

The Emergence of New Leadership in the Decentralization of Power  
and Its Impact on State and National Politics in India

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### Introduction

It is widely assumed that one of the most neglected aspects in the study of government and politics in India is local government.<sup>1</sup> It is in the villages where the majority of the people live, and their economical, sociological and political problems and their consequences have a great effect on state and national politics. It is in the districts, towns and villages that the beginning and the consequences of Indian politics are found. The recent decentralization of power and its impact on state and national politics is an important topic due to the fact that eighty per cent<sup>2</sup> of the population in India are agrarian and most of them live in villages. The problem of political stability in India is the problem of her villages where 360 million of her population live.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to understand the village communities which provide a vast body of facts about rural, social and political life. The study of political life naturally constitutes, therefore, a valuable contribution in addition to knowledge of the social, economic and religious history of Indian villages. Thus, the village in India is an appropriate unit of study not only for the adequate reason that it is a basic unit where elections take place and power is exercised, but it is a social and cultural unit as well.

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<sup>1</sup>Richard L. Park and Irene Tinker, Leadership and Political Institutions in India (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 456 pp.

<sup>2</sup>Encyclopedia of Social Science, XII-XIV (1956), 469-71.

<sup>3</sup>Percival Spear, India, Pakistan and the West (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 15.



The recent extension of formal political democracy in villages through local self government and the gradual politization of the rural areas with the recent government-launched community development program has begun to change the structure of village life. The village is the basic unit of Indian politics, because the new groups first enter the political arena and articulate new demands on the state and national levels. The gradual politicalization in rural peasant society and its urban administrative and commercial nuclei are a phenomenon which needs as much attention as possible. The Indian experience and experimentation in local self-government could be a good example for other countries in the developing world. We have attempted to look at local government politics from the point-of-view of its political development since the inception of the decentralization of power.

### Historical Background

After the dawn of independence, the government of India decided to launch community development programs and establish local self-government bodies throughout the countryside. The Congressional government built the rural institutions from the local to the district level. The main objective of building these institutions up was to hand over power to the people in the villages. Mr. Nehru, in particular, and the party elite machinery, in general, were supporters of this theory. Mr. Nehru said in this regard: "...let village authorities work and function for their own betterment and let them make a million mistakes."<sup>1</sup> Besides Nehru and other Indian leaders, there were few foreign dignitaries like

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<sup>1</sup>Carl C. Taylor, et al., India's Roots of Democracy. (New York; Washington: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), p. 344.

Mr. Chester Bowles,<sup>1</sup> at the ambassadorial level, and a number of academicians in the American universities, who were also supporters of these programs. Among them Mr. Albert Mayer,<sup>2</sup> a town planner, played a key role in building up the community development projects in India. After a long process of trial and experimentation an agreement was reached between the United States and India to coordinate the building of a democratic type of government in the countryside.<sup>3</sup> A Bill, seeking these objectives, was passed by parliament and work was started under the framework of India's first five-year plan. The main objectives of the decentralization of power and community development program was the transfer of power to the people's institution; development of the initiative of the people; increased participation of the people in the implementation of developmental programs, and development of village leadership.<sup>4</sup>

After long years of constant hard work, the plan brought about largely good results in forming a viable type of village government. Besides this, the plan had also contributed in making the people self-sufficient in regard to their food problems. As a Time correspondent

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<sup>1</sup>Op cit., pp. 170-71.

<sup>2</sup>Albert Mayer, Pilot Project, India (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959). *Passim*.

<sup>3</sup>Taylor, India's Roots of Democracy, p. 170.

<sup>4</sup>Hugh Gray, "Andhra Pradesh," in State Politics in India, ed. by Myron Weiner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 422.

said, "One bright spot in India's future is the success of the green revolution which increased production fifty per cent."<sup>1</sup> After solving the food problem, there were a number of problems related to the politicalization of the masses to run their own institutions. In order to achieve these goals, they had to develop a healthy, young, articulate and responsible leadership to run the government at the village level. After eighteen years of constant endeavor and initiation, at last the plan reached every corner of the Indian countryside and we found that a number of changes occurred in the village structure in general and the leadership pattern in particular. Therefore, it is important to look at those changes which are being made in the sociological, economical and political sphere of village life, to what extent they are successful and what other work has to be done in the future. In the light of this background, the author will analyze, in general, the aspects of political development and particularly give importance to the emergence of new leaders at the grass roots level of democracy, who culturally, socially, and politically are quite different from the traditional village leadership.

#### Traditional Leadership

In the traditional era the leadership was based on caste hierarchy and the leaders were primarily caste and faction leaders. The leadership was ascribed, not achieved. They were conservative, dominant, egocentric, caste conscious and proponents of old values and institutions.

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<sup>1</sup>Time Magazine (March 22, 1971), p. 23.



While it is not assumed that all old, local leaders will be shunned, there is a governmental plan that many new leaders shall be developed and thereby given new local community status.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the government plans to do nothing to strengthen the caste structure and shall do as much as possible to transcend caste boundaries. The state also stresses that village leaders and village groups must now assume different kinds of responsibilities and exercise initiative for types of undertakings which, in the traditional past, were not part of village activities. In short, the government was determined to change the outlook of the village from traditional structure to a modern one. On the one hand, the government officials made up their minds to change the structure; and on the other hand, there was a tremendous response from the people to change their social, economical and political way of life.

#### Impact of New Culture

On account of the planned change and a deliberate attempt to "root out" the old values and old institutions, the whole village structure changed morphologically from old to new. The village shifted from a tradition-oriented to a progressive society in which the emphasis on

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<sup>1</sup>Hugh Gray, "Andhra Pradesh," in State Politics in India, ed. by Myron Weiner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 422.

change from the sacred to the secular, while the functional superiority of religion declined. There was a constant effort on the part of all sections of the population to raise their social status. These changes significantly brought out changes in the self-image and the levels of aspirations in the different segments of village population. Moreover, the land legislation, social reforms and introduction of democratic elections at different levels have slowly worked to bring about meaningful organizational adjustments with the village communities.

#### Communication System and Its Effect

Changes in the communication system played a key part in changing the values of the traditional village communities. The diffusion of radio sets, automobiles, cycles, and asphalt roads have attributed immensely to the removal of the feeling of isolation that was an important characteristic of villages in India. All of these trends testify that great changes have occurred in the villages in general, and particularly in the leadership patterns. The emergence of youthful leadership and the training of leaders by community development authorities to use and develop new leadership, also indicates a change. The creation of democratic institutions from the village through the district levels has an impact on this leadership and now these leaders operate in other dimensions also. Their prestige in their own village may now depend on the power they wield in higher bodies at the block or district levels, or at least to the ties which they maintain with the chairmen of these bodies. Thus, there is a constant pressure on



the local leadership to get more benefits from the block and district level bodies.

On account of the monetary help received through the blocks and the districts, the village leaders, in turn, get directions to make basic changes in the village cultural, social and economical spheres. Due to these tremendous changes it became imperative to study the role of these emergent leaders in villages of India. S. C. Dube,<sup>1</sup> rightly emphasizes that studies in this area are rewarding not only in terms of the theoretical insights they offer in regard to the working of a rural social system, as well as the trends and directions of social change; they are invaluable also to the planners of the change and their field agents because guidelines to action are implicit in them. As we look at the importance of these leadership patterns at a higher level of abstraction, it helps to understand the dynamics of the leadership pattern in India which brings to light certain points about rural India. Therefore, the present approach to the study of village leadership could help us in deducing certain generalizations about the changes taking place throughout the Indian countryside. In the following detailed discussion, we will elaborate on the economical, social and political aspects of the present structure of village India from different perspectives.

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<sup>1</sup>S.C. Dube, Dominant Caste and Village Leadership. Seminar on trends of change in village India, Central Institute of Study and Research, Mussorie, India. (November, 1961).

In the first chapter, we will discuss the traditional village structure. The village consists of three important social institutions, namely, the caste system, the joint family system, and the traditional Panchayat system (the local self-government). These social structures are part and parcel of traditional village society. After the dawn of independence, the government of India chalked out a plan to "root out" traditional values and change them into a new secular democratic village. In order to achieve these objectives, the government planned to change the caste system, the family system and evolve a village leadership to take the responsibility to run the village government. We elaborate on all of these points in the first chapter in order to get an idea about the traditional village structure.

In the second chapter, we discuss the decentralization of power from historical perspectives. Because the historical background could enlighten the reader in understanding the different studies of the plans at the village, block and district levels, we must study: What are the powers given to local bodies and how do they effect the block and district levels? How are they coordinated with the community development program? We had elaborated on the concept of decentralization of power and the community development program in detail. On account of these plans, there are so many changes made at the social, economical and political spheres of the village society. These changes occurred not only in rural leadership and at the local institutions, but also emphatically altered the very basic fabric of village life. This was one of the main objectives of the decentralization of power to break down all the old patterns and evolve a new pattern of leadership

to take the responsibility of running their own government. In the following chapter, we discussed all of those factors which helped in the emergence of the new leadership. These new leaders made many contributions to the establishment of a healthy democratic-type of village government. The new leaders broke down all caste loyalties and emerged as leaders of the masses. In fact, it was a great success, because the leaders were the first to envisage change and to function as agencies of change. After a careful study of the traditional village structure and the decentralization of power, we notice that there are a few more changes required in the present social and political structure of the village society which need as much attention as possible. In the last chapter, we deal with all of these points which are related with the village institutions in general, and the political development in particular. In light of this background of the traditional and modern views of development, we will make certain remarks regarding the creation of a healthy democratic-type of village government.

