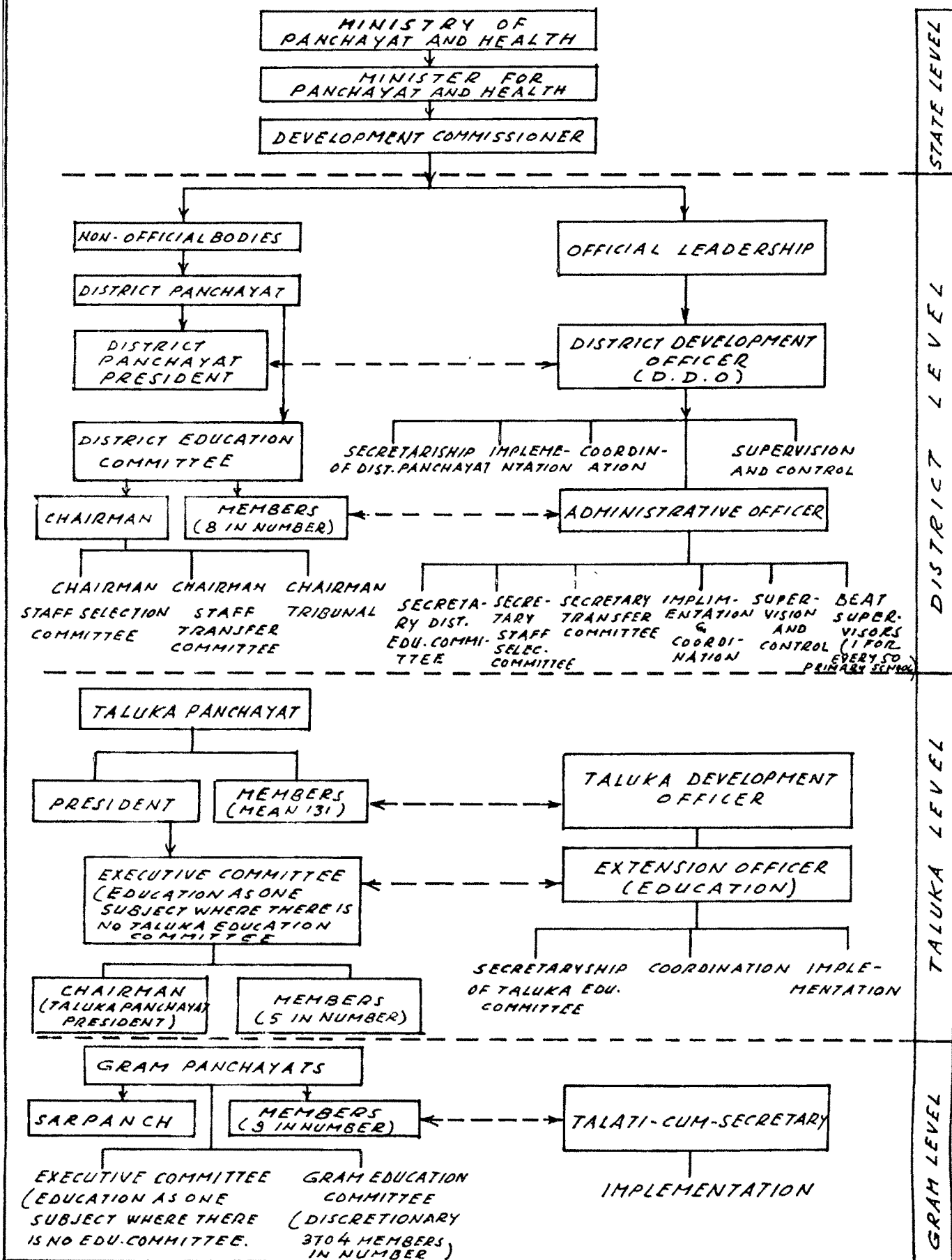
The Sarpanch of a Gram Panchayat and its Upa-Sarpanch were first elected by its members from amongst themselves. But, in this respect the Gujarat Model came to be altered in the Amendment Act, 1973. This came as a result of the recommendation of the High Power Committee on the Panchayati Raj presided over by Shri Zeenabhai Darji (1973). The Committee's rationale was something like this.

The basic unit of the Panchayati Raj institutions is the Gram Sabha. The experience of running the Panchayati Raj institutions over a period of a decade reveals the sad fact that the basic unit of Panchayati Raj could not be made as active as it was desired. Even though it was provided in the rules under the Act that the meeting of the Gram Sabha should meet at least twice a year, but in reality

the Gram Sabha does not meet twice a year. In order to activate the Gram Sabha the Darji High Power Committee (1973) suggested two fundamental changes in the Gujarat Model in respect of the Gram Sabha and the electing agency of the Sarpanch of the Gram Panchayat. It provided that the annual budget of a Gram Panchayat is not open for incurring any expenditure unless it is presented and discussed and passed by the Gram Sabha. Secondly, the election of the Sarpanch of a Gram Panchayat members is now to be done by all the adults of the local village constituting the Gram Sabha. The points in favour of this change are : (a) It guards against the creation of any possible situation in which there is a rift between a Sarpanch and the members of the Gram Panchayat in which case the Sarpanch is likely to be put under undue pressure and tension and he cannot act independently and freely, (b) the motion of non-confidence in the Sarpanch should be entertained and considered not by the Gram Panchayat but by the Gram Sabha. This change has added to the importance and significance of the Gram Sabha and erected a possible wall of defence against any administrative impasse or insoluble situation.

The changed Gujarat model also provides a firm representation of the weaker sections of the society on the Panchayati Raj institutions at all the three levels. These weaker sections of the society that have received increased or

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firmer representation are women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

In the original Gujarat Model framed by the Gujarat Democratic Decentralisation Committee, functions in the sphere of primary education were delegated at all the three tiers. The functions in education delegated at each level were decided from the point of their appropriations, the importance attached to it in the general scheme of the Panchayati Raj and the resources in terms of men, material and finance available at each level. In the Gujarat model, the District Panchayats constitute a strong top tier having a role of leadership, supervision, control, and coordination assigned to it. The Gram Panchayat is a subordinate institution to the Taluka Panchayat and the Taluka Panchayat, in its turn, is a subordinate body to the District Panchayat. The District Panchayat being the key institution, some very important central and leading functions are delegated at that tier. For instance, the functions delegated at the district level are : (i) the preparation of Five Year Plans for the development of primary education within the district; (ii) the conduct of an educational survey of the district; (iii) maintenance of an adequate administrative, teaching and other staff required for the primary schools and other educational institutions under its control; (iv) sanctioning the schedules of staff required by the Taluka Panchayat in

respect of primary schools; (v) maintaining an adequate engineering establishment to guide the Taluka Panchayats and the Gram Panchayats for the construction of primary school buildings; (vi) publishing Annual Report on the progress of primary education and other educational activities in the district; (vii) carrying on propaganda in the district for the expansion and improvement of education in general and primary education in particular, etc.

In the Panchayati Raj system in Gujarat, the recruitment of primary school teachers is done at the district level by a statutory Staff Selection Committee. It consists of four members, viz., District Development Officer, District Education Officer, Principal of a Primary Teachers' Training College located at the district head quarters and the Administrative Officer. The new staff of primary teachers needed in a district is decided upon this way;

- (a) The Gram Panchayats resolve about the new schools to be opened in their villages. This resolution is sent to the Taluka Panchayat, which, after due consideration and endorsement, passes it on to the office of the Administrative Officer at the district level.
- (b) The Beat-Supervisors, during their visit to the village schools, collect enrolment figures from the schools and the additional enrolment likely to occur next year as a result of the School Census taken in the village.

- (c) The A.O. has also data about teachers who are going to retire from service next year.

On the basis of these data, the A.O. prepares a note on the new additional teachers needed in the primary schools within the district in the next academic year. He prepares a proposal for the consideration of the District Education Committee. After the proposal is accepted by the District Education Committee and a resolution is passed by the Committee specifying the number of primary teachers to be recruited, the A.O. advertises the vacant posts in newspapers and invited applications from the prospective candidates. The Staff Selection Committee recruits teachers on the basis of the interviews of the candidates who have applied for the advertised posts.

The issue of transfer of primary teachers has become one of the most trouble-spots in the Panchayati Raj system. It is a hard rock on which the ship of the Panchayati Raj (in regard to education) is likely to wreck. Primary Teachers are transferred in a way that creates a lot of inconvenience and discomfort to the community of teachers. Instances are on record when primary teachers were transferred because they refused to be agents of the members of the District Panchayat or its Education Committee; they gave or did not give bribes; they were to be punished (in such a way that a husband (teacher) was separated from his wife(teacher),

a sick teacher is transferred to a place where there is no hospital or the placements of women teachers are done at lonely places, in backward areas and in tribal habitations. In order to deal with such problems the Darji High Power Committee had suggested that the transfers of teachers should be decided by the district level Teacher Transfer Committee consisting of the Chairman of the District Education Committee, two members of the Education Committee belonging to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, a woman member of the Education Committee, District Development Officer and the Administrative Officer. For deciding the transfer of teachers, certain office administrative concepts are generally developed. Such operative concepts in the Panchamahals District are as under :

- (a) If a teacher has worked at one place for a long time over a number of years;
- (b) The Beat-Supervisor's adverse report of unsatisfactory work in the school against a teacher;
- (c) If a teacher has become a source of trouble to his headmaster and to the local village community;
- (d) Rise or fall in school enrolment at one place as evidenced from the school attendance register;
- (e) The rule that every primary teacher should serve at least for some years in schools situated in backward areas;
- (f) Application made by a teacher for a transfer to

his native place or a place of his choice if that application is duly piloted through the Beat Supervisor and the Taluka Development Officer;

- (g) If duly supported by leading local community leaders.

The question of teachers to be deputed for training and the inservice teacher education of the teachers in position is decided at the district level.

A Committee to conduct examinations at the primary school level functions at the district level. This District Examination Committee is constituted in cooperation with the District Primary School Teacher Association. The headmasters of the Taluka Primary Schools are represented on this Committee. The Beat Supervisors also extend their help and guidance to this Committee. This Committee sets question papers for examinations* to be conducted for all the Primary schools within the district. The examinations are administered with the help of the headmasters of the respective primary schools.

The Student Welfare Services are also administered from the district level. The Development Commissioner in the State provides grant-in-aid to districts to support their schemes of free mid-day meals. The provision of supply of school materials to needy and poor children is also decided upon at the district level. This student welfare

service can be provided only if the District Panchayat makes budgetary provision for it and if the State Government sanctions its supporting grant for it. Taluka Panchayats are then given appropriate grants to provide free supply of writing or reading materials as well as school uniforms to poor and needy children.

