The Panchayati Raj as indigenously termed to denote democratic decentralization aiming at empowerment of people for rural development in India, obviously, signifies that the Gram Panchayat is primarily a political institutional entity, a set-up for governance. Practically, it has come to be a developmental agency to carry out programmes sponsored by various agencies of the state and the central government. Amidst the rural people, it has carried the image more, of an agency for development and the least of a governing body. In