In the following chapters, we will discuss the traditional as well as the present structure of the Indian villages and conclude that democratic decentralization of power is a worthwhile experiment not only in India, but in other under-developed countries also. Due to the nature of these programs the traditional cultures have been transformed and so many changes occurred in every sphere of village life in India. The most fascinating and heartening aspect of the democratic decentralization of power was the creation of an awareness in the people of their rights, and when more literate and educated leaders

get elected into the political processes in India, then the whole fabric of village life will be changed morphologically.

As Professor Pye said, in time the rural masses, discovering that they have much in common, will find ways to mobilize their interests and so exert their full potential influence on the nation's political life. Such a development would drastically alter the national political character. Thus, the prophecy and the analysis of India's context became true and a larger elite is produced in a short span of time who are socially, culturally and politically quite different compared to the traditional village leadership.



## CHAPTER I

### TRADITIONAL VILLAGE

The traditional village communities were seen by different authors as a social and economic unit. It was like a social organization, having everything they want within themselves, and almost independent of any foreign relations. Sir Charles Metcalfe's<sup>1</sup> writing in 1932, called " ... the village communities as little republics." Sir Henry Maine<sup>2</sup> said that, "... it is a composite group of people, comprising the family hereditarily engaged in the humble arts which furnish the little society in articles of use and comfort." It includes a village watchman and a village Mukadam or policeman, and there are other semi-government authorities for the settlement of disputes and the maintenance of civil orders.<sup>3</sup> In short, it was like a close-knit group, where everyone knows each other. The religious and social ceremonies of different groups were shared by everyone. There was a systematic vertical level of occupational groups of people, who, in fact, had a

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<sup>1</sup>Sir Charles Metcalfe, Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons, 1832, III, Appendix 84:221. Cited in Srinivas, M.N. (ed.) India's Villages.

<sup>2</sup>Sir Henry Maine, Village Communities in the East and West. (London: John Murray Press, 1890).

<sup>3</sup>Carl C. Taylor, et al., India's Roots of Democracy. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1966), p. 30.



monopoly in the craft of that profession. The system was an accepted and sanctioned arrangement from which members of all castes benefitted and everyone living in the village provided the occupational services of each of them. The Brahman was contributing his ritual services to the community by the sanctioning of religious dogmas. Similarly, the scavenger, even though an untouchable, was guaranteed by the whole village which he served in a number of ways, a place to live, and was provided goods and even some services by families that he had arranged permanently to serve. These inter-family relations, passed down from generation to generation, were not precarious or arbitrary, but a complete system of social relationships. Thus, caste and inter-caste social relationships provided the organic structure of the ancient Indian village. Dube<sup>1</sup> has described the structure of the traditional village in the following way. He says that, "the village communities all over India have a number of common features. The village, as a unit of social organization, represents a solidarity different from that of the kin, the caste, and the class, and plays a vital role as an agency of socialization and social control." Different castes and communities inhabiting the village are integrated in its economic, social and ritual pattern by ties of mutual and reciprocal obligations, sanctioned and sustained by generally-accepted conventions.

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<sup>1</sup>S.C. Dube, "Indian Village" (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Press, 1956), in Taylor, et al., India's Roots of Democracy.

In this village social atmosphere, there were three main and unique systems which worked horizontally in the village. These were as follows: the caste system, the joint family system, and the traditional role of village institutions. We will elaborate each system in detail in order to understand the theory behind these systems which is contradictory with the concept of individualism, liberalism and democratization.

### The Caste System

The caste constitutes the most universal social structure of Indian society, and no society in the world is more highly structured or highly stratified. Different authors have defined the caste system in different ways, but the best definitions are given by Kelkar and Hutton.

Kelkar says that a caste is a social grouping having two characteristics. (i) Membership is confined to those born of members and includes all persons so born; (ii) the members are forbidden by inexorable social law to marry outside the group. Hutton says, "From the point-of-view of the individual member of a caste, the system provides him from birth to death with a fixed social milieu from which neither wealth nor poverty, success or disaster can remove him unless, of courses, he so violates the standards of behavior laid down by his caste that it spews him forth - temporarily or permanently."<sup>1</sup> Thus, a person was restricted by the act of a group to marry in another caste, feeding or acceptance of food from any other caste than his own.

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor, et al., India's Roots of Democracy, p. 45.

### Historical Structure of the Caste System

In India, it is estimated that 3000 castes are found.<sup>1</sup> The philosophy behind this caste system is somewhat complicated. However, it is recognized by Indian and foreign authors that there are four dominant castes and the rest are subcastes. The main four are Brahamins, Kshatryas, Vaisyas, and Sudras. This fourfold division of society is thus interpreted to be a division based on differences of labor. The Brahamins were at the top of the social scale and were concerned with the functions both of an intellectual elite and of priesthood. They enjoy great prestige for their astrological knowledge. The Kshatryas come next to the Brahamins in the social scale. They are warriors and fighters. The Vaisyas are businessmen and the Sudras, the lowest in scale, could be a small professional class. Besides these dominant castes there are fifty million untouchables, who are not included in this caste system. The philosophy behind this system of caste is said to have originated in the process of the divine creation of man, in which the Brahamin sprang from the head of God, the Sudras from his feet, the Kshatryas from his trunk or chest, and the Vaisyas from that portion of the body which lies between the chest and the feet.<sup>2</sup> It is said that it is the sacred duty of each class to fulfil his divinely-created task and by doing so fulfils its mission in life and guarantees its future life. Although different authors have defended this system of caste in an ambiguous way. Max Weber<sup>3</sup> gave a short and lucid elaboration of

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<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., pp. 44-67.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. 53

<sup>3</sup>Max Weber, Essays in Sociology, trans. Gerth and Mills (1946), 396-97.



this concept. He said, " ... that it is a system of social relationships, based on superiority and subordination, and in a way it was a social grouping." Due to this strict social grouping, distance and sanction for the infringement of caste laws, a political fraternization and a united front could not be presented.<sup>1</sup> Besides the adherence of this strict caste system, there is a strong consciousness among the members of different groups about their status in the hierarchical division of caste. Andre Beteille<sup>2</sup> said that Indian village society is beyond a doubt marked by a high degree of concern for status. The Bhagvagita (Hindu religious book) says that if Arjuna would not fight he would lose his prestige and the loss of honor for a person would be a greater evil than death itself.<sup>3</sup> Myron Weiner has also pointed out that if one can make any generalization about a society as divisive and as complex as the Indian, one could say that Indians are the most status-conscious people.<sup>4</sup> This constant concern for status created numerous problems. As Pye<sup>5</sup> said, the concept of power and prestige is in a

<sup>1</sup>Op cit., pp. 402-404.

<sup>2</sup>Andre Beteille, "The Concern for Status, New and Old Hierarchies," Times of India (Sept. 25, 1968).

<sup>3</sup>Vivantha Prosada Sinha Varma, Some aspects of the political and social thoughts of the ancient Hindus (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1950).

<sup>4</sup>Myron Weiner, The Politics of Scarcity. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 251.

<sup>5</sup>Lucian W. Pye, Nation, Personality, and Nation Building. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 71.

concept of status. Thus, he feels that power is in a sense the desire to glide through life without being touched or affected by the acts of others, to have one's personality encased in a protective shell of omnipotence so that nothing in the world can hurt or threaten it. The third important concept of life in Hindu mythology was the law of Karma which was an inhibiting factor in creating a secular society where there was no importance of caste or any other religious dogmas that inhibited the planned progress and change of the society. Karma is a sanskrit word meaning action, whether neutral, physical, or vocal. The philosophy of karma accepts the determination of the life of a man by psychological and cosmic influences and impressions generated by the transmission of the moral and physical energy in the process of the act.<sup>1</sup> The law of karma regulates the present status and the future rebirth of an individual. "A man's present status is the result of his past deeds."<sup>2</sup> If karma explains a man's position in the caste network, dharma (duty) tells him what to do in that position. In short, in the case of materialism, it would not have any importance whatsoever and the theories in some instances would not fit into the western concept of materialism. As Spear said, Hinduism is a world-renouncing system rather than, like Christianity, a world-accepting one. He says that he lacks much

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<sup>1</sup>Beleille, "Race and Descent as Social Categories in India," Daedalus (Spring, 1967), p. 444.

<sup>2</sup>Radha Krishnan, Indian Philosophy (George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1922-27), pp. 244-49.



incentive to change it now, because he always looks forward to another change in the future.<sup>1</sup>

On account of all of these rigid enforcements of physical distance between casts, status groups, and religious-minded groups, there was constant resistance to change the very structure of the society. This was one of the greatest challenges and in a way a great obstacle to the development of the kind of society which the constitution declared in 1949 India would seek to build.

#### The Joint Family System

The second important feature of the traditional village system was the joint family system. The principal features of the joint family system are that its members live under the same roof, and that property, of whatever kind, is shared by all. It is a social and religious unit, within which all decisions are made - of education or a career of a son or daughter, marriage - and all important events take place. The institution has very important social consequences whose understanding is essential for a grasp of Hindu society. The first is the emergence of a limited number of outstanding personalities, exercising despotic sway with some benevolence, and accustomed to dispose of the lives of dependents without any great regard for their wishes or susceptibilities. The marriages and other decisions of an individual's life are conducted by the head of the family where one's opinion and wishes are little considered. There is a habit of dependence of the members of the family on the family manager. There is little or no privacy among the

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<sup>1</sup>Percival Spear, India, Pakistan, and the West.  
(New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 44.

members of the families. As Spear<sup>1</sup> said, there is no note of democracy here, as the hindu college youth who is often influenced by western culture finds to his cost and ruefully admits in private.