The inspection and supervision of primary schools is divided at the district and taluka levels. These powers lie with the Chairman of the District Education Committee, the members of the Education Committee, the Administrative Officer, and District Development Officer. The Schedule II Under Section III(2) of the Gujarat Panchayats Act, 1961 (as amended upto 30th November, 1973), also lays down as a function of the Taluka Panchayat "to supervise the working of all primary schools and of such other educational institutions under the control of the district as that Panchayat may decide from time to time"⁸. Thus, though supervision and inspection of primary schools is mainly the responsibility of the Beat Supervisors assigned to the Taluka level, powers in this respect are also given to the district level officers and District Education Committee Chairman and the other members.

The Taluka Panchayat is the second and intermediate tier, when the Gujarat Panchayats Act, 1961 was framed, it carried a provision to constitute Taluka level Education Committee.

This happened because the Gujarat Democratic Decentralisation Committee⁹ (1960) had recommended that one of the five Standing Committees that should be constituted in the Taluka Panchayat should be of Education. The Taluka Panchayat Standing Committee on Education would "attend to duties regarding primary education, social education, social welfare and the welfare of women and children"¹⁰. The Committee further specified in its Report that the Standing Committee on Education be entrusted with duties and responsibilities pertaining to the establishment and maintenance of primary schools; preparing and implementing the programme of constructing primary school buildings; enforcing the provisions of the State Law on Compulsory Primary Education; conducting and encouraging libraries, reading rooms and other cultural activities; and assisting the propagation of pre-primary education. In the then Gujarat Model, these functions were assigned at the Taluka level because they could be best performed at that level. But the Taluka level Standing Committee on Primary Education could not function satisfactorily. It gave rise to many mal-practices and indulged in casteism, communalism, nepotism and to many social, economic and educational evils. Therefore, the Taluka level education Committees were abolished under the Gujarat Panchayats Amendment Act, 1968.

The removal of the Standing Committee on Education

from the Taluka level Panchayat has constituted a major change in the Gujarat Model. This has been the case not as a result of a major shift in the ideology of the Panchayati Raj in education. This happened because the leadership in the Taluka Education Committee became an easy prey to uneducational, unsocial and unethical forces that emerged from the leadership itself and resulted in its many sad and degenerating acts of nepotism, communalism, casteism, corruption and power craziness. The Taluka-level leadership in education misused their office and powers so much so that a strong anti-movement against them developed which ultimately culminated in the abolition of the Taluka Education Committee. But the functions delegated at the Taluka level have been retained at that level. These functions have been now discharged by the Executive Committee of the Taluka Panchayat, that is to say, by the leadership in that Panchayat. That leadership was expected to behave, and the evidence suggests that it has behaved, in a more responsible manner. Perhaps, the Taluka Development Officer has been able to have a better impact on the leadership at this level, or perhaps there develops at that level better climate and tempo, or now it is enjoined that the Taluka Panchayat Committee will function in the sphere of education within the orbit of the detailed policy determined by the Jilla Education Committee for the entire district.

The grassroot level of the Panchayati Raj is the Gram Panchayat. The Gujarat Democratic Decentralisation Committee (1960) had suggested in its report to constitute an Education Committee in the Gram Panchayat. This the Committee did because it believed firmly that the democratic body like the Gram Panchayat provides an opportunity in shouldering the responsibilities in conducting administration. The gram or the village should be the fundamental unit of democracy. If local initiative, interest and dynamism are generated at the gram level and if the local level leadership become active and pushing, four important services in universal primary education can be better performed, viz., (a) provision of land and accommodation for the opening of new primary schools necessitated by the accelerated pace of expansion, (b) enforcement of provisions of the State law on compulsory primary education, (c) provision of some student welfare services in the local primary schools and (d) exercising well intentioned and close supervision on the running of the local village school. In this perspective, the Gujarat Panchayat Act, 1961, has specified functions to be performed by the Gram Panchayats, some of which are as follows:¹¹

- To spread education; ,
- To assist the introduction of primary education as planned by the State;
- To provide school-buildings and necessary equipment for education;

- To provide pre-primary education and child-welfare activities;
- To repair and maintain school buildings;
- To offer financial assistance to needy students;
- To celebrate school functions and festivals; and
- To provide, if possible, for light meals.

The Gujarat Democratic Decentralisation Committee¹² suggested that the Education Committee should be one of the three Standing Committees in the Gram Panchayat to be constituted from among the members of the Panchayats. The Section 81 of the Gujarat Panchayats Act, 1961 had provided for constituting a three man Education Committee for performing functions pertaining to literacy drives including pre-primary education, primary education, adult education and other cultural activities. But the way in which the Gram Panchayats were constituted and they functioned, the Gram Shikshan Samiti came to be voluntary, (because the formation of Committees in the Gram Panchayat was made discretionary), and only a few Gram Panchayats constituted their separate Education Committees, and in a majority of cases, the functions delegated to the Gram Panchayat in the sphere of education came to be performed by the Gram Panchayat itself. Thus, the leadership of the Sarpanch and Upa-sarpanch became crucial in performing the assigned functions at the Village Panchayat level. The leadership in the Gram Panchayat, in many

cases, did not come upto the level of public expectation. It unfortunately faltered in the enforcement of the compulsory education law of the State; it also faltered in the sphere of providing student welfare services; it did very little to improve school buildings, school teaching aids and materials, and to raise school instructional quality. The Zeenabhai Darji Samiti (1973) had, therefore, to recommend, even after a decade of the introduction of the Panchayati Raj in Gujarat, the following :

"The School headmaster should prepare a list of local families which do not send their children of compulsory education age to school, and make a formal report about it to the Gram Panchayat. Then the responsibility of enforcement devolves upon the Sarpanch. If he fails to persuade the defaulting parents to send their children of the school age to school, then it would be the responsibility of the Talati-cum-Secretary of the Gram Panchayat to process the complaint as provided in the Compulsory Education Law"¹³.

The Gujarat Government¹⁴ has claimed that its model of the Panchayati Raj has certain distinctive features; some of the salient features of the Panchayati Raj administration in education are as under :

- (1) The creation of a powerful executive body at the district level.
- (2) The conferment of a special status on the Education Committee at district level;
- (3) The creation of Staff Selection, Recruitment, Transfer Discipline Committees, Tribunal for appeal, etc. at District level.

- (4) Development of definite criteria for effecting transfer of primary school teachers from the district level;
- (5) Firm representation given to the weaker sections of the society on the District Education Committee, and on Committees for recruiting teachers and effecting their transfer from the district level;
- (6) Delegation of functions to each of the three tiers appropriate to their respective role, resources and competence;
- (7) Introduction of the element of direct election of leadership in the Panchayati Raj bodies at the Taluka Panchayat level and Gram/Nagar Panchayat levels;
- (8) Provision of direction and supervision and indirect control of administration of primary education by the District Development Officer at district level and the Taluka Development Officer at the Taluka level;
- (9) Disability imposed on the District Panchayat President to become the Chairman of the District Education Committee;
- (10) Provision of Student Welfare Services like free supply of mid-day meals to all school children, of school uniforms and writing and reading materials to poor children under certain prescribed conditions.
- (11) Better provision of financial resources and conditions for education, viz.,

- (a) Ten percent of the united resources of the Gram Panchayat to be reserved for education;
 - (b) Levy of education cess by the Taluka Panchayat at the rate of 10 paise in every rupee of the land revenue to be ear-marked for primary education;
 - (c) Allocation by the District Panchayat of 8 paise in every rupee of the income from the Local Fund Cess levied by the District Panchayat for the purpose of primary education;
 - (d) Datum capitation grant to the District Education Committee by the State Government at the rate of 100 percent on the expenditure incurred on non-educational staff and Rs.2 per every child in attendance in school (in such a way that the total grant thus received does not exceed two-thirds of the total expenditure incurred on primary education by the District Education Committee;
 - (e) Full grant-in-aid is given for at least 80 percent average daily attendance of the enrolled school-going children in general areas, and for 60 percent average daily attendance in backward areas;
 - (f) Yearly calculation of Datum Capitation Grant.
- (12) Building grant at the rate of 50 percent on approved schedule of rates for school building.
 - (13) Genuine transfer of powers, functions and duties in the development sphere within the district.
 - (14) Built-in scheme for further devolution of powers and dispersal of authority;
 - (15) Setting up of Development Commissioner's organisation at the State level for guiding, supervising and controlling the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Such is briefly the Gujarat Model of the Panchayati Raj.



1.4 The Gujarat Model in Operation

As stated earlier, a full decade has passed since the Panchayati Raj institutions were first created in Gujarat State in 1963. It would be fruitful to have an over-view of the functioning of the Panchayati Raj institutions in Gujarat and the general impact it has created on rural communities and on democratisation as well as development processes brought into action by the great experiment in democratic decentralisation. The broad over-view that will be presented here, is based on the reports of the official committees appointed by the State Government, articles that appear in the Journal, 'Panchayati Raj', an organ of the Gujarat State Panchayat Parishad, news items that appear occasionally in the Gujarati Press and the opinions expressed by the local community leaders, some members and leaders of the Panchayati Raj bodies, government officers, supervisors and inspectors of primary schools and teachers and headmasters of schools under the Panchayati Raj administration in Gujarat and research workers in the field.

Though the Panchayati Raj system has been in vogue in the State for the last ten years or so, there does not seem to be unanimity and clarity of thinking on the concept of the Panchayati Raj among political leaders, government officers, rural community leaders and rural people. There appears to be some conceptual confusion. In the speeches of political leaders

and of the State Ministers that are often reported in the Gujarati Press, on the Panchayati Raj, an apparent attempt is to paint the Panchayati Raj System as a charter of rural self-government. Such speeches and writings have created among rural people a feeling resulting into strong expectations that in the Panchayati Raj, the leaders and representatives of rural communities at the Gram, Taluka and the District levels would enjoy maximum autonomy in decision-making in all that concern their community life and development, and that they would have supervision, powers and control of their resources in men and money. The politicians' eloquence in evoking people's capacity to shoulder the burden of self-government, bear real responsibility and discharge honestly and effectively the delegated authority and power to people's elected representatives. The conceptual image that the politicians unscripulously and inadvertently tend to build up in the minds of rural people do not harmonise and confirm with the real image of the Panchayati Raj that emerges from the letter of the law on the Panchayati Raj. There has been an alarming dimension of divergence between the concept of the Panchayati Raj built up by the political leaders and politicians in the minds of the expectant rural people and the actual concept embodied in the letter of the Law. The latter concept is very much more limited than the former concept. In the legal concept, the Panchayati Raj turns out to be a mere extension of the State Government's administrative machinery

to undertake plans and programmes of rural community; the Panchayati Raj has not any independent role of its own, but it is called upon to perform just an agency role to administer rural development services under the direction and supervision of the bureaucracy - the Panchayati Raj institutions are not, in real sense, units of rural local government. It may be that in the initial period of the creation of the Panchayati Raj institutions at the three levels, the assignment of an agency role to it was unavoidable, but, as more experience of working the Panchayati Raj institutions became available to rural people, the agency role should have been gradually modified so as to involve in it a larger element of self-government. Theoretically, this next step of transformation of the Panchayati Raj institutions from playing an agency role to operating as units of rural local government could not be taken because the Panchayati Raj leaders of rural community could not acquit themselves as efficient, honest, public minded, self-less, sacrificing and effective rulers. A number of Panchayats continued to be mismanaged. Concrete instances of mismanagement have been brought to public light which show that there are several lapses in the administration of the Panchayati Raj institutions by the leaders of rural community - of course some panchayats in Gujarat are happy exception. This has tended the State Government to lose slowly, and the public fast, confidence in the new system. And, therefore, the agency role