Apart from patriarchs and matriarchs, the system promotes a spirit of dependence, and retards initiative and enterprise. Reverence for parental and family authority weights heavily on the young man anxious to strike out on a new line and tends to arrest character development in its most susceptible and formative years. Reliance on family support saps the sense of responsibility and turns many a potential steady worker into a drifter. The family pressure is far stronger than anything known in the West, and too strong not only for weak, but often also for average and sensitive natures. On account of this dependence, we find that there is too much submissiveness, docility and lack of initiative in the individual. In some instances the individual's opinion was not taken into consideration and the family's decision prevailed.

Taub,<sup>2</sup> in his study of Indian administrative officers, cited an interesting example of an officer who was forced to change his profession. The following is a quote from an engineer.

I got admission from both engineering and medical schools. But my family was opposed to my going in for medicine, because doctors must attend women in labor, and do other things that are unclean. And my family was very orthodox. So although I

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>2</sup>Richard P. Taub, Bureaucrats Under Stress, Administrators and Administration in an Indian State (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p. 79.

was interested in medicine, and I had a sponsor, an eminent doctor who was willing to set me up in the profession, give me tools, etc.; I had assisted him and he thought I had a natural aptitude, I chose engineering, because my family disapproved of medicine.

As another example, Taub quoted that one father who had nine children had already decided their future profession and selected a wide range of occupations for them because, he said: "I did not want to put all my eggs in one basket."<sup>1</sup> There were a few instances of officers who were the victims of the family's decisions, but in villages the condition is worse compared to urban areas. Here the younger members were encouraged to stay in the house and were advised to follow the same ancestral craft which in a way promotes the rigid caste system. Most of the professions in general are interlinked with the individual's caste. On account of the importance of caste and its identity, the head of the family, who is a conservative and caste-conscious person, tries hard to continue those values and hence wants to see his offspring follow the same craft or profession. The second important feature is the role of the head of the family and the role members played in marriages of their children. Due to their dominant roles, the younger men and women accepted their advice in the prearranged marriages between the bride and the bridegroom's family where there is always a stipulation of dowry. (It is paid according to the educational qualifications and the professions of the individuals), which is a common social disease, indeed. The last feature of the joint family system is a

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<sup>1</sup>

Op. cit., p. 83.



family patriotism which places the welfare of the family member before that of the public, which is the root cause of nepotism in public life. As Spear said, that in Hinduism nothing matters really, so long as the family flourishes.<sup>1</sup> When India wants to move towards a secular society through vast programs of industrialization and technological development in public as well as in private sector, this old institution inhibits changes of various kinds.

### Traditional Panchayat System

The third important feature of an Indian traditional setting was the local self-government.

Local village government in India, the Panchayat or village council, is probably more ancient than any other in the world. The story of its origin can be traced back to the distant past.<sup>2,3</sup> When we reexamined the history of India, through ancient Hindu literature, certain episodes recede into the background and others achieve a new importance. The modern emphasis in the discussion of the Panchayat origin is decidedly on its allegedly democratic character. The term Panchayat itself is a generic expression for the gathering together of an indeterminate number of people for the purpose of arriving at some

<sup>1</sup>Percival Spear, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>Taylor, et al., India's Roots of Democracy, p. 87.

<sup>3</sup>Malawiya, Village Panchayats in India. (New Delhi: All India Congress Committee, 1956), p. 843.

kind of decision. David Mandelbaum said that it is a way of forming public opinion, through council discussions.<sup>1</sup> In his research findings Retzlaff<sup>2</sup> described different kinds of Panchayats which were related with the problem of caste. In the same way, Tinker<sup>3</sup> found out in his study that there were general kinds of Panchayats where villagers were ruled by the local landlords to arbitrate cases among the litigants. In these council discussions critical issues became known and sentiments crystallized among the older people to form a solution to the problem. Thus, millions of people were governed by their own local Panchayats for many centuries. As far as powers were concerned, it was obligatory and customary on the part of the parties to accept the verdict of the council. Sir Henry Maine said that it was customary on the part of the villager to accept the Panchayat decisions. When custom was violated by anyone, it was considered that the offense was against the integrity of the entire community.<sup>4</sup>

Although the typical traditional Indian village was a highly structured social entity, there were a number of weaknesses in it. First of all, it was not a democratic community in the modern sense. Sometimes the dominant caste leaders were the bosses who dictated their

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<sup>1</sup>David G. Mandelbaum, Society in India, Continuity and Change. (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1970, p. 293.

<sup>2</sup>Ralph H. Retzlaff, Village Government in India (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1962), p. 140.

<sup>3</sup>Hugh Tinker, The Foundations of Local Self Government in India, Pakistan and Burma. (London: The Athlone Press, 1954), p. 376.

<sup>4</sup>Taylor, et al., India's Roots of Democracy, p. 89.



verdict to the lower caste individuals. The second weakness was that extra village kinship and caste rights and obligations in some ways took precedence over village obligations. The third general weakness was that, to the extent that village Panchayat still functioned, their function was far more than that of settling local disputes between persons and families than it was of directing local government. Even the caste Panchayats more often than village Panchayats settled these disputes, and caste loyalties were probably stronger than village loyalties. The fourth weakness was the over-weening influence of "dominant families" or elite classes.

In short, when the new government of India was formed in 1949 and rural development programs launched in 1952, India had no system of government in the village except the customary village Panchayat. It was this Panchayat which was part and parcel of its total government structure. To build and evolve such a system was one of the basic tasks of the new government. The new constitution declared in its directive principles of state policy (Article 40) that the states shall take steps to organize village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as might be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.<sup>1</sup>

The first five-year plan also said, "... as the agencies of the state government cannot easily approach each individual separately, progress depends largely on the existence of an active organization in

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<sup>1</sup>Manilal B. Nanavati and Anjaria, The Indian Rural Problem. (Bombay: The Indian Society of Agricultural Economics, 1960), p. 423.

the village which can bring the people into common programs to be carried out with the assistance of the administration.<sup>1</sup>

In this environment of traditional village structure, the planners faced tremendous problems to change the caste structure, the joint family system, into a new status system and to change the individual's mode of thinking through village leadership and create a secular, liberal and democratic type of government.

In light of the above social and political background of the Indian village system, the great problem before the planners was how to change the basic ideas of the village people, because the main structure will not change until the ideas themselves are transmitted. As Spear<sup>2</sup> said, a fungus here or a parasite there may be removed, a dead branch or broken twig may be lopped off, but the Hindu tree of life will stand so long as the sap of Hindu ideology continues to rise. This is the great question before Hinduism today - to prune and cut, or to replant altogether, to change or not to change? Can Western ideas be grafted onto the parent Hindu stem, or must there be a fresh planting altogether?

With all of these problems to consider, the planners simultaneously started building up the rural institutions with help from community development and a national extension service to build a viable type of village government, by creating a new type of village leadership which may be responsible enough to run the village government.

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor, et al., India's Roots of Democracy, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup>Spear, India, Pakistan and the West, p. 45.

In the following chapter we will discuss the historical background of the community development as well as the decentralization of power (Panchayati Raj system), which has radically changed the whole traditional structure of villages in India.



## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF COMMUNITY

#### DEVELOPMENT AND DECENTRALIZATION OF POWER

In the pre-independence era, under the leadership of M.K. Gandhi, the Congress movement began to examine the root causes of village problems. It was Gandhi who believed that India's problem lay in its villages where 350 million of her population lived. He advised his partymen as well as his foreign social workers to go to the villages and guide them. Before his assassination the last advice he gave to his countrymen was to make the villager literate and enable him to respond to the world around him.<sup>1</sup>

In order to uplift the village masses he placed a constructive program for rebuilding the life of the countryside. The principal objectives of that program were: establishment of a democratic-type village government through which to achieve communal unity, increase food production, promotion of village industries, uplift of the under-privileged classes, full development and utilization of local resources, the promotion of economic equality, self-sufficient village economy and self-reliant village community. M.K. Gandhi's ideology and philosophy was forwarded by the Congress Party in the post-independence period and has placed before the country the vision of a new society, integrated and classless, having full autonomous and self-reliant communities as

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<sup>1</sup>The Asian Student, May 1, 1971, p. 4.

the primary unit, preserving and developing the best that existed in the old culture and traditions, and yet accepting the best that science and technology can offer in building up the village communities inter-related with each other and playing their part in the larger life of the nation.

### Origins of Community Development

Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's program of rural development, on October 2, 1952, Mr. Nehru inaugurated the community development program in order to usher rural India into the twentieth century. This program has its roots in the pre-independence effort, when Gandhi emphasized development of decentralized self-sufficient village communities which would eventually constitute parts of a uniquely Indian federation of village republics.

In light of the above philosophy of Gandhi, a modern socialist pattern of community development scheme pioneered at Etahaw (U.P.) in 1948-1949 by an American architect and town planner, Albert Mayer.<sup>1</sup>

The idea behind the first pilot project started by Albert Mayer was economic in terms of concern for more or better products (and income) in agriculture, animal husbandry, irrigation, marketing, roads, consolidation and partial co-working of holdings, fish culture, and local industry. These were the few items which were selected as spear-head and whatever is best suited and most needed in the particular locality. In the second phase, the general improvement of the quality of village life, health, sanitation, housing and community facilities, were to be provided to the people.