of the Panchayati Raj has not only continued, but the trend is towards more direct and comprehensive direction and supervision, amounting to a larger element of control. A thinking has begun to generate that there should be internal checks and balances to be built in the system itself, so that the mismanagement by rural community leaders be detected and controlled in time and that the rural community leadership in the Panchayats bodies should be properly oriented to public service and trained in the sphere of leadership acts, organisation, decision-making, activating members of the Panchayati bodies and generating interest, enthusiasm and dynamism in the local community. But the gap between the public image of the Panchayati Raj as conjured by the political leaders and politicians and the image as reflected in the letter of the law continues. The crisis of expectations among rural people leading to frustration and disillusionment and loss of faith in their leadership and in Government continues. It appears for certain, at least in Gujarat, that the concept of the Panchayati Raj will continue to operate in the limited frame of the performance of agency role rather than real units of rural self-government as originally visualised by the Balwant¹rai Mehta Study Team on democratic decentralisation or even by the Gujarat Democratic Decentralisation Committee. It would be better if efforts are directed by the State Government to rid the average villager's mind clear of the false expectations

that are being entertained that the Panchayat is an all-purpose organisation which can, and will, find a solution of all his needs and problems in near future - he should be made to realise the fact that at the best, the Panchayati Raj bodies at all the three levels are primarily organizally linked up units of development administration. This should be done even at the initial transitory risk of frustrating and sapping the enthusiasm of the villager for the Panchayati Raj Movement. This would eventually lead to better understanding of the limitations of the Panchayati Raj institutions, A research report concludes

"It would be better, therefore, if Panchayat members are permitted to raise all their felt problems on the floor of the Panchayat. It should be made clear that the Panchayat itself would not be able to tackle these problems, but would, at the best draw the attention of the authorities to them"¹⁵

The upshot of the exposition done so far on the hiatus existing between the political image and the legal image of the Panchayati Raj is that if better results are to be expected from this new system, the statutory institutional image of the Panchayati Raj is made to resemble as closely as possible with the popular image that rural people have of it. Village Community should be made to realise that the Panchayati Raj institutions are primarily a development mechanism and their purpose is to make up, as best as they can, the inadequate deficiencies revealed in the Community Development Programmes.

A feeling has been engendered that early and effective steps should be taken to guard against the degeneration of the Panchayati institutions from development oriented service mechanism to mere power mechanism. A likely danger in this respect is inherent in the machinery because the Panchayati Raj itself constitutes a decentralised democracy and in decentralised democracy power devolves from bureaucracy to popular leaders. The salient fact that the Panchayati Raj will be a power mechanism has got to be accommodated and tolerated to some extent, but care has to be also taken to see that besides being a power mechanism, the Panchayati Raj institutions become more vigorous development mechanism and that there should be no inherent contradiction in the Panchayati Raj becoming both a power mechanism to some extent and a development mechanism to a larger extent - the equilibrium has to be maintained between the two. This has become a major problem with the leadership in the Panchayati Raj institutions in Gujarat State,

This leads to the question of leadership in the Panchayat institutions. The leaders at the three levels are the Sarpanchas and Upa-Sarpanchas of the Gram Panchayats, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Nagar Panchayats, the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Taluka Panchayats and Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the District Education Committees. These leaders are elected by the respective Panchayats.

(a) Sarpancha : The Sarpanchas of the Gram Panchayats are, under the 1973 Amendment of the Gujarat Panchayats Act (1961), now elected by the Gram Sabha and not by the members of the Gram Panchayats as was the case prior to the 1973 Amendment Act. This change was effected as the Zeenabhai Darji High Power Committee had recommended to that ¹⁶ and. The recommendation has already been referred to earlier. The reasons for making the election of the Sarpanchas to be done by the Gram Sabhas and not by their respective Gram Panchayats can be summarised briefly as follows :

1. An urgent need was felt to make the institution of Gram Sabha a vigorous, dynamic and vital organ of democratic functioning. Thinkers like Jayaprakash Narayan (the eminent Sarvodaya leader) perceived the relationship between the Gram Panchayat and the Gram Sabha as that which obtains between a Ministry and the State Legislature.
2. When Sarpanchas are elected by the members of the Gram Panchayats, they naturally have to depend upon the votes of these members. This vote-giving power of members of Gram Panchayats was often misused; it was used to exert undue pressures on the Sarpanchas to do things which they did not want. The experience over a decade about the functioning of the Gram Panchayats shows that often the Sarpanchas desisted from showing any enthusiasm to enforce the punishment clauses of the Gujarat Compulsory Education Act, 1961. They only out of fear from losing support from the members of the Panchayats who either themselves did not like

that the rural parents be compelled to send their children of the school age to school and take punitive measures against the defaulting guardians of the non-attending children of their own electorates, did not want the vigorous enforcement of the law. The weak enforcement of the Compulsory Education Act has continued to be a major source of educational wastage and stagnation as well as inadequate enrolment of children belonging to the weaker sections of the society like women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. It was, therefore, deemed vital to leave the election of the Sarpanch in the hands of the local adult village population itself rather than to their elected representatives to the Gram Panchayats.

3. In the past, when some differences occurred between the Sarpancha on the one hand and the majority of the members of the Gram Panchayat, a situation of crisis was created, as the Sarpanch was threatened by the members with a motion of no-confidence tabled against him. In such situations, either the Sarpanch had to be ready to go out of office or submit to the pressure of the majority group in the Gram Panchayat. The leadership at the Gram level could not function according to the dictates of his conscience and in the best interest of the people. It had to toe the line proposed by the majority of the members or some members who are vocal, pushing, and hardhitting. There was nothing wrong if the members exerted pressure on the Sarpancha in the Public interest. But in many cases the pressure was exercised to serve the interest of some individual or groups; often factors and forces of caste, cultural or religious group, political party affiliation, economic exploitation, cornering of power etc., played their

ugly role. It was, therefore, deemed necessary to give authority to the Gram Sabha to elect its Sarpanch and exercise power to pass a vote of no confidence against him if the leader does not serve the local community according to its desires and expectations.

4. The system of election of the Sarpanch by the Gram Sabha will result in enlisting the support and confidence of the rural people for their leader.
5. It opens up a possibility of having a courageous and strong leadership at the village level;
6. This system will also force the leader- the Sarpanch to go out often to and among the village people especially the weaker sections and minority sections of the community.
7. In villages where the population of scheduled tribes or scheduled castes is in majority, the emergence of leadership from these weaker sections becomes most likely. This is necessary to elevate these communities culturally and politically.
8. In villages, often strife and struggle for leadership develop between two powerful local groups or parties. In this situation, often strong pressure is put on the elected representatives of the weaker sections of the rural community. Sometimes such members are bought through back hand devices such as by distribution of money to them and/or assurance to them for doing some out of the way service to the community they represent. In the changed situation of a Gram electing its Sarpanch, this possibility fades away to a larger extent.

9. In the past, there was a considerable scope for the leadership to persuade, win over or intimidate members to serve their good or bad ends; and also there was scope for the weak and inactive leadership to get elected. In the new set up, there is hardly any scope for this type of leadership to emerge.

The Zeenabhai Darji Committee's recommendation mainly paved the way for this reform in constituting a strong and able leadership at the village level : It observed :

"After examining the merits and demerits of both the methods of electing the Sarpanchas, we have come to the conclusion that the direct method of election of the Sarpanch is better. The principal flaw in the direct method of election which is being pointed out is that in the event of a conflict between a Sarpanch and his Panchayat, an administrative impasse is created. But, as the Study Group under the Chairmanship of Shri Sadikali appointed by the Rajasthan Government has pointed out, such administrative crisis hardly occurs. In Rajasthan, where the direct method of election is in vogue, not a single incident of such internal crisis has been reported. Therefore, the possibility of such a conflict and administrative crisis is more imaginary than real.¹⁷"

A Rajasthan Study¹⁸ on Panchayati Raj showed that (a) in Gram Panchayats, the Sarpanchas have come to amass around him so much of weight that the members of the Panchayat have automatically paled into insignificance; (b) the trend is one of the higher castes securing a larger number of offices at the level of Sarpanchship than at the level of Panchship. (Conversely, the trend implies that the representation of lower castes at the level of Sarpanchas is far

less than that at the level of panchas); (c) Political parties and rival candidates of office at the Block Panchayat level make active efforts to get their supporters elected to various Gram Panchayats as Sarpanchs, and (d) the party or ideological considerations do not play any part, and even when they do, their role is at best subsidiary.

Joshi's¹⁹ study on the administration of primary education under the Panchayati Raj in South Gujarat (Surat, Valsad and Bharuch districts) reveals a little better picture at the Gram Panchayat level. Though the caste-h²ier caste- is a dominant factor in the election of the Sarpanchas; quite often the best persons in the village either offer themselves for the office of the Sarpancha or the local people persuade such persons to stand for election and they elect them. However, the percentage of politically active persons becoming Sarpanch of the local Panchayat is also appreciably high. In such a situation, better leadership potential either aligns with the leadership with political affiliation (i.e. it gives tacit support to it) or it prefers to be in the background. Even the leadership with political affiliation that has come to the forefront in South Gujarat comes from the affluent and traditionally higher echelons of rural society. The backward classes in South Gujarat, as was the case reported in the Rajasthan study, have been hardly able to come up to the position of leadership even though they have numerical strength in the

local population.

It may be said about the leadership of Gram Panchayat level in Gujarat that persons high up in social hierarchy and economically prosperous claim leadership. Such persons have now learnt to wear the political cap of either the Shashak Congress or the Sanstha Congress. Though persons who are accepted as leaders by the village community have primarily their own individual image and strength, factors like caste, wealth and political alignment also play a supporting role.

Joshi (1973) who analysed the data of the randomly sampled 82 Gram Panchayats of South Gujarat found that no Sarpanch^a was illiterate, 71.73 percent were either primary IV class or primary VII class passed, 23.17 percent S.S.C. Examination passed and 5.10 were even college educated. This definitely shows that in recent years the educational qualifications of the leadership at the Gram Panchayat have been going up. This is a welcome development. Educated Sarpanchas and Upa-sarpanchas are likely to play a much better role of understanding and service than the un-educated or little educated leadership in villages.

In the present investigation, it is found that a good number of the Sarpanchas are either literate or educated upto primary Class IV and in some cases primary Class VII.

In Joshi's study, it was found that most of the Sarpanchas belonged to the age-group of 30 to 40 years, whereas in the present investigation it is revealed that a majority of the leadership at the village level belongs to the age-group of 40 to 60 years. In the absence of data from other parts of the State, no generalisation about the age of leadership at the Gram Panchayat level is possible. But one may hazard a guess that in the advanced districts younger leadership below 40 years has begun to emerge, whereas in backward districts with majority of population of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, the leadership is an elderly one.