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<sup>1</sup>Albert Mayer, Pilot Project, India (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), p. 376.

In the beginning, two small size talukas (consisting of 100 to 150 villages) were selected. It was neither so small as to be meaningless, nor so large that personal observations and checks are not possible. Each taluka had 100 to 150 villages. The purpose of selecting a limited number of villages was to observe the degree of productive and social improvement, as well as of initiative, self-confidence, and cooperation among the village masses.<sup>1</sup> But the main idea behind the selection of a limited number of villages was to train the individuals to take the responsibility of village government. The greater emphasis was made on the importance of leadership because it was important in producing both individual and joint action in an expansive village atmosphere. In fact, there was leadership in each village, but the planners wanted to find out and develop a healthy contemporary leadership.<sup>2</sup>

On account of a planned and constructive approach to development, the project within a short span of time had grown up, and looking at this success the villagers started contributing materials as well as physical labor to gain benefits from the project. Thus, this novel structure which was started by a meager amount of money had itself been adopted by the planning commission as a model for the administration of the community development project.

These later projects, inaugurated under India's first five-year plan, contributed a national network of intensive rural development efforts. In this connection it is necessary to state that this plan started seven months before the plan was issued, and six months after a technical cooperative program agreement was reached between the

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<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. 179.



governments of India and the United States. This agreement was signed by the two governments in May 1952.<sup>1</sup>

After a full crystallization of the community development program, the administration presented its first report to Parliament and later on as a part of this program fifty-five community projects were launched. A project area was called a development block and originally comprised 100 villages covering 150 square miles. The average population of the first development blocks was between 60,000 and 80,000.<sup>2,3</sup> The other extensive national extension service blocks followed much the same pattern.

#### Objectives of the Program

The planners of the community development program defined it in this way, "Community development is the method and the rural extension is the agency through which the five-year plan seeks to initiate a process of transformation of the social and economic life of the villages." Since India was an agrarian country, emphasis was placed on food production.<sup>4</sup> As Mr. Nehru commented, "The community schemes have made great progress in many ways, I think it will be a good idea if those projects and national extension blocks were to devote a little more thought to the production of more food."

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor, et al., India's Roots of Democracy, p. 170.

<sup>2</sup>Harry Maddick, "Panchayat Raj and Rural Local Government in India," Journal of Local Administration Overseas, 1(4) (Oct. 1962), p. 203.

<sup>3</sup>W.H. Morris Jones, The Government and Politics of India. (London: Hutchison University Library, 1964), p. 116.

<sup>4</sup>Government of India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Planning and Development, Speeches of Jawharlal Nehru (1952056) (Delhi: The Publication Division, 1956), p. 53.

The second objective of the plan was to uplift the social condition of the masses. The problems addressed by the plan included the fact that (1) there was an illiteracy rate of 90 per cent for the total population; (2) most of the villagers were isolated physically and socially from the urban areas; (3) the majority of the village people were psychologically oriented more to survival than to hope and expectation; (4) there was a rigid, stratified social structure; (5) a meager transportation system and still a more inadequate communication system existed; (6) there was no proper leadership who could take initiative to help their brethren; (7) and the administrative structure was oriented towards police, tax collection and regulatory functions.

#### Community Development and People's Response

At the initial stages people were pessimistic about these plans, but by the method of successive trials and experiments some goals were achieved. The first program evaluation report published in 1954, said that "The response of the village community to schemes of extension and improvements has been uniformly good."<sup>1</sup> Thus, in a short span of time the people through the government-launched schemes solved the country's food problem.<sup>2</sup>

It is necessary to mention here that at the initial stages of the development, the government wanted to see the response of the people in

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor, et al., India's Roots to Democracy, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup>Time Magazine (March 22, 1971), p. 23.

order to hand over the whole development program to village democratic institutions. In order to fulfil these objectives the government of India appointed a team of experts headed by Mr. Balwauth Ray Mehta for the democratic decentralization. The recommendation of the Mehta committee provided the pattern for building up the structure of the local government. The main points of this committee are that the government should divest itself completely of certain duties and responsibilities and devolve them to a body which will have entire charge of all development work within its jurisdiction, reserving to itself only the functions of guidance, supervision and higher planning.<sup>1</sup> The team's recommendation was accepted by the Government of India, the National Development Council and the State Government in principle and the states were allowed the freedom to vary the pattern. The clearest statement of the team's report is as follows:

Development cannot progress without responsibility and power. Community development can be real only when the community understands its problems, realizes its responsibilities, exercises the necessary powers through its chosen representatives and maintains a constant and intelligent vigilance on local administration. With this objective, we recommend an early establishment of the statutory elective local bodies and devolution of them of the necessary resources, power and authority to suit their local conditions, but without affecting the essence of the scheme which was that substantial power and responsibility, particularly in the field of development, should be devolved

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<sup>1</sup>Brahmadeva Makerji, Community Development in India. (Bombay: Orient Longman's, 1967), p. 217.



to democratic local authorities, representing the local people so that the people's participation in the development program could be secured to the maximum extent and on a continuing basis. These recommendations of the study team were given careful consideration by the Parliament, the state legislative assemblies, and the National Development Council and provided the general blueprint which became the national program for democratic decentralization.<sup>1</sup> Hence, the main structure of this system was made to establish this new system of local government in early 1959. The first state law, which followed the recommendations for the three-tiered system of local self government, was: "The Rajasthan Panchayat Samithi and Zilla Parishad Act, 1959," which was passed by the Rajasthan state legislature and approved by the president of India on the ninth day of September, 1959.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the other Indian states like Andhra, Assam and Orissa established the Panchayat bodies in early 1961.<sup>3</sup> Subsequently all the Indian states had the Panchayati Raj instituted before the end of 1968. In short, the Rajasthan law provides for lessening the administrative authority not only of the district officers but also of the block development officer.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the public and government officials had divided the power. The popular elective bodies were not only to administer, but also participate actively in the formulation of

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor, et al., p. 343.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 349.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 355.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 353.

developmental plans. The proposed elective bodies were as follows:

- (1) Gaon Sabha (village assemblies at local level),
- (2) Panchayat Samithi (at block level),
- (3) Zilla Parishad (at the district level).

The presidents of local assemblies were indirectly elected at the block level in the same way the presidents of Panchayat Samithi were indirectly selected at the district level.

We shall trace the structure of all those bodies and analyze the institutional, organizational and functional changes in local self-government and its impact on the general politicization of the village community.

#### Village Assemblies

The first step in the formation of the new Panchayat was the division of the rural areas in every district into Gaon Sabhas (a Hindu word of village assembly). Each Gaon Sabha was to comprise a population of less than 1000 and not more than 2000 people.<sup>1</sup> The Sabhas were corporate bodies made up of all the mentally competent adult residents of a village or group of adjacent villages. Each Gaon Sabha acquires, holds, administers and transfers both movable and immovable property and could sue and be sued. The Gaon Sabha elects its executive committee, the Gaon Panchayat. The chairman, who presides over the meetings, is the chief administrator. The term of office of members of

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<sup>1</sup>Report of the Team of the Study Community Projects and National Extension Service, Volumes I and II (Nov. 1957), Volume III (Dec. 1957).

Gaon Panchayat were fixed at five year, or six years, if the state government so declared by official notification.<sup>1</sup> The major obligatory duties and functions of Gaon Panchayats, so far as their funds allowed, are construction, repairs, maintenance, clearing and lighting of public streets, medical relief, sanitation, construction of new buildings, and establishing and maintaining the village primary schools; construction and maintenance of public wells, and the care and management of common grazing grounds. Among the discretionary functions are organizing a village volunteer force for watching the village, assisting and advising agriculturists in the obtaining of governmental loans and the development of cooperatives. These various activities are to be financed with shares of fines and fees realized by Panchayats and with taxes and fees which the Gaon Panchayat is empowered to collect. According to the terms of the Act, the Gaon Sabha may levy taxes and fees on lands, animals, vehicles, entertainment, vendors and professions.

### Functions

It is in the Panchayat meetings that we observe the functioning of direct democracy. Under the Act members have the right to ask questions, to discuss and to participate in the Panchayat budget, and in the finalization of the annual report. In a sense it functions during its very short session as a legislature to which the executive is held

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<sup>1</sup>Matheshwari, Studies in Panchayati Raj. (Delhi: Metropolitan Book Co., 1963), p. 195.



responsible. Panchayat supervised almost all the affairs of the village, settled disputes and appropriated taxes.

### Panchayat Samithi (At Block Level)

The Panchayat Samithi (the local government in the middle tier) is formed from 30 to 40 Sarpanchs (presidents) of the local level. Each Samithi elects its own president from its members. This intermediate body of local self-government, in between the Zilla Parishad and the village Panchayat, has more effective powers than the other two bodies. As Taylor said, the Samithi has to perform all the development functions previously performed by the development block. But in addition to being a development block, it is a statutory unit of local government which can levy taxes, receive grants, make and collect loans, execute contracts on its own behalf, and exercise supervision over its own officers. In short, many of the tasks and powers of supervision about development activities from agriculture to education and other related public welfare work, which was previously exercised by the state, were now transferred to the Samithi.<sup>1</sup>

Its organic relationship with the district organization (Zilla Parishad) was that its president, together with the presidents from all other Samithis in the district, were to constitute the voting members of the Zilla Parishad (District Council).

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor, et al., p. 350.

### Zilla Parishad's Functions

The Zilla Parishad, the top administrative body of local self-government at the district level, was commissioned to watch over all agricultural and production programs, construction programs, employment and other targets laid down for the district and to see that they are being properly carried out, accomplished and implemented and reviewed at least twice a year the progress of such programs and targets. The president of the Zilla Parishad was to encourage the growth of initiative and enthusiasm in the Panchayat Samithis and provide for them guidance in the plans and production programs undertaken by them and the growth of cooperative and other organizations therein.<sup>1</sup> This higher body is comprised of 40 to 60 members. The chairman of constituent Panchayat Samithi is an ex-officio member. There are also a few coopted members of each Parishad: (1) Eight women; four members of scheduled castes if their population is less than 10 per cent; (2) eight, if population is more than 10 per cent, and (3) four members of scheduled tribes if their population is more than 5 per cent. The members of Parliament and state legislatures elected from the area of a district are also by law the members of Zilla Parishad.<sup>2</sup>

The Zilla Parishad had its own gazetted officer as secretary, its own engineer and other officials. The collector (the senior district official) is the chairman of the standing committee of the Zilla Parishad

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor, ibid., p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Panchayat Raj and Community Development and Cooperation, Dept. of Community Development, Government of India. (New Delhi, 1965), p.76.

but not of the Zilla Parishad itself which elects its own chairman. The Zilla Parishad's job is supervision and coordination in between the Panchayat Samithi and the Collector. The Collector is a member of Zilla Parishad and chairman of its statutory committees. As chairman of the standing committees, his only statutory duty is to preside at meetings. As a member of the Zilla Parishad, he has no more rights than any other member, although as collector he has to fill vacancies in it, and act in emergencies and in connection with "no confidence" motions. The collector's planning responsibilities have been taken away and transferred to politicians, although he is still responsible for revenue collection, law and order, and for general supervision of the work of all officials in the district.

#### Coordination in Between the Samithi and the Block Officials

The block development officer is supported by a staff of technical experts, such as extension officers in animal husbandry, agriculture, small scale industries, cooperatives, Panchayats, engineering, etc. Thus, the official and non-official members coordinate activities in order to implement or execute the programs.

The Panchayat Samithi has several standing committees for such purposes as agriculture, cooperatives, education, public works, finance and taxation. Every standing committee consists of seven members, and the chairman of every committee is the Samithi president. The staff of the Panchayat Samithi is under the administrative control of the block development officer and all are subordinate to the Samithi. The president of the Panchayat Samithi exercises control over the block



development officer to ensure that the resolutions of the Panchayat Samithi and of its standing committee are implemented. The block development officer is the executive officer of the Samithi and is responsible to the Samithi for the execution of their decisions. A confidential report is made by the Samithi president. Meetings of all of the extension officers are held monthly to report on their activities and are generally presided over by the Samithi president.<sup>1</sup>

#### Role of Village-Level Worker at the Local Level

At the village level, the official representative of the government, the multiple-purpose village-level worker would serve either 5 to 10 villages, depending on whether the program in the block was intensive or extensive. The village-level worker is a philosopher, public servant, guide and a social worker to the villager. He would render his duties in the field of first aid, catalyze and help, organize village groups for the self-help undertakings; and he is the agent through whom village needs could be made known to the block development officer and his specialists, in agriculture, health, veterinary, fertilizers, and in other areas which could be useful to villagers. The village level worker was the most important person at the grass roots level of democracy to change the traditional mode of practices, either in agriculture or health, or in local bodies, and all personnel of the village and the echelons of administration above him would participate in the activities which he was attempting to promote.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Weiner, State Politics in India (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 419.

<sup>2</sup>Taylor, et al., India's Roots of Democracy, p. 177.

In short, the official and non-official bodies coordinated to achieve the desired results about the villagers' economical, social and political sphere of life. Thus, we have discussed the general structure of the community development and the local self-government, and the relations and coordination in between the official and non-official personnel at the various levels of decentralization of power. As we discussed earlier, the idea behind the decentralization of power and community development programs was basically to decentralize responsibility, utilize and develop local group initiative to run their own governments democratically. Having gone into detail about the institutional and structural set-up of local self-government bodies, now we will look at the impact of these plans on village, social, economical and political spheres, which has changed the very basic fabric of the Indian countryside.

In the following chapter we shall discuss the impact of these plans on the traditional village social structure in general and its leadership pattern in particular.

CHAPTER III

IMPACT OF DECENTRALIZATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE EMERGENCE OF NEW LEADERSHIP

The introduction of community development programs and local self-government bodies brought with their trials a host of new emergent institutions and their leaders. In the traditional era there were old Panchayat bodies, which were not part of the local government and its leadership role was also different from the present village structure. The leadership of the old institutions was ascribed rather than achieved. The leaders were conservative, authoritarian, egocentric, caste-conscious and proponents of old cultural values. In this environment where traditional values were dominant it was imperative on the part of planners to change the leadership pattern and encourage those emergent leaders, who were interested in cutting off traditional moorings and adopting new values and roles in running the new democratic institutions. After the inception of democratic decentralization there were tremendous changes taking place at the village level in general and leadership pattern in particular. Firstly, the encouragement given by the government through its village leadership training center<sup>1,2</sup> changed the old traditional processes into new democratic institutions. Secondly, the

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<sup>1</sup>Hugh Gray, "Andhra Pradesh," in State Politics in India. ed. by Myron Weiner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 422.

<sup>2</sup>Community Development and Panchayati Raj, Ministry of Community Development and Cooperation (Government of India, 1964), pp. 160-61.



ineffectiveness of the dominant caste was one of the major factors which helped in the emergence of new leaders. The rigid caste system is being split along more than one line. Due to personal conflicts between ambitious leaders it has broken down the unity of caste support.<sup>1</sup> There are party interests, regional interests and local factional pulls undermining the strength of any dominant caste.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, the keen competition among all the groups in a village to hold power cuts across all boundaries of traditional loyalties such as family, kinship, caste and religion, etc. Lastly, the impact of the communication system and general economic development programs in the villages contributed to the understanding of the new values and new functions in changing the traditional approaches in running the village government.

On account of all of these changes in the authority and power pattern in the community and the family, individuals are less dependent upon each other. This has weakened the social bonds, and in turn has facilitated the formation of groups on a non-traditional basis. As a result of all these factors, the traditional groups broke down and changed into social groups with some political functions.

We shall discuss in detail in the following pages the changes which have been made in the social, economical and political spheres at the grass roots level of democracy.

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<sup>1</sup>K. Ishwaran, Change and Continuity in India's Villages. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Pitney Beatrice Lamb, India - A World in Transition. (New York: F.A.Praeger, 1966), p. 382.

After the inception of the community development program in India in 1952, a marked importance was given to education. In the following five-year plans it was also one of foremost priorities. On account of the importance of education and early establishment of schools, it increased the literacy rate among the people.<sup>1,2</sup> This has indirectly effected awareness among the young people of their economical, social and other problems. Before the dawn of independence, the outside information was passed on through traditional leaders who were well informed but they had vested interest to keep the lower classes uninformed about the opportunities available in the newly-established democratic institutions. Besides education, the other factor which helped the people was the diffusion of radio sets, automobiles, cycles, and asphalt roads which have contributed immensely to the removal of the feeling of isolation and effected the common villager's sensitivity to external events and he became aware that political acts and decisions are directly going to affect him and he had a choice to articulate his demands. All of these and other factors played a role in the emergence of new articulate leaders at the grass roots level of democracy. It is necessary here to understand what role they played in the local, district, state and national politics in India. What are the social and cultural factors which helped in electing these leaders to the newly-founded local self-government bodies? How are these newly-emerged leaders elected? How do they mobilize the voters? What methods do they use in support of mobilization?

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<sup>1</sup>The Asian Student, May 1, 1971, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Taylor, et al., p. 644.

In nominating the candidates in the local council, those who finished at least primary school education and are able to read and write are given importance compared to illiterate candidates. As by statutory law<sup>1</sup> it is necessary that those interested in getting elected to the chairmanship of the local council should be able to read and write the local languages. On account of this literacy matrix fixed by the statutory law, the majority of the candidates elected to the office of Panchayats are literate. Sen<sup>2</sup> in his all-India survey of candidates found that 33.5 per cent finished middle school education, and 63.5 per cent had finished the primary school education. Robins,<sup>3</sup> Gist,<sup>4</sup> and Valsan,<sup>5</sup> in their survey results found that a person who finished the primary school education has a better chance of being sponsored for the local elections than an illiterate person. The second next criterion which helped in electing the candidates was belonging to the farmer peasant class. An all-India survey taken by the Institute of Community Development Programme in India, showed that most of the elective members

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<sup>1</sup>The conference of state ministers of community development and Panchayat Raj: Ministry of Community Development and Cooperation, Government of India, 1965, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup>Lalit K. Sen, Awareness of Community Development in Village India. (Hyderabad, India: National Institute of Community Development, 1966), p. 42.

<sup>3</sup>Robert S. Robins, "Political Elite Formation in Rural India," The Uttar Pradesh Elections of 1949, 1956, and 1961." Journal of Politics, 29(4) (Nov., 1967):838-60.