From all available evidences, both from research and empirical, one may observe that the educational equipment of Sarpanchas has been improving in Gujarat State; the leadership belonging to the money-lending class has been definitely on decline, but high caste still is in a more favourable and dominating position and to that extent the socialistic pattern of society, which the ruling Shashak Congress Party has been trying to usher in, is delayed; the caste or community consciousness among the leadership has been also significant. The leadership has not been quite dynamic and enthusiastic in universalising primary education quantitatively and much less in improving the quality of primary schools and improving instruction in them. A large majority of primary schools in Gujarat State continues to be housed in school buildings which

have neither aesthetic wear and look nor are they adequately equipped with minimum furniture and instructional materials and aids. The extent of wastage and stagnation provides a useful index for the qualitative status of primary schools. It was pointed out in the document "Perspective Plan of Gujarat: 1974-1984" that the wastage in case of girls in Gujarat State is around 71 percent²¹ (and it is not substantially very low in the case of boys also); the Annual Report on the Progress of Education in Gujarat State for the year 1970-71 records the fact that out of the total 38,493 pupils who appeared in the State level Primary School Leaving Examination conducted at the conclusion of study in Class VII, 16,588 or about 43.1 percent passed, that is to say, the stagnation was to the high extent of 56.9 percent.²²

(b) Taluka Panchayat : After 1968, as a result of the amendment of the Gujarat Panchayats Act, 1961, the administration of primary education at the Taluka level is entrusted to the Executive Committee of the Taluka Panchayat. Therefore, the leadership at the Taluka level is with the Presidents and Vice Presidents of the Taluka Panchayat in each district. The President and Vice-President of each Taluka Panchayat are elected by its elected members from amongst themselves. Prior to 1968, when the Sarpanchas of the Gram Panchayats in a Taluka were ex-officio members of the Taluka Panchayat, the prospective candidates for the office of Taluka President

played a crucial role in getting their supporters elected as Sarpanchas. This tended to make some Taluka Panchayat Presidents very powerful and dominant. It further led to division and groupism in the membership of the Taluka Panchayat. The Rajasthan Study makes the following observation in this respect:

"Panchayati Raj can thus be said to have aggravated village factionalism. It may also be pointed out that the opposing factions in a Panchayat Samiti generally centre around one or two leading personalities. The party or ideological considerations do not play any part, and even when they do, their role is at best subsidiary. This is reflected in the ceaseless shifts in the pattern of group loyalties and realignment of factions.... Not merely the pendulum of group loyalties swings but also the group leaders themselves move from one party to another. They are seldom tightly bound to any party."²³

The Rajasthan study also underscores the fact that group alignments cut across, 'caste ties', and power alignments take shape on the basis of interest rather than caste, though the latter is also exploited wherever possible.²⁴

In Gujarat, too, factionalism is found in the Taluka Panchayat and there is rivalry between two or more personalities. There are social (caste) and economic pressure groups. Sometimes cultural pressure groups also do exist. But largely the pressure groups are political. Affiliation to different political parties affects the group loyalties and their actual functioning in the interest of the people. The leadership at

the Taluka level often works according to the directives from the State level political leadership. This aggravates the leadership acts further and it is the community that is the sufferer. The clashes between dominant political parties within a Taluka Panchayat also make it very difficult for the Taluka level leadership to perform leadership acts in the best interest of the rural communities.

In the study on 'Problems of Rural Change' done by Gore (1973), some interesting facts are revealed about village and Taluka levels leadership in the country. His conclusion is that caste continues to play a dominant role. Gore observes :

"Even in cases where an economically dominant caste is not numerically preponderant, its political sway in the Panchayat may not be obviated because the patron-client relationship develops loyalties across caste line. The clients of lower castes are attached to the patrons of dominant caste in various ways, as tenants, debtors, and servants. Such vertical ties across caste prevent, to some extent, polarisation of higher and lower castes. Nevertheless, polarisation of higher and lower castes cannot be ruled out".²⁵

Even in Talukas where the lower caste is high up in population, but low in elements of economic dominance, it has little chance to succeed against the accumulating economic pressure exercised by the higher caste. The competition does take place between the high caste and the low caste in respect of getting dominance in the Taluka Panchayat by holding political power. This competition sometimes degenerates into

bitter quarrels as is evident from press reports and it eventually sometimes ends in violent physical clashes. The houses of lower castes are burnt, their men and women folk are physically assaulted, the crops in their fields are burnt and communication with them is broken. Under such a situation for the lower caste to wield political power or assume leadership at the Gram or Taluka level becomes difficult if not an utter impossibility.

Because of such an interplay of dominant and conflicting cultural, political, social and economic factors, the Taluka Panchayat leadership is not able to do much in the matter of social education of the people, especially in cultivating a new outlook, among the people to make them self-reliant, industrious and co-operation minded as was stipulated in the Gujarat Panchayats Act, 1961. The performance of the Taluka level leadership is somewhat good in construction of school buildings for primary schools but the same cannot be said about the establishment and maintenance of primary schools at a reasonably satisfactory level of quality. It has not endeavoured sincerely and vigorously enough to be effective in assisting educational activities of the Gram Panchayats and Nagar Panchayats within the Taluka. Its behaviour in the enforcement of the provisions of the Gujarat Compulsory Primary Education Act, 1961 has been lukewarm and more propagandist than activated by a real desire to spread good

qualitative primary education on a universal basis in the Taluka. There has been little achievement registered in the field of propagation of pre-primary education. Its performance in conducting and encouraging libraries, reading rooms and other cultural activities has been also marginal.

(c) Jilla Panchayat : One distinguishing factor of the Panchayati Raj in Gujarat State is the creation of a powerful executive body at the district level. It has, on an average, 50 members, consisting of elected and associate members. A Jilla Panchayat has four times the number of full-fledged voting members as the number of Talukas in the district.²⁶ Formerly, all Presidents of Taluka Panchayats were ex-officio members of the Parishad. But this method of indirect election and ex-officio membership was abolished as a result of the recommendation of the Zeenabhai Darji Committee (1973) for reasons of ills of indirect election in the Panchayati Raj bodies discussed earlier. In the Amendment 1973 of the Gujarat Panchayats Act, 1961, only two categories of membership for the Jilla Panchayat, viz., elected and associate are provided. The leader of the Jilla Panchayat - the President - (as well as Vice-President) is elected by its elected members from amongst themselves. A distinguishing feature of the Amendment 1973²⁷ is that the specified number of seats in the Jilla Panchayat is reserved for the Scheduled Castes on the basis of the same proportion as the population of the scheduled

castes in the district bears to the total population of the district. The same also holds true about the reserved seats for the scheduled tribes. Women also have reserved seats ranging from 6 to 10 depending upon the total seats in the Panchayat. This development is significant as it opens up a possibility for leadership to emerge from the weaker sections of the society.

Section 131 of the Panchayats Act provides that a Jilla Parishad shall constitute an Education Committee for performing the functions and duties delegated to it under the Act. For the purpose of the present investigation, the composition of the Education Committee is of particular significance as the leadership in education at the district level is elected from the members of the Education Committee. The Act provides that the Education Committee shall consist of 10 members, if the total number of elected members of the Jilla Parishad is not more than 39, and 12 members, if the total number of elected members is more than 39. A significant fact is that higher educational qualifications are now prescribed for the members of the Education Committee to be selected by the Jilla Panchayat from among the qualified voters in the district. Section 113(3) (iii) provides the following :

(A) Selected from the Jilla Panchayat

- (a) In the case of a Committee having 10 members, 2 persons, and in the case of a Committee having 12 members, 3 persons, having not less than 5 years teaching experience in an educational institution imparting primary, secondary, higher or vocational

- (b) One person who, being a graduate of any university established by law, is an educationist;
- (c) One person who having teaching experience of not less than 10 years is an educationist;
- (d) One person belonging to a scheduled caste;
- (e) One woman;
- (f) Where the population of the scheduled tribes in the district exceeds 5 percent of the total population of the district, one person belonging to the scheduled tribes.

It will be seen from the above that higher educational qualifications and teaching experience are prescribed for all the members of the Education Committee other than the woman member and those members belonging to the scheduled castes and tribes. The number of such members does not exceed three in a total of 10 to 12 members. It is also prescribed in the Act that the Education Committee shall consist of 10 to 12 persons elected by the Jilla Panchayat from amongst its members depending upon whether its total strength is 39 or more. One Associate Member on the Education Committee is also elected by the Presidents of the unauthorised municipalities in the revenue district, from among themselves. When higher qualifications are prescribed for members of the Education Committee, it goes without saying that the leadership that will be elected by those members from among themselves will, too, have higher educational qualifications.

Before an attempt is made to discuss the leadership of the chairman of the District Education Committee, some important facts about the relationship of the Education Committee with the Jilla Samiti will be briefly touched upon. Firstly, the Education Committee is one of the five mandatory committees of the Jilla Panchayat. Secondly, its term of office is co-extensive with the term of the Jilla Panchayat. Thirdly, the bulk of its membership is drawn from the parent Panchayat. Fourthly, after it is carved out from the Panchayat it acquires an autonomous character, that is to say, it is neither dependent upon nor controlled by the parent body. Section 131(10) provides that the Education Committee shall in the discharge of its functions, exercise all the powers and discharge all the duties of the Jilla Panchayat. In this respect it retains the characteristics of the former District School Board. Fifthly, it has its own budget and it has authority to pass it itself, but its budget has got to be approved by the Jilla Panchayat. Eight paise out of every 50 paise of Local Fund Cess received by the Jilla Panchayat are earmarked for primary education. Sixthly, the Chairman of the Education Committee goes out of office, if a motion of no confidence is carried on by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the total ~~number~~ of the members of the Education Committee. Seventhly, ~~its~~ resolutions are implemented by its Administrative Officer, who is a Government Officer of Class II Service Cadre. The A.O. is largely the administrative and controlling

authority. Eighthly, the President of the Jilla Panchayat cannot hold two leadership positions simultaneously. Ninthly, the Chairman of the Education Committee is entitled to an honorarium of Rs. 200/- per month, to the use of a rent-free residence in the headquarters of the Parishad and to travelling allowances while touring on public business.