<sup>4</sup>N.P. Gist, "Leadership and Culture Change in Kulu," Man in India, 44(2) (April-June, 1964):123-31.

<sup>5</sup>E. H. Valsan, Community Development Programs and Rural Local Government (New York: Praeger Special Studies, 1970), p. 443.



(87.2 per cent)<sup>1</sup> were peasant cultivators who cultivated their own land. Previously, big landlords were the traditional leaders of the Panchayat council but due to land reforms and other tenancy laws the peasant class of cultivator farmers emerged in the local self-government.<sup>2</sup>

### Support Mobilization

Unlike western politics, support mobilization is based on a year-round procedure. Each group tried hard to mobilize the voters in their own camp. They maintained an intimate relationship with their constituents. Myron Weiner<sup>3</sup> has pointed out that patron-client relationships are helpful factors in bringing the people into individual camps.

### Support Mobilization and Role of Factions

In village India, six to seven factional groups are found. These factions are primarily social groups which also played a minor role at the time of elections as a supporting group to a candidate. Oscar Lewis<sup>4</sup> in his survey of a north India village also found few factional social groups who played a minor role in elections. Although these groups are important, they have only partial influence on the way in which villagers cast their ballots.<sup>5</sup> There are various causes for the

<sup>1</sup>Sen, Awareness of Community Development in India, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup>Vijay Ranjan Dutta, "Emerging power patterns at the Zilla Parishad level," The Indian Journal of Political Science, XXXI (July-Sept., 1970), p. 291.

<sup>3</sup>Myron Weiner and Ranji Kothari, Indian Voting Behaviour. Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965), p. 177.

<sup>4</sup>Oscar Lewis, Village Life in Northern India (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1958), p. 384.

<sup>5</sup>Weiner and Kothari, Indian Voting Behaviour, p. 199.

formation of these groups. First, the villages were isolated entities where there were no recreational facilities. Secondly, the people had plenty of leisure time where the topics of discussion are related with individual, families, and the group's personal affairs. In this environment some kind of friction among the different groups was inevitable. After the decentralization of power and the community development program, these groups changed into support groups for the candidates. On account of technological revolution in agricultural sectors each group became interested in participating in village affairs in order to achieve material benefits as well as spiritual happiness; such as building of schools, libraries, and health centers, etc. Therefore, the factional leaders compete very strongly in the social, economical and political sphere of village life. Before the inception of the community development plan, it was one of the objectives of Mayer<sup>1</sup> and his associates to harness the competitive drive among different factions and channel them into a healthy competition in order to make the village development a success.

Mayer described the positive role of factions in the following words:

No one could deny or ignore the existence of factions in the village. They are realistically recognized. But the main issue or task before the planners was to create a healthy and competitive drive to make a village development a success. These factions are important in themselves, and important in producing both individual and joint actions in an expansive village atmosphere. Through them runs the requirement of leadership. But it is our job to find and develop a healthy contemporary leadership.

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<sup>1</sup>Albert Mayer, Pilot Project, India. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), p. 376.

Thus, in this environment of competition those factions and their leaders are successful who possess personality, character, and talent for public service;<sup>1</sup> such as raising contributions in religious festivals, mobilizing people for creating common facilities, building up of schools, libraries and health centers, etc.<sup>2</sup>

### Elections: And Their Effects

After the elections these newly-emerged leaders played an important and pivot role, which had an impact on the district through state and national politics in India. Because it is these elective leaders who represent the three-fourths majority of the electorate at the Legislatures and Parliaments. It is imperative to understand the values and the general role of these leaders. How has this new leadership been changing and what effects do these changes have upon political demands and public policy? What does the present trend indicate? It suggests that urban discontent may not so easily overflow into rural areas because rural areas increasingly provide their own leaders, both rural leaders and rural voters are more likely to be conditioned by what is going on in rural areas than by discontent in cities. All of these changes in the social and political sphere of village life have affected the general voter's awareness to put constant pressure on the rural leaders to get more benefits from the state "machines". On account of all of these constant demands and pressure, there is a change in leadership patterns also. This pressure from the masses on the

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<sup>1</sup>Hugh Gray, "Andhra Pradesh," p. 425.

<sup>2</sup>Udai Parek, Studies in Rural Leadership. (Delhi: Behavioral Sciences Center, 1966), p. 109.



contesting groups made the leaders more flexible and accommodating to the lower groups, who were previously unable to move vertically.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the local leaders who have accommodated all of these groups at the local bodies had to play an active role in the block and district levels in order to get more developmental work for their village. Due to the importance of this local leadership at the block and district levels, it has indirectly affected the nomination of a local man at the legislature as well as in national elections. Maheswari contended that there is a growing tendency among the village masses to nominate a local man at the block, district and state levels.

Bailey,<sup>2</sup> dealing with Orissa, remarks on the role played by the local man. Through kinship ties, ties of friendship, business, locality and so forth, the newly emerged leader has built up a "machine" for his campaign, and his electors also believe that they can approach him, and keep hold of him after he has been elected.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the Panchayati Raj has paved the way to produce more legislators who have rural backgrounds.<sup>4</sup> Survey results show that the average member of the state legislature sees himself as the real representative of his constituents. These bourgeois cultivators who own land dominated in one state assembly as

<sup>1</sup>David C. Potter, Government in Rural India: An Introduction to Contemporary District Administration. (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1965), p. 53.

<sup>2</sup>F.G. Bailey, "Parliamentary government in Orissa (1947-1959)," Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies, 1 (1961), p.120.

<sup>3</sup>B. Maheswari, Studied in Panchayati Raj. (New Delhi: Metropolitan Book Co., 1963), pp. 154-55.

<sup>4</sup>V.M. Sirsikar, "Leadership patterns in rural Maharashtra," Asian Survey, IV(7) (July, 1964), pp. 929-40.

well as in the rest of the states.<sup>1</sup> Forrester,<sup>2</sup> also in his survey found that the most legislators get the major part of their incomes from land. Most of them belong to peasant cultivator groups. Hence, the agricultural interests are much stronger within the Congress party in legislatures and parliament. On account of the importance of the rural numerical strength of votes, the local leaders in turn press the block and district level leaders to receive more developmental programs for their villages. Thus, the dynamic change took place at four levels, i.e., local, block, district and state.

(1) Between village leaders and the district political factions for the domination of village Panchayats. (2) The competition at the local, block and district levels which has furthered the legitimization of the democratic system. (3) There is a competition between the state "machine" and the block and district officials to capture the local institutions to unseat the incumbent if he happened to be from an urban area. (4) Lastly, the growing importance and power structure of the local self-government bodies has affected the relations between the Congress party leaders and the Panchayat leaders. Due to all of these processes of a competitive system of the "survival of the fittest," the masses at all levels of the social and political structure have been awakened. Finally, the most important impact of the decentralization of

<sup>1</sup>Stanley A. Kochanek, "The relations between social background and attitudes in Indian legislators," Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies, VI, No. 1 (March, 1968), pp. 34-54.

<sup>2</sup>Duncan B. Forrester, "State legislature in Madras," Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies, VII, No. 1 (March, 1969), pp. 36-58.

power was the relationship between the state and central government. Due to the growing importance of rural leaders and the articulate character of their demands and their interests, it has become more difficult for planners not to take the demands of these leaders into account. As Myron Weiner<sup>1</sup> said, the growth of rural political power has had an effect on straining center-state relations. Thus, the state government would increasingly turn to the center for financial help and these growing rural demands on the state are reflected in state-center conflicts. Hence, the demand on rural areas for greater allocations for government expenditure and greater access to power will be difficult to reject, due to the growing importance of rural leaders in which universal suffrage has given the real power to the village masses who are numerically in greater strength than the urban masses.

Thus, Indian politics has entered a new phase in which the urbanized leadership has come face to face with a new generation of leaders which has its roots in the rural areas and has its grip in the local organization.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Myron Weiner, "The changing patterns of political leadership in W. Bengal," Pacific Affairs, XXXII, No. 3 (Sept., 1959), p. 286.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph R. Guesfield, "Political community and group interests in modern India," Pacific Affairs, XXXVIII (1965), p. 29.



## CHAPTER IV

### A CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM

In the preceding chapters we have discussed the general background of the community development and the Panchayati Raj system and its impact on the social, economical and political sphere of villager's life which contributed in the emergence of new leaders at the grass roots level of democracy. In the following pages we will critically assess the results and make a few remarks about the present working set-up of these bodies. In this regard it is necessary to see how far the traditional values changed and what has to be done to further establish a democratic society at the lower level.

In Chapter I we pointed out that in the traditional village structure there were three systems; namely, the caste system, joint family system, and the traditional Panchayat system, which were the part and parcel of the village society. After the inception of the democratic decentralization, these institutions changed morphologically, which was one of the objectives of the planners to build up a new pattern of democratic society.

In the following pages we will discuss the changes and developments made in these systems in detail.

The caste system was the main hurdle in the path of developing a democratic dynamic society, which India declared in her constitution to build. This old institution was in direct clash with an open-class structure which is the corner-stone of a free, open democratic system. Therefore, this old institution was a stumbling block in the path of the vertical mobility of the masses. Moreover, it dampened free communication between persons and classes and this thwarts the development of a free communicative society. Due to planned programs and a deliberate attempt to make this system ineffective it became weak in more than one way.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, due to modern civilization it has lost much of its vitality. The following are the main causes which made it ineffective: (1) Impact of western education and culture; (2) university and college life; (3) modern facilities of travel; (4) growth of large towns; (5) the economic pressure on resources and professions; (6) the removal of the isolation of the village; (7) the emergence of industrialization; (8) and the development of a spirit of skepticism which has undermined the influence, the rigidity, and the exclusion of the caste system.