Joshi had studied the leadership at the Jilla Panchayat level and of the Education Committee in South Gujarat. His following observation throws significant light on the leadership at the district level:

"In the election of the Presidents of Jilla Panchayats, the political factor - the membership of a political party, has become a dominant factor. All the Presidents of South Gujarat are the members of the Shashak Congress. They are strong individuals as leaders having a considerable popular following. Perhaps they were given tickets to fight Panchayat election by the ruling Congress Party on the strength of their strong popular support in the district. Caste did not play a very prominent part in their election, though it had some effect. They all belong to the farming occupational group. They also belong to economically fairly well off category - at least the high middle income group. They have also a good and long record of public service work. They have usually a dominant-dictating type of personality. They seem to be habituated to get their voice heard and orders - suggestions obeyed. They seem to be conscious of their power and usefulness for the continuation in office of the political party in power. They are honest and frank to the extent to which a seasoned politician can be honest and frank."28

That the leadership at the district level panchayats has strong political overtones had been revealed by several studies done on the Panchayati Raj System. This could be seen

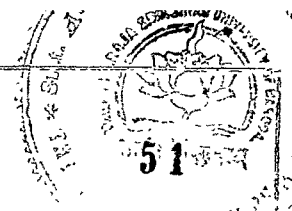
from the Chapter II on review of researches. The intrusion of party politics in the activities of the Panchayati institutions, has become a taken - for - granted normal practice. This has been vehemently opposed by the Sarvodaya leaders like Jaya Prakash Narayan.²⁹ However, it has continued. In a study on Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh, Myron Weiner³⁰ has observed that once the powers of the local bodies are increased, the politicians cannot abstain from participating in local Government politics without committing political suicide. This renowned western scholar is of the opinion that those who argue, as many Gandhians did, that local bodies should be given more powers but that there should be no politics in the local bodies - whether involving political parties or castes or factions - were taking contradictory position. One of the fundamental laws in political science is that where there is power, there must be politics.

Joshi in his research referred to earlier has also studied the leadership in the Education Committee. His findings are that the leadership belongs largely to the advanced caste; it is in the hands of people who are either middle aged or old. He concludes that "this has brought to bear upon the administration of primary education matured judgement and comprehensive and searching thinking, but the decision-making on the whole is slow, lacking boldness, dynamism and breadth of outlook"³¹. Joshi Further adds that "the leadership

in the Jilla Shikshan Samiti is not very much self-centred or interested in furthering its own ends. The leaders are fairly well dynamic. The extent of caste-mindedness in them is not much. But they have a high degree of manoeuvring and scheming mentality. They are not quite well high up on the scale of sincerity of purpose and dedication to community welfare and work. They possess considerable leadership skills. They also have fairly good attitude to public service!³²

In brief, it appears from Joshi's study that the leadership at the level of District Education Committees in South Gujarat is not so much dependent upon the factor of caste, as there is more inter-caste alignments, but the dominant determination is the political affiliation. The leadership is more in the hands of middle-aged and old people. The persons who sit on Jilla Panchayats as members are younger than what used to be the case in the past, but they are not, by and large, democratically so vocal as to influence the decision-making by the Jilla Panchayat leadership. The top leadership is too strong and powerful to allow leadership at member-level to take a firm root in the democratic functioning and decision-making.

It has been revealed in the course of the present investigation on the Panchamahals District that in the Jilla Shikshan Samiti, 33.3 percent of the total members belong to the advanced caste, and the remaining 66.7 percent belong to the



backward castes and communities. Thus, in the Panchmahals District Shikshan Samiti, the backward caste is in a majority; 77.7 percent of the members belong to the age-group of 41 to 60 years; they have educational qualifications with 44.4 percent having primary education, 22.2 percent having secondary education and 33.4 percent having higher education; 66.6 percent of the members, coming from the trading community, claim themselves as social workers, and the remaining belong to the occupation of farming, management and household work; the majority of members belong to middle income group (44.4 percent) and low income group 33.3 percent. (This is understandable as the whole district is economically underdeveloped), and all the members of the Shikshan Samiti have strong political affiliations. (They are distributed over three strong political parties in Gujarat - 39 percent Sanstha Congress, 35 percent Shashak Congress and 26 percent Swatantra Party). From this composition of the membership of the District Education Committee, the Socio-economic and political background equipment and other demographic characteristics of the leadership in the Education Committee become evident. It is from the backward community; it belongs to higher middle age; it has received secondary education; it belongs to the trading community; it comes from the middle income group and he is an active worker of the Sanstha Congress Political party.

The leadership of the District Shikshan Samiti is important in another perspective. The Chairman of the Samiti is a member

of the important statutory Committees of (a) Staff Selection and Recruitment, (b) Teacher Transfer and (c) Tribunal. The functioning of these committees touches primary teachers on vital points. It is here that the leadership of the Chairman as well as members of the Shikshan Samiti has been brought under fierce criticism. The teacher community is, as a whole, unhappy with the role that the Panchayat leadership plays in all the three areas, particularly in respect of teacher transfer. The Zeenabhai Darji Samiti has also conceded to this fact. Strong representations were made to the Committee by primary teachers about the frequent and improper transfers made of teachers. The State Association of Primary Teachers had submitted a Memorandum to the Zeenabhai Committee to take away the administration of primary education from the Panchayats and recommend the constitution of an autonomous District School Board. These complaints about the malpractices and revengeful practices adopted by the leadership and members of the Shikshan Samiti are not new. They were frequently heard even in the days of District School Boards.

It is alleged that teachers are transferred at an inconvenient time of the year and to inconvenient places. This is done by way of spite or revenge on teachers who do not offer themselves for service to further the cause of the Chairman and members of the Shikshan Samiti. Not only that but allegations are also made that bribes are taken by these office

bearers to effect, and in some cases to cancel, the transfer. The non-conformist husband-teacher or wife-teacher is often separated from the home by effecting transfer of husband-teacher and wife-teacher at two different and distant places. Articles that at times appear in the 'Panchayati Raj', the mouth-piece of the Gujarat State Panchayat Parishad also expose the leadership in the Shikshan Samiti as indulging in dirty party politics, distributing patronage and favour to primary teachers by way of transfer to desired places and amassing wealth through bribes.

The Chairman of the Shikshan Samiti is also a member of the Tribunal which hears complaints of injustice and unfair play against the Administrative Officer, made by primary school teachers. Here, also many unsavoury observations are being made about the honesty, integrity and sense of justice and fairness of this leader.

As observed earlier, the role of leadership in Jilla Shikshan Samiti is crucial. The success of the efforts of the district towards expansion, development and enrichment of the primary education is dependent upon his leadership acts and behaviour, his sustained interest in all educational matters, his anxiety to improve facilities and quality in primary schools, his dynamism, integrity and human relationship to keep high the morale of the primary school teachers, and his

tactful dealing with all the officers who have more or less to do with the administration of primary education within the district. He has to be a well informed man so far as the needs and problems of universal, compulsory and free primary education for children in the age-group 6-14 are concerned. He has to take his colleagues on the Education Committee with him in the noble service-oriented task of better school and better primary education for all the children of school going age within his district. The Jilla Shikshan Samiti holds powers of direction, supervision and control of Taluka Panchayats in respect of the maintenance and development of primary schools and improvement of instruction being imparted in them. His leadership acts might affect the programme of expanding and/or improving the school plant, instructional materials and aids, pre-service and inservice education of primary teachers, introduction of Student Welfare Services in the primary schools of different talukas, creating a climate by generating necessary dynamism in Gram Panchayats for vigorous enforcement of compulsory primary education and making concentrated and imaginative efforts to enhance the resources for the education of the Panchayati institutions. As the budgets of the Taluka for primary education are to be approved by the District Shikshan Samiti, the leadership in the Samiti, can better influence the programme and efforts of the Taluka Panchayats within the district for adequate and qualitative primary education. In the last

decade of the Panchayati Raj in Gujarat, primary education has considerably made the head-way quantatively. For instance,³³ 97.70 percent of the total habitations in the State have facilities for primary education within their own boundary or within one mile walking distance from the home of children belonging to the age-group of 6-11; over 90.5 percent of children in the age-group of 6-10 and 45.0 percent of children in the age-group of 10-13 have been already brought into primary schools; 64.0 percent of girls of school-going age are enrolled in primary schools; the teacher-student ratio in primary schools has been brought down to 1 : 40 and over 87.7 percent of primary teachers are now trained. However, in the matter of the quality of education and the provision of student welfare services, still a long way is to be yet covered. During 1963-64 to 1966-67 at the lower primary stage (classes I to IV), the wastage percentages in the 19 districts of the State ranged for boys from 46.89 to 80.90 and for girls from 45.39 to 89.21, and during 1964-64 to 1969-70 at the upper primary stage (classes I to VII), it ranged from 31.51 to 62.68 for boys and 6.50 to 63.90 for girls.

The following passage from Gujarat's Perspective Plan, 1974-1984 referred to earlier mention several factors responsible for the low enrolment in primary schools in several districts. These factors provide a direction and dimension of efforts to be directed by the Shikshan Samiti and its leadership in

each district.

"The main factor for low enrolment in several districts has been due to lower enrolment of girls and also lower enrolment of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and lower enrolment from economically backward classes and nomadic and migrating population. The second factor has been the degree of wastage and stagnation at different levels of primary education. The third factor is the lack of extending physical facilities, providing teachers, etc., owing to special backwardness of the areas. For example, a school exists between a group of villages and such schools are mostly one-teacher schools. This position is responsible for low enrolment as well as wastage and stagnation on account of the absence of the teacher or lack of attention by him. The next factor is the absence of residential quarters for teachers. The need for residential quarters for teachers is particularly greater in backward or remote villages where normally other reasonable facilities are not available. For want of residential accommodation teachers are not prepared to go. ~~to each~~ schools or at least good teachers are unwilling to go. This also results in low enrolment and wastage and stagnation. Another factor is economic and social backwardness of the people themselves... The hours in school attendance and vacations are also sometimes rigid and on account of economic needs in a particular season, children are kept away from schools" 34

It is apparent from the analysis of factors contributing to the low enrolment in primary schools in a number of districts of Gujarat State, that the leadership in Jilla Shikshan Samiti will have to concentrate on the programme of construction of school buildings and construction of residential quarters for teachers, conversion of single-teacher schools into multiple teacher schools, the expansion of the programme of Ashramshalas in tribal areas, provision of mobile schools or schools to be conducted in tents or temporary huts on the lines of Ness

Schools started in the Gir area of Saurashtra, provision also for parapetic schools for nomadic communities like Rabaris, Bharwads, etc.

The District Shikshan Samities shall have to think seriously and make painstaking efforts to carry Taluka Panchayats and Gram Panchayats within the district to introduce, in areas where primary schools are not attractive, for mid-day meals, provision of supply of free books, uniforms, and other writing materials like slates, pens, pencils, etc. The following table shows that some beginning has been done by the Panchayati Raj bodies in this area. But efforts need to be expanded, made more systematic and planned and intensified.

TABLE -1.1: Community Participation in Student Welfare Services

Sr. No.	Items	1966-67	1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	Total
1	Mid-day meals	50884	36987	49688	66835	204364
2	Sanitation	19849	13304	23710	25284	81147
3	Teacher's Quarters	7730	2100	5925	6908	22663
4	Compound walls	15344	11500	25615	13175	65634
5	Drinking water	8764	8852	8918	17442	43976
6	Uniforms	-	-	41550	45816	87366
7	Books & Slates	-	-	125	751	876
8	Reading rooms	4267	1347	1186	958	7758
9	Miscellaneous activities like cultural programmes, sports, festivals etc.	27863	30046	31581	73737	163227
Total:		134701	104136	188298	250876	678011

They will also have to introduce programmes for part-time education for such children who cannot attend primary school on a whole time basis, and make arrangement for continuing education for those who had left primary school before completing Std. IV or Std. VII.

The Study Group³⁵ which prepared the Gujarat Perspective Plan (1974-1984) on Education had suggested the following programme for improvement of quality of primary education:

- (a) Minimum programme for all schools;
- (b) Obligatory programme for such schools;
- (c) Earn and learn programme;
- (d) Work-experiences;
- (e) Improvement in competence of teacher through programmes of in-service training as well as by associating them in the task of curricular development, textbook preparation and functioning of such complexes;
- (f) Improvement of supervision and inspection;
- (g) Curricular development;
- (h) Introduction of instructional materials;
- (i) Promotion of school complexes;
- (j) Revitalising teaching of science and covering schools under science improvement programme; and
- (k) Improvement of health education programme.

This would show that much is yet to be attempted and achieved in the field of qualitative primary education. It is one thing to have most of the school-going children in the

schools, but those who are enrolled are to be retained in school till they attain at least permanent literacy, they do not stagnate in different standards and they receive effective school instruction which equips them with minimum essential knowledge, habits, attitudes, values, and skills. The future of democracy in the State as well as in the country is dependent upon the quality of the products of the primary schools. Therefore, the tasks facing the leadership at all levels of the Panchayat Raj are very challenging and crucial. The future of the success of the role of the Panchayati Raj in education as well as in other fields of public service and development is going to be shaped by the leadership at all the three tiers. This leadership should be carefully selected by the democratic bodies, but it should be exposed, oriented and trained to the performance of leadership tasks in respect of democratisation and development by the Panchayati Raj Training Institutions of Government, and Faculties of Social Work and Education of State Universities.

1.5 Official Leadership associated with the Panchayati Raj Institutions

In the previous section the role of the democratic or popular leadership at all the three tiers of the Panchayati Raj institution has been discussed at length on the basis of data collected from research, interviews by the investigator, newspapers reporting, Government documents of Panchayats Act,

Government Rules, reports and other semi-official and non-official published or mimeographed literature. The leadership has two components, the popular and official. In this section, an attempt will be made to describe and discuss the official or bureaucratic leadership that bears relationship on the administration and development of primary education.

In the official cadre the leaders are the District Development Officer, District Education Officer, District Education Inspector, Administrative Officer, the Taluka Development Officer, the Extension Officer (Education) and Beat Supervisors. Of these, the Administrative Officer, popularly known by the name of A.O., is the central figure. He is the principal actor and prime mover in the administrative matters of primary education within a district. His role will, therefore, be dealt with in some detail. The State Institute of Education has also some leadership function in improving the quality of primary education in the State as a whole.

(a) The Development Commissioner : As far as the Panchayati Raj Administration in the whole State is concerned, the Development Commissioner is at the top of the structural organisation. He is responsible for coordinating all the development activities going on in all the districts in the State. He exercises administrative control from top to bottom. He has powers of control over all the officials and non-offi-

cials at all the three tiers of the Panchayati System. He inspects the Panchayats at all the tiers annually. Appeals and revision against the decision of the Jilla Panchayats lie with him.

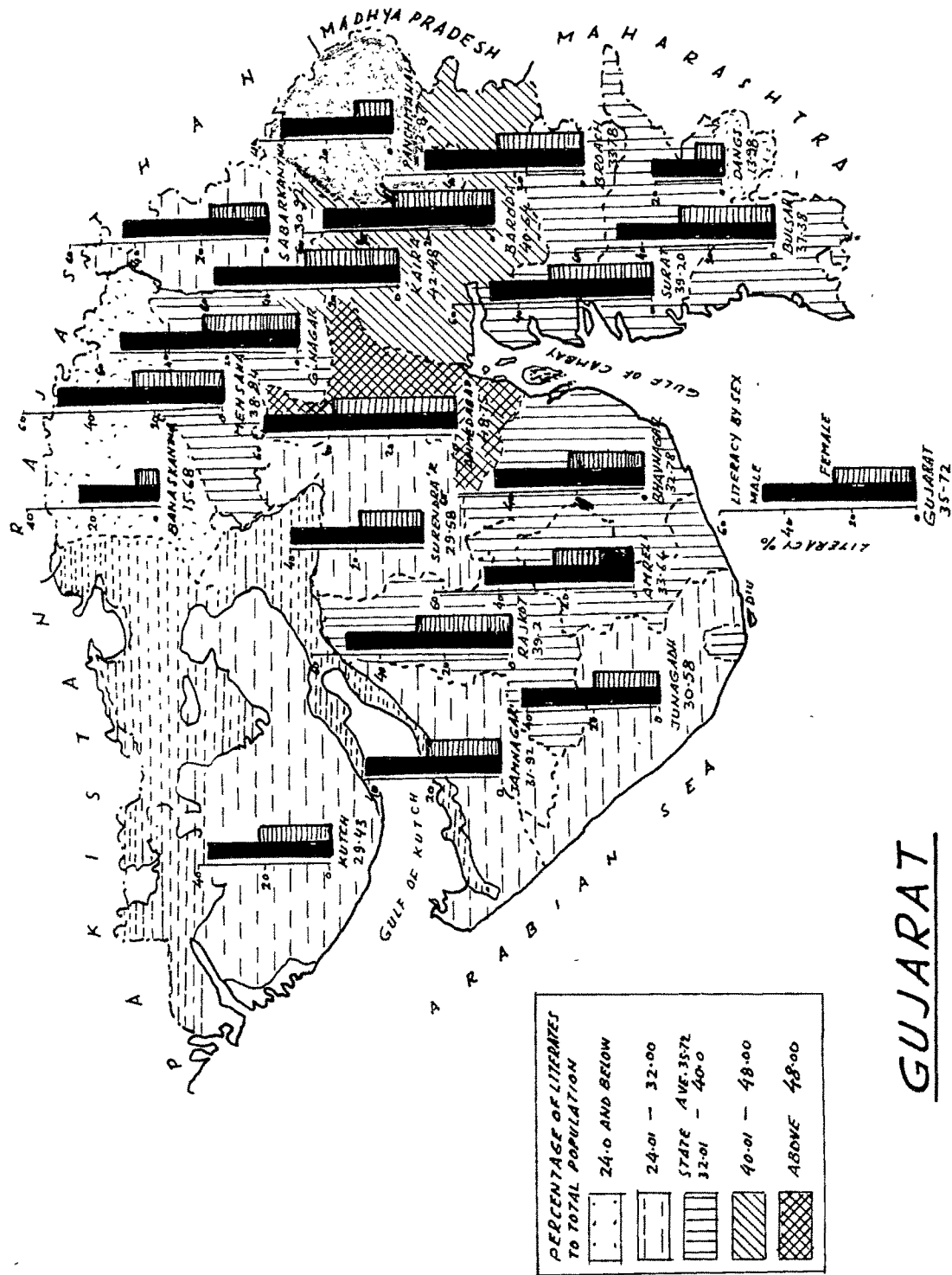
(b) The District Development Officer: At the district level, the principal officer is the District Development Officer (the D.D.O.) He is the officer of the rank of District Collector. He acts as an ex-officio secretary of the Jilla Panchayat. Powers and functions of the D.D.O. are laid down in the Gujarat Panchayats Act, Section 143(2). The executive powers of the Jilla Panchayat are vested in this officer. However, he is subject to the orders of the Jilla Panchayat President in performing the delegated tasks to him. He is entitled to attend the meetings of any of the committees of the Jilla Panchayat. He controls the officers and servants of the Panchayat. He has authority to supervise and control the execution. He has the custody of all papers and documents connected with the proceedings of the Jilla Panchayat and of its committees. It is this officer who draws and disburses money out of the Jilla Panchayat Fund. This is so far as the general administration, supervision and control of the Jilla Panchayat are concerned. In the matter of primary education, the D.D.O. has over-all powers of supervision and control. But in reality it is the Administrative Officer of the Shikshan

Samiti that wields the real authority of execution, supervision and control. The D.D.O. can make recommendations to the A.O. on whatever aspects of administration of primary education which he has found essential during his supervision, visits to Gram Panchayats, Taluka Panchayats, and primary schools and which he gathered from meetings with the local community leaders and people. He can even recommend the transfer of a particular teacher or teachers on the basis of the representations made to him and/or his own independent findings.

(c) The Administrative Officer : So far as the administration of primary education in rural areas within a district is concerned, the principal executive officer is the Administrative Officer (A.O.). He is the Class II officer in the Gujarat State Education Service. He is appointed by the Director of Education. He is under the D.D.O.; he has powers of decision-making so far as the administration of primary education in rural areas within the district is concerned. He administers primary education as per the provisions of the Bombay Primary Education Act, 1947 (or Saurashtra Primary Education Act, 1956), and the Gujarat Compulsory Primary Education Act, 1961. He acts as Secretary of the Staff Selection Committee and recruits the employees of the Jilla Shikshan Samiti. The Staff Selection Committee also selects teachers to be deputed for training. (The selection of candidates and teachers by the Staff Selection Committee has to be done in accordance with

the instructions issued by the State Government). Under Section 24 of the Bombay Primary Education Act, 1947, the A.O. has been given powers to promote, transfer and take all disciplinary action, including removal or dismissal against any member of the staff of the Jilla Shikshan Samiti. However, any person aggrieved by an order of dismissal, removal, reduction or any other order involving disciplinary action made, may submit an appeal to a Tribunal consisting of the Chairman of the Shikshan Samiti and the District Education Officer. Section 25 of the Primary Education Act makes it a duty on the part of the A.O. to prepare and implement scheme to provide compulsory primary education in such area and for children of such ages and upto such standard within such period as the Director of Education may specify. (In Gujarat State, primary education has been made compulsory all throughout the State for children of the age-group 6-11 and for Standards I to IV). The introduction of compulsory education all throughout the State makes it imperative for the A.O. to arrange for taking the Census of all school-going children in the age-group 6-11 every year in all habitations within the district. Often, the A.O. is delegated by the Jilla Shikshan Samiti the power to issue attendance order to a defaulting parent who is not causing his son or daughter of the compulsory age, attend an approved school on and from a specified date. The A.O. has power to prosecute in a court of law any defaulting parent.

(SOURCE: CENSUS OF INDIA-1971, PROVISIONAL POPULATION TOTALS)



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The A.O. is principally an executive officer. He functions according to the rules framed by the State Government. He does welcome and accepts suggestions, recommendation etc., of the members of the Jilla Shikshan Samiti, and even of the Jilla Panchayat, but he can act on them only to the extent to which he can under the prescribed rules. In this respect, he can have an independent focus and status, provided he is able to stand firmly against the accumulating and over-powering pressures coming frequently from the Chairman and members of the Jilla Shikshan Samiti and other Panchayat members. Quite frequently, the personalities of the Chairman, Jilla Shikshan Samiti and the A.O. clash and there are bold, firm and independent A.Os., who have refused to toe the line of the Panchayats' leaderships. In a democracy where political pressure, the leadership of such^{an} independent and determined A.O. is challenged by the powerful elements in the Shikshan Samiti and in the Panchayat, frequently attempts are made to intimidate, harass and embarrass^{an}, and instances are on record where pressure on Government is put to transfer him.