Lastly, the influence of democratic ideals and secular concepts has discouraged the preference given to one class over the other in government employment. In short, if industrialization progresses more rapidly, then this old institution will disappear by the end of this century.<sup>2,3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ahmed and Ahmed, "The politics of social mobility in India." The Indian Journal of Social Research (Dec., 1964), p. 240.

<sup>2</sup>Ahmed and Ahmed, p. 240.

<sup>3</sup>Selig Harrison, Washington Post (July 15, 1964).

The second system which stood in a strong but vulnerable position across the path of change was the joint-family system.

It was recognized by the planners from the beginning that fundamental changes should be made in this traditional institution in order to lay the foundation of democracy at the grass roots level. In this system an individual's life is wholly sacrificed for the welfare of the family instead of the community and the nation. This deep loyalty to the family makes it difficult for many individuals to exercise their rights and obligations as citizens of a national society. Although the loyalty of a family and a caste does not inhibit a person's loyalty to his state or nation, it does dilute his recognition of obligation to the national society.<sup>1</sup>

#### Breakdown of Joint Family System

After the advent of independence, the Indian government started various plans to uplift its masses economically. In order to implement all of the plans successfully there is need of hundreds and thousands of literate individuals to take the responsibilities in various developmental plans. This has offered tremendous opportunities to the rural intelligentsia to get more education which caused departure from their homes for a longer period of time for schooling, making them more mobile horizontally and vertically and giving them greater freedom to pursue lives of activity independently of family and caste predilection. Thus, the joint-family system has responded to the pronounced trend towards more education for children which have modified the structure and function

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor, et al., p. 671.



of this system. The actual composition of the household is reduced in size as the younger members leave the villages for towns and cities to seek schooling, training and jobs.<sup>1</sup>

Sharib,<sup>2</sup> found that under the stress of modern civilization the joint family system is fast disappearing. It is losing, and has now already lost, much of its force among the educated professional class and urban dwellers.

The third traditional institution, which has been drastically changed and has adopted new roles according to the situation, was the working of the old Panchayat system. In the last chapter we have discussed the impact of new institutions on the emergence of new leaders. In the following pages we will rationalize and evaluate how the new institutions have taken the place of old systems. In order to see the difference between the old and the new, we will submit the survey results taken throughout India.

First, the community development and the Panchayati Raj system gave a serious jolt to the old forces of traditionalism, conservatism and ignorance. The second, was the fact that the consciousness of the people about their rights made the old institutions dormant and ineffective. Two survey results showed that almost all of the respondents in

<sup>1</sup>David G. Mandelbaum, Social organization and planned culture change in India. Ed. by R.K. Desai, Rural Sociology in India. (Bombay: Popular Prakhshan), 1969, p. 693.

<sup>2</sup>Zahurul Hassan Sharib, Indian village in Transition, Quarterly Journal of Local Self Government, XXXVII (1) July-Sept., 1966:69-94.

a village know that new institutions are working for their uplift<sup>1,2</sup> and betterment.

In the traditional institution there were <sup>d</sup>few well-to-do people who monopolized the entire political power of the village and now it has changed significantly.<sup>3</sup>

If the success of the new institution can be measured in terms of the people's awareness of their rights, then it is a great achievement for planners who created self-confidence among the village masses. Political awareness reached not only the lower classes but also the Scheduled caste also. A survey result showed that 27 per cent of Harijans, who have the ability to sign their names, showed political awareness. The author contended that the reason for their greater political consciousness was that the leaders of this group have during the recent years ingrained on the minds of their caste people, that the privileged groups of the village have exploited and dominated them in every sphere

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<sup>1</sup>Y.D. Jadeja, Villager's View of Their Gram Panchayat (A Study). Local Self Government Quarterly, Vol. XXXV, No. 2 Oct.-Dec., 1964, pp. 214-36.

<sup>2</sup>M. Rafiq Khan, Panchayati Raj in Madras Summary of an opinion Survey. In Readings on Panchayati Raj, ed. by George Hyderabad, 1967,

<sup>3</sup>S. Bhatnagar, Panchayati Raj in Punjab, Quarterly Journal of Local Self Government, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 4, 1968, pp. 411-422.

of their lives.<sup>1,2</sup> Moreover, the constitutional privileges and reservation of seats for scheduled castes and tribes heled in disturbing the earlier status quo created by the powerful groups.<sup>3</sup> Rao and Ramana<sup>4</sup> cited a case which showed that the underprivileged classes were exerting their rights to get the benefits from the government.

This work relates to the construction of a school building in the Kapileswar-Puram Samithe in 1960. The school building was exclusively intended for the benefit of the local Harijans. The village Panchayat, dominated by the non-Harijan elements, did not show much interest in this work. But the Harijans were keen about having the school building constructed. The leader of the Harijan community was not disheartened by the indifference of the village Panhayat. He organized his community so well that he collected sufficient cash and labor by way of matching government contributions. The work was completed very successfully.

Thus, the new institutions have created a stir in the political domain by raising the political consciousness of the local people and providing them with accessible power platforms.

<sup>1</sup>D.S. Muley, Working of Village Panchayats in Bhandara District. Journal of Local Self Government, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 1-2, Oct-Dec., 1967, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup>K.V. Rao, Democratic decentralization and the quest for leadership. Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol. XXII, No. 4. Oct-Dec., 1962, p. 322.

<sup>3</sup>George Jacob, Readings on Panchayati Raj, p. 146.

<sup>4</sup>B. Saweswara Rao. K.V. Ramana, Panchayat Samithis (A Case Study). In Andhra Pradesh in Readings on Panchayati Raj. ed. by George Jacobs, p. 75.



The lower and scheduled castes not only accepted challenges, but also sat with their masters, employers, money-lenders, and landlords and felt that their civic interests would no more be neglected.<sup>1</sup> Besides the general awareness of the population, the same survey results found that the groups were acting in a constructive fashion in the villages as a check on the levy of taxes on themselves to support projects which they themselves wanted to initiate. At the local level there have been in some places three different chairmen in three elections. Some genuinely democratic factors have been at work.<sup>2</sup> When the Panchayat or chairmen failed too badly to secure any advantage for their areas, they may be changed. The leaders have realized that village community was emphatically a part of a larger world of social and religious life. Retzlaff in his case study of a village, quoted the remark of a farmer in the following way.

Don't forget this. This is the first time we have had such a thing in Khalapur village. We have made many mistakes, but we will not make them again. Now we have learned what the powers of the President and the Panchayat are. We will watch the new President carefully.<sup>3</sup>

In short, even though the landless, poor peasants do not possess any land, their political awareness may seem to increase their power in two ways: One is in the direction of universal adult suffrage with

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<sup>1</sup>Rajeshwar Dayal. Panchayati Raj in India (Delhi: Metropolitan Books, 1970), p. 253.

<sup>2</sup>Hugh Hunter, Paths of rural change, Time for a bolder course." Asian Review, 2, No. 1 (Oct. 1968), 9.

<sup>3</sup>Ralph H. Retzlaff, Village Government in India, a case study. (London: New York Asia Publishing House), 1962, p. 125.

a corresponding growth of their power in local government, and the second is in the creation of compulsory primary education which is universal throughout India.<sup>1</sup>

### Perception of General Functioning

The present indications in the field of Panchayati Raj have clearly shown that the newly created institutional structure has struck roots in the rural soil and has generated a burst of energy and dynamism that has revolutionized the traditional rural life. These institutions, as the results show, have been successful in attaining a pace and drive which no other scheme or project of rural development had been able to do so far in the history of India.<sup>2</sup>

While the prospects of this system can be regarded as bright, there are certain deficiencies and difficulties which, if not tackled at the earliest would obstruct the smooth working of those bodies in the years to come.

In the following discussion we will point out those deficiencies and submit certain prescriptions.

In the earlier discussion (Chapter II) we described the different roles and functions of the statutory bodies, like Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat at local level, Panchayat Sameti at the block level, and Zilla Parishad at the district level.

<sup>1</sup>Weiner, The struggle for equality in India. Foreign Affairs, No. 4, July 1962, p. 652.

<sup>2</sup>Iqbal Narayan and M.C. Mathur. Panchayati Raj in Rajas. A case study in Readings on Panchayati Raj, ed. by George Jacobs, p. 104.

The three tier bodies are working smoothly and they are interlinked together but the lowest and important bodies Gram Sabha (village assemblies) have not yet emerged as a potentially powerful body. The purpose of Gram Sabha was essentially to facilitate direct face to face communication between the villagers and their elected representatives, in almost all of the states where they exist and generally consist of all the eligible voters of a village Panchayat area.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this institution was the drawing of the plans, checking of the accounts, report of the administration for the preceding financial year, development and other work programs prepared for the current financial year and last audit report and replies.<sup>2</sup>

These stipulated powers granted by every state to the Gram Sabhas have not yet worked properly. The study team on the failure of this body submitted the following reasons:

1. The average villager, once a leader is elected, thinks that he has nothing to do after that and the leader will do everything;

2. The average villager is unaware of his rights and responsibilities as a Gram Sabha member;

3. Very few people get the information about the forthcoming Gram Sabha meeting. The usual method of communication is the beating of drums by the village watchman (Chowkidar) which is seldom done properly.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Meddick, Panchayati Raj, (London: Longman Group Ltd.), 1970, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 340.