On the official side, the A.O. exercises effective leadership at the district level. He has certain definite relationship with the Shikshan Samiti and even with the D.D.O. His modus operandi is the rules prescribed by the State Government under the Bombay Primary Education Act, 1947 or the Saurashtra Primary Education Act, 1956. He is mainly respon-

sible for framing the annual budgets of the Shikshan Samiti on the basis of instructions that he receives from the Director of Education from time to time and place it before the Shikshan Samiti for approval. It is true that the budget approved by the Shikshan Samiti has also got to be approved by the parent Jilla Panchayat, yet his voice largely prevails in budgetary matters.

The District Development Officer, the Chairman Shikshan Samiti and any ^{member} ~~member~~ of the Shikshan Samiti can visit and supervise any of the primary schools located within the district. But their visit or reporting becomes formal. The real supervisory and controlling functions lie with the A.O. The others can, at the best, send their suggestions to the A.O., but the ultimate decision-making lies with him. He is always eager and ready to discuss with the D.D.O., the Chairman or any member of the Shikshan Samiti any matter pertaining to the administration, expansion and qualitative improvement of primary schools, any of the problems of primary school teachers and any of the demands of the local rural communities. But it is he who largely shapes the decision-making.

Prior to the introduction of the Panchayati Raj Administration, some possibilities of conflict between the District Education Inspector and the A.O. existed. The D.E.I. had the complete authority of inspection of the primary schools within the district. He used to get the schools inspected by the Beat

Supervisors, consolidate their school inspection reports and forward them to the A.O. with his remarks and suggestions for implementation. As both of them belong to the same G.E.S. Class II service cadres and of equal in rank and status, one advising the other at times created conflict. Now this conflict has been reduced considerably, as the inspecting staff has been placed under the A.O. and this staff has been reporting to the A.O. who can take action on the basis of these reports. The D.E.I. has, under him, only a skeleton staff of inspectors who inspect sampled primary schools and the D.E.I.'s reports to the A.O. is broadly of recommending nature. This change has given to the A.O. added focus and status. The A.O., though a subordinate officer to the D.D.O., does not have any point of conflict with him, because the ultimate authority in primary education within the district is the A.O., and the D.D.O.'s recommendations are advisory. There is practically no conflict between the A.O. and District Education Officer because the latter is a superior officer and the former is subordinate to him in the matter of implementation of State policy on primary education and the main area of the functioning of the D.E.O. is secondary education and only a broad, general type of supervision over primary education. The A.O. sits with the D.E.O. as a subordinate officer on the Staff Selection Committee and the Committee for transfer of primary teachers. That is to say the A.O. is an implementing officer of the decision taken at these Committees.

Further, in the Tribunal the D.E.O. along with the Chairman, Jilla Shikshan Samiti, participates in hearing and deciding appeals by aggrieved staff of the Shikshan Samiti against certain orders passed by the A.O. There is hardly any scope for conflict between a higher cadre officer and subordinate cadre officer.

In brief, the A.O. exercises leadership acts in the following

- (i) Planning and implementation of programmes designed to improve standards of primary education in the rural areas within the district;
- (ii) Preparation of schemes of mid-day meals and supervision of their execution; also distribution of food packets among the talukas of the district;
- (iii) Distribution of grant-in-aid among the Taluka Panchayats of the district;
- (iv) Fixation of school holidays and vacation;
- (v) Planning and conduct of school examinations;
- (vi) Administration of social education;
- (vii) Conduct of centres of pre-primary education;
- (viii) Planning and management of libraries and reading rooms;
- (ix) Appointment of teachers for primary schools;
- (x) Effecting transfer or primary teachers;
- (xi) Taking disciplinary measures against defaulting primary school teachers and other staff of the Shikshan Samiti;
- (xii) Management of Provident Fund and Retirement wages of the staff of the Shikshan Samiti;
- (xiii) Purchase and management of School furniture, equipment and teaching aids for the Shikshan Samiti primary schools;

- (ix) Allocation of the Datum Grant for primary education to Taluka Panchayats; etc., etc.

Thus, the A.O. is the heart of the machinery for administration of primary education in the district.

In some districts, the position of the Assistant Administrative Officer is also provided. For instance, the Panchamahals Jilla Shikshan Samiti has an Assistant A.O. He assists the A.O. in all tasks entrusted to him by him (i.e. A.O.). Usually, this supporting official leadership is selected from among the senior Beat Supervisors. He is, therefore, also called the District Supervisor. This officer is ordinarily assigned six tasks :

- (i) To supervise the primary schools within the district;
- (ii) To conduct an inquiry on issues and complaints that come before the A.O. for decision and report his findings to him;
- (iii) To distribute supervisory responsibilities among the Beat Supervisors;
- (iv) To provide educational leadership in group meetings of the primary teachers of the district;
- (v) To plan and conduct Science Fair for primary schools of the district; and
- (vi) To prepare calenders for primary schools.

A detailed work-sheet of the A.O. of the Panchamahals Jilla Shikshan Samiti is given in the Appendix to give a broad view of the functioning of an Administrative Officer.

(c) The District Education Officer : Actually, the D.E.O. is the head of school administration of a district. But his major leadership act is in the field of Secondary Education. In the field of primary education he exercises limited supervision and control. A reference has already been made to his membership of the three important Statutory Committees tied up with the administration of primary education by Jilla Shikshan Samiti, Viz. (a) Staff Selection Committee; (b) Transfer Committee for Primary Teachers; and (c) the Tribunal. He is the principal officer charged with the responsibility of preparing district five-year plans of development for all the sectors of education including primary education. He discharges this responsibility with the assistance of the inspection and supervision staff attached to his office and also with the collaboration of the A.O.s of the Jilla Shikshan Samitis and Nagar Shikshan Samitis. He exercises indirect control over the Jilla Shikshan Samiti and the A.O. by getting 10 percent of the primary schools within the district inspected through the staff of Assistant Educational Inspectors attached to his office. One copy of the report of each primary school thus inspected is sent to the A.O. for action thereon and one to the school concerned for information.

The official leadership that has been discussed so far is all at the district level. The Taluka is the second and intermediate tier in the Panchayati Raj System. At this level the

leadership function is exercised by the Taluka Development Officer (T.D.O.), the Extension Officer (Education) and the Beat Supervisors who are assigned at this level.

(e) The Taluka Development Officer : The T.D.O. is also called the Taluka Panchayat Officer, (T.P.O.). What the D.D.O. is to a district, the T.D.O. is to a Taluka. It is this officer who is responsible for management of school buildings, equipment, instructional materials and aids for the primary schools, the mid-day free meals to children and other Student Welfare Services. He also deals with the management of financial affairs in a Taluka. Under him, there are Extension Officers in Several fields such as Education, Building, Farming, Co-operatives etc. He belongs to Class II State Service, whereas these Extension Officers are all Class III Service, officers. The T.D.O. exercises his leadership at the Taluka level by performing the following functions ;

- (a) He recommends transfer of primary school teachers;
- (b) Under his supervision, building plan estimates for construction work of school buildings are prepared.
- (c) He wields sanctioning authority to approve repair works of school buildings;
- (d) He initiates the construction of new or additional classrooms required to meet increased enrolment in different primary schools;
- (e) He visits primary schools, from time to time, inspects their management and makes necessary recommendations to the A.D. and other concerned personnel of the Shikshan Samiti;

- (f) He is in charge of general supervision and control of all the primary schools within his Taluka;
- (g) He regulates also financial matters of the primary schools with his taluka;
- (h) He signs the pay roll of the primary school teachers of the schools in the Taluka;
- (i) He can ask for explanation from the headteacher of a school for its mismanagement and can issue warning to him;
- (j) He has also authority to ask for explanation from Taluka Supervisors and Beat Supervisors;
- (k) He is the sanctioning authority of leave asked for by teachers not exceeding 89 days; etc. etc.

This officer is ordinarily a University graduate or a post graduate degree holder. He is a subordinate officer to the D.D.O., but an officer of an equal cadre and rank as the A.O. There is not much conflict between the two, as the T.D.O. functions at the Taluka level and the A.O. at the district level. But there is a channel of communication between the two. The T.D.O. is the reporting and recommending officer to the A.O. who has the power to decide which of the recommendations should be implemented. Thus, this discretion is vested in the A.O. If at all there is any conflict, it is reflected in the T.D.O.'s communication about primary schools to the D.D.O.

(f) The Taluka Extension Officer in Education : He is a Class III Cadre officer subordinate to T.D.O. in the hierarchical line and staff service of the State Government. He is

usually selected from among long experienced and trained graduate teachers in the State Service. Sometimes, Extension Officers are recruited from teachers with a few years of teaching experience in school. This officer is also designated as the Taluka Supervisor, because he wields primary responsibility for regular and effective supervision of all the primary schools within the Taluka. His leadership acts in the field of primary education are reflected in his following work :

- (a) Visit of primary schools;
- (b) Sanction of short duration of leave asked for by primary teachers, as a delegated function by the T.D.O.
- (c) Preparation of pay bills of teachers and distribution to them of their salary.
- (d) Distribution of food-stuff to primary schools for the free mid-day meals to school children;
- (e) Distribution of school equipment, furniture, instructional materials and aids to schools;
- (f) Distribution of school uniforms, writing and reading materials - pencils, slates, books etc. to poor school children in different primary schools within the Taluka, etc. etc.

The Extension Officer drafts resolutions to be placed before the Taluka Panchayat for consideration, about the construction of classrooms, preparing budget estimates for them etc. He is largely responsible for placing before the meetings of the Taluka Panchayat all questions pertaining to primary education and answering all questions about it raised by the Panchayat members. He collects educational statistics and compiles them for the Taluka. He has the custody of service books of primary

school teachers and enters in them necessary notes and remarks. This he does by putting his own signature and getting each entry countersigned by the T.D.O.

It is customary in Gujarat State to form groups of neighbouring primary schools which are placed under the direction and supervision of the head-teacher of the centrally located group school. The Extension Officer maintains more direct contact with the Central group schools and he sends to its head teacher all the administrative circular letters issued by the A.O. Two or more of such groups constitute a Group Centre. Periodically, group meetings of teachers of each Group Centre are convened by the Extension Officer when demonstration lessons (class teaching) are organised, experiments and innovations are described and discussed and difficulties and problems arising from day to day school functioning are discussed. This opens up a communication channel to and from teachers. This has been a desirable trend among Group Centres in different Talukas. Here, the leadership is also provided by the State Institute of Education. It is a premier agency in the State for inservice education of Extension Officer, Beat Supervisors, headteachers and teachers of primary schools.