<sup>3</sup>Report of the Study Team in Gram Sabha in Panchayat Raj movement, Govt. of India, 1963, p. 13.



This important body can be made effective by the evaluation of the village public opinion which has not been done.<sup>1</sup> If the people are properly guided as to their roles then this important body can take an active part in the development programs sponsored by the Panchayat or Panchayat Samithi. After a plan is discussed in the Gram Sabha, then it becomes easier for the executive to implement it and levy more taxes on the masses to meet the extra financial burdens.<sup>2</sup> As Inamdar<sup>3</sup> and Maddick<sup>4</sup> also submitted, this can give strength to the executive to implement progressive programs. In short, this body has yet to emerge as a forum of constructive criticism for the waking of the Panchayati Raj institution.<sup>5</sup>

The second deficiency in the working of these institutions is the incompatibility between the officials and non-officials. The relationship between these two groups is the most sensitive issue. In different studies it has been shown that there are conflicts between the president of the Samithi and the Block development officer. This friction between the official and non-official is a great handicap to the healthy growth of democratic institutions at the grass root levels. The basic philosophy behind the community

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor, et al. 542.

<sup>2</sup>George Jacob, Readings on Panchayati Raj, p. 155.

<sup>3</sup>N. R. Inanadar, Functioning of Village Panchayats in Readings in Panchayati Raj ed. by George Jacobs, pp. 35-59.

<sup>4</sup>Henry Meddick, Panchayati Raj, p. 79.

<sup>5</sup>Iqbal Narayan and P. C. Mathur. Panchayati Raj in Rajasthan, a case study of Jaipur, district in Readings on Panchayati Raj ed. by George Jacobs, p. 104.

development and the Panchayati Raj system was to hand over the power from the administration to the people. As Mr. Nehru said, "Let village authorities function and let them make a million mistakes." It is a sensitive issue at the present moment whether the district and Block development officers could bring themselves to accept either rationally or emotionally the idea expressed by Nehru.<sup>1</sup>

Now administrators are being asked not only to cooperate with their schooled judgments about good administration but, to some extent, suffer some loss in the elite status which they have enjoyed in the British system. Hugh Gray,<sup>2</sup> as an example quoted that the public officials used their powers in transferring administrators. He said that in one Samithi (Block), the Block development officer was not on good terms with the president and he was eventually transferred. In another Survey, Valsam<sup>3</sup> found that there was tension between the Bureaucrats and the Panchayat bodies. In short, the power is not equally balanced between the contending sides, and the officials can only fight through defensive and evasive actions.<sup>4</sup> Thus, in a dominant party state, too much power may be concentrated in the Block presidents who are usually Congress Party members.

<sup>1</sup>Taylor, et al., India's Roots of Democracy. p. 344.

<sup>2</sup>Hugh Gray "Andhra Pradesh" in State Politics in India, ed. by Myron Weiner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968) p. 419.

<sup>3</sup>E.H. Valsam, Community Development Programs and Rural Local Government (New York: A Prager Sp. Studies, 1970), *passim*.

<sup>4</sup>Hugh Gray: "Andhra Pradesh," p. 421.

How can this be rectified? As we observed earlier, these democratic institutions are beginning to find their feet, and in the initial states, it is necessary to build up a tradition that would strengthen democracy. The main functions vested in the Samiti should be only to make policy decisions, not execute them; for most of the presidents implement as well as make policy.<sup>1</sup> The elected functionaries themselves should not try to carry out executive functions: If they do that, and if they make mistakes, there will be no other agency at that level to correct them. So execution of programs should be left exclusively with permanent official hierarchy. The elected representatives at each level of the Panchayati Raj institutions should exercise supervision and general control. This can be better ensured if power at these levels is vested not in one individual, such as Sarpanch at the local level or the Samithi president, or the Zilla Parishad chairman, but in an executive group of people. For example, administrative control will be exercised by the Zilla Parishad over the officers placed at their disposal, through the chief executive officer. Instances like the failure of community work programs because of misappropriation of funds by Panshayat president will not arise if executive functions are handled exclusively by permanent officers.<sup>2</sup>

Lastly, is the question of relationship, which can offer a solution to this issue. As Harold Laski has remarked that the

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<sup>1</sup>Hugh Gray, "Andhra Pradesh," p. 419.

<sup>2</sup>George Jacobs, Readings on Panchayati Raj. p. 160.



relationship between the elected members and the expert is not susceptible of definitions, it is a habit of mind, a tradition, which can be recognized when seen, but eludes the printed words.<sup>1</sup> The Sadig Ali Commission in its recommendations has pointed out that solution to this problem lay in understanding one's role whether one is a public servant or an elected representative.

The third deficiency of these plans was that the weaker sections have not benefitted as they were expected to. In few cases through Panchayat and welfare department some work is done like Harijan Housing scheme, grant of scholarships to Harijan students, mid-day meals, etc. The overall performance of Panchayat has not yet achieved the desired results.<sup>2</sup> Although, constitutionally, they have been given special privileges (Article 46 of the Constitution) still major steps would have to be taken by the Panchayati Raj institution.<sup>3</sup>

The reason why the benefits of development in the rural areas have not percolated through the weaker section is, that to take advantage of programs like agricultural loans, subsidies, etc., one must possess land and immovable property to offer as sureties. If the weaker sections of the rural community are to take advantage of these development programs, present rules in this respect will have to be changed.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>H.J. Laski, A Grammar of Politics, p. 424-425, quoted by Rajeshwar Dayal in Panchayati Raj in India, p. 294.

<sup>2</sup>M. Rafiq Khan. Panchayati Raj in Madras. In Readings On Panchayati Raj, ed. by George Jacob, p. 116.

<sup>3</sup>The Ministry of Community Development and Cooperative, Dept. of Community Development, India, 1965. p. 163.

<sup>4</sup>P.K. Chandhiri, Panchayati Raj in Action -- A Study of Rajasthan in Rural Sociology in India. ed. by A.R. Desai (Bombay: Popular Prakasan. 4th ed. 1969), p. 552.

### Towards Future

After discussing the Indian village social, economical and political aspects of life from traditional as well as the present set-up, we now move towards the end of this discussion. We will make a few running generalizations about the overall achievements of Panchayati Raj and the Community development programs.

In order to elaborate the point, we will take the traditional social structure, in what way it has changed and what would be the prospects of traditional value system.

The main finding of the survey results, showed that the caste, the joint-family system, and traditional village system which form the base of old social edifice has changed to a certain degree. The caste system experienced a peculiar jolt under the impact of western culture and civilization. This system of class distinction is being superseded by another rival system where the individual position in society is determined on one's personal merit.

Secondly, the modern system of transport and communications, technology, industrialization and western type education, the diversification of employment opportunities in trade and services and glamour and the attraction of city life have created a steady drift of the rural people towards the city. This has been responsible for loosening the hold of joint family system on the members. The spirit of collectivism changed into individualism and competition.

Thirdly, the advent of democratic decentralization and the planned change by the Government of the traditional institution lost

its grip on the population and adjusted according to change of the times, or it has disappeared altogether from village horizons. After the breakdown of all these systems the have-nots, who had been suppressed, socially and morally made substantial efforts to come out on top of the power structure of the village. On account of all of these changes made in the social, political and economical structure of the village, the traditional social groups or factions turned into power factions. Thus, in the future there will be a fierce competition not on the basis of color, caste, class or economic status but it will be based on mutual adjustments of the groups. On account of all of this push and pull, there will be a keen competition among the party young and old, Liberal and Conservative and among those who want to seek advancement at the state and national levels. In this new environment those who are orthodox and unfit for the new pattern would be replaced by newcomers, who in turn would acquire a new style or a new mode for recruitment and training. In short, competition rather than cooperation will be the more potent politicizing and modernizing force in the local self bodies.



### Conclusion

As far as overall assessment and accomplishment are concerned, we can say that there are few pitfalls in the decentralization of power, but in a way it was a worthwhile experiment not merely because it has awakened the rural masses, but also because it has produced a potent, genuine leadership which could hold its position according to the demands of modernization.

Thus, the democratic decentralization community development program is a promising experiment in one of the largest democratic countries of the world, the results of which are being watched throughout the developing world.

## GLOSSARY

Bhagvagita	Hindu religious book.
Brahaman	Top in the caste system. He functions as an intellectual elite and priesthood.
Dharma	Duty, i.e., what to do in the position of his caste.
Gaon Sabhas	Village assemblies.
Harijans	Lit., "child of God;" Gandhian term of members of lowest "untouchables" castes.
Karma	Meaning action. It regulates the present status and the future rebirth of an individual. (A man's present status is the result of past deeds.)
Kshatryas	Second in the caste system. Meaning warriors or fighters.
Panchayat	Lit., "Assembly of five;" traditional term for a village council of whatever size.
Panchayat Raj	Lit., "Panchayat rule;" local government by village councils established under Panchayat Raj Acts.
Panchayat Samithi	A middle tier of local self government.
Sudras	Lowest in caste system (small professional class) like woodcutters, blacksmiths, etc.
Sarpanch	President of local council.
Talukas	It is like a county. It consisted of 100 to 150 villages.
Vaisyas	Third in social scale (in caste system) i.e., businessmen.
Zilla	District.
Zilla Parishad	District council. The upper tier of decentralization of power.

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