(g) Beat Supervisors : The function of inspection and supervision of primary schools is done by an army of educational inspectors assigned at the Taluka level. For the purpose of

inspection and supervision, a taluka is divided into smaller units, each having about 50 primary schools located in it. An inspecting officer is allotted to each beat. He is called a Beat Supervisor. He is responsible for supervision, inspection and educational guidance of all the primary schools within his beat. He is a trained graduate teacher with extensive experience of teaching in school situation. Some experienced and competent teachers of primary schools are promoted, in recognition of their meritorious work, to the cadre of Beat supervisors. The major function of this officer is inspection, supervision and improving school quality. This function he performs by inspecting every primary school of his beat once and paying atleast two visits to it in a year.

When a Beat Supervisor visits a primary school for annual inspection, he calls a meeting of the local community leaders and discusses with them questions such as improvement of school attendance, increase in enrolment, enforcement of the Compulsory Education Law, community participation in the expansion and enrichment of school equipment, furniture and instructional materials and aids and organization of cultural festivals, national events in collaboration of the local school, etc.

The Beat Supervisor has also responsibility to inspect Social Education Classes, Libraries and Reading Rooms, and Balamandirs. He also assists in the administration of all

Examinations conducted by the State Board of Examinations, particularly in the conduct of Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination. He also tests gifted children who apply for accelerated promotion to the next higher class or classes.

He also performs tasks of educational leadership to individual primary schools. He provides direction and guidance in the meetings of the Group Centre.

He also performs two other important functions, viz. writing the confidential reports of teachers of primary schools and making recommendations for transfer of primary school teachers.

This is broadly the framework of official leadership functioning and communication network in the organization of the Panchayati Raj at all the three tiers. This official leadership is Status leadership, It reflects bureaucratic temper, attitude and way of working. The climate in official organizations is not quite conducive to making them democratic leaders. On the contrary it makes them stiff and to some extent uncompromising. Their most powerful weapon is the prescribed Government Rules and Orders passed by their superior officer in the hierarchy. This leadership is more oriented towards Government rather than towards people or community. Quite often they are egoistic. They are quite often not able to bridge distance between them and community leaders. When they are pressed by the latter for

solution of some of the emergent problems, the official leadership is not able to take quick and firm decisions because quite often it is under political or official pressure. This leadership reveals a tendency to get entangled in the network of rules and regulations and that is why its decision-making is delayed, vague and sometimes even dilatory. Its attitude to the elected leaders of the Panchayats at all the three tiers is a mixed one. It has ingredients or elements of indifference, apathy, resistance, dominance and even dictation where the popular leadership is mild and meek and of submission, appeasement, collaboration, even alignment when the popular leadership is strong-willed, dominating, hard hitting and with great pull in the Government. The official leadership is more habituated to one-way communication - orders passing on from top to bottom; the two way communication is small, uncertain and with broken and repaired links which sometimes work and sometimes do not work.

The official leadership in Gujarat, even after a decade of participation in the Panchayati Raj system, has not been able to wear off its bureaucratic wear. It still seeks to function with bureaucratic air and awe. Good working relations with popular community and Panchayat leaders have not reached a level of regard and fruitfulness.

Mutual regard and a spirit of cooperation between popular and official leadership are not often to be found. If official leadership rubs shoulders with popular leadership, it is often more forced and outward rather than real and inward. The Democratic Decentralisation Committee of the Maharashtra Government (1960) had rightly observed :

"We cannot, however, over emphasise that the success of decentralisation will depend essentially on a mutual sense of regard and understanding between the administrative machinery and their respective local bodies.... In the past, the administrative machinery had to play a dominant role in framing policies and their execution. In recent times, progressively the policy functions have rightly been passed on to the elected representatives of the people.... While the officials have a right to advise on policy, they should clearly recognise that ultimate decision rests with the elected representatives."36

Researches done so far on this subject have brought to light some causes for the ^tinternal tension existing amongst officials in relation to their functioning with popular leadership. These causes are :

- (a) Lack of clear demarcation of spheres of action, powers and functions of the two leaders;
- (b) Interference by the non-officials in administration;
- (c) Poor quality of officials;
- (d) Political pressurisation;
- (e) The interaction that is going on between the traditional social order and modernised democratic and administrative structures;
- (f) The loss of power to rule on the part of the officials;

- (g) Feeling of exasperation experienced by officials that they have to obey the dictates of illiterate, unsophisticated and rusty rural leaders.

It may be that the bureaucrats, as observed by Dubey³⁸, still perhaps believe subconsciously in the efficacy of the traditional approach. In a Rajasthan Study³⁹ about the impact of the Panchayati Raj on educational administration, it was found that the officials could not see much wisdom in this experiment on democratisation as "the morale of teachers had got involved in the politics and postings and transfers were done on an arbitrary basis and often on political grounds." This reflects the lack of faith of the officials in the transfer of the administration of primary education to the leaders of rural community. The Sadiq Ali Committee of the Rajasthan Government also brings to light the indifference displayed by the officers of the State Education Department. It observed: "District level officers seem to have adopted a somewhat detached attitude. They do not consider the programme as their own"⁴⁰. Among the reasons which were ascribed by the Committee to the officials' indifference, were the following:⁴¹

- (i) Cessation of their responsibility;
- (ii) Their pre-occupation with Departmental activities which were given priority by them;
- (iii) Resentment felt by them at their advice and guidance being flouted often by Panchayat leaders and members;

The Sadiq Ali Committee remarked that "all these reasons

may be more or less real, but the fact is that coordination between the administrative and technical personnel leaves much to be desired."⁴²

The Hyderabad Seminar on Panchayati Raj held in October, 1969 had come to the conclusion that "the main reasons for the conflict between the officials and non-officials, especially at Samiti and Zilla Parishad levels, are : lack of past convention, an emphasis on exercise of power and discretion and external interference."⁴³

1.6 Conclusion

The introduction of the Panchayati Raj in rural local Government is a great event of last decade in Gujarat State. According to an official document of the Government in Gujarat (1973), there are at present a little less than 12,000 Gram Panchayats and 59 Nagar Panchayats covering a rural population of 2.08 crores. This works out to be 74.1 percent of the total population in the State. There are also 182 Taluka Panchayats and 18 District Panchayats covering the whole State excepting the small district of Gandhinagar.

The Panchayati Raj system was introduced in Gujarat in 1963. The entire administration of primary education in the State has been entrusted to this new popular organization. Universal, compulsory, free primary education in the age-group 6-14 has made remarkable progress in Gujarat under the Panchayati Raj administration. According to the Fifth Five Year Plan

(draft) for the period 1974-79 of the State, the respective enrolments in the age-groups 6-11 and 6-14 which were 64.8 percent and 29.3 percent at the end of the Second Plan period have risen to 87.5 percent and 41.5 percents (estimated). Facilities for primary educations exist in 17,685 out of the total 18,430 villages. This indeed is a substantial achievement. In achieving this high target, both the popular leadership and official leadership have played a great role.

The available evidences suggest that popular leadership in the Panchayati Raj institutions is both traditional and neo-traditional. The characteristics of these two types of leaderships set forth in the Jaipur Study of the Panchayati Raj in Rajasthan by Mathur, Iqbal Narain and Sinha (1966) largely hold true for the Gujarat Panchayati leadership also. The traditional leadership described below is more to be found in Gujarat at the Gram Panchayat level :

"First, traditional leadership is Status bound. Persons high up in social hierarchy and economically prosperous could claim leadership. Feudal lords, money lenders* etc. are in the forefront as leaders. Secondly, it is caste-oriented, the balance always tilting in favour of the higher castes. Thirdly, it is, by and large, conservative and, therefore, pre-status quo**, its role being to preserve the social system on the basis of traditional norms. Incidentally, it is drawn from the 'above fifty' (of higher group). Fourthly, it is individual-oriented, rather than institutional as persons are accepted as leaders because of their individual standing They, thus, enjoy a great deal of consensus as the basis of their claim to leadership.*** Fifthly, their role is more social than economic,

* Not many now in Gujarat. ** This has been changing in Gujarat and a social change though small but not very slow, is in evidence. *** This does not always happen in Gujarat.

developmental or political.**** Lastly, their role comes into play on an ad hoc rather than on a regular basis."44

One might add here that so far as the leadership at the village level in Gujarat is concerned, it is not entirely tradition-bound. In many villages, the best available persons do get into the Gram Panchayats, though this ^{does} not happen always.

At the Taluka level and the District level, the emergent leadership in the Panchayat bodies is more neo-traditional. "Persons belonging to higher strata of rural society are no more in a position to claim authority exclusively on the basis of their caste Status, family or wealth... Secondly, the leadership which is now emerging in the rural areas can perhaps be best described as material-benefits oriented.. Thirdly, the emerging rural leadership is a combination of power and development orientations."45 The leaders at Taluka and District levels have strong political affiliation. They make planned efforts to develop strong links with the State political leaders, particularly State ministers and the members of the national level Working Committee of the political party to which they belong. This they do in, what Mathur, et.al call, "enlightened self interest". They are conscious of the fact that so far as election to State Legislature is concerned they can serve as a 'Vote bank' for their particular area or electoral college.

**** In Gujarat, their role is also political.

In Gujarat, the official leadership has been also playing an important role. But it has limitations born out of past traditions, bureaucratic training, circumscribed mental outlook, power-ego, the 'we know everything', complex, habituated to hang on rules and regulations and built-in stiff attitude and mechanical or detached outlook.

The Zeenabhai Darji High Power Samiti of the Gujarat Government, on the recommendations of which the 1973 Amendment of the Gujarat Panchayats Act was largely based, had advocated strongly for a fair and better deal to be provided to the weaker sections of the Society.⁴⁶ It has succeeded in getting more representations for women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. But it will take some time for leadership to emerge from this section of the society and still more time for a strong, efficient, development minded and public spirited leadership from these demographic groups. Till such leadership emerges or the members representing these sections of the society on the Panchayat institutions become active, dynamic and pushing, the struggle for safeguarding their interest is likely to be left in the hands of more powerful and assertive leadership from higher caste and more economically prosperous groups. The greatest problem in universalising primary education in Gujarat is to spread it more rapidly than it is being done at present among the weaker sections. The Draft Fifth Plan⁴⁷ of the Gujarat State makes a revealing observation that 80 percent of the non-attending school children are from

three groups : (1) girls; (2) landless labourers and (3) aboriginal tribes and migrating groups. It is, therefore, necessary that leadership also emerges from weaker sections of the Society. Woshi had found also that most of the women members, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe members did not participate actively in the proceedings of the meetings of the Panchayats and they did not even open their mouths all throughout the proceedings. This shows that the way to the creation of a strong leadership from the weaker sections of the society is still long and the goal is still difficult to be attained. It is to be seen how the present ruling party of Smt. Indira Gandhi succeeds in bringing out a society wherein the downtrodden and the poor will have equality of opportunity for growth and development. The journey is long and arduous, but striving is worth all efforts.

The next chapter will be devoted to a broad review of related research on the subject of the Panchayati Raj, education and rural leadership. The discussion given in the present chapter and the finding of the research reviews in the next Chapter will be utilised for building up a research design for the present investigation.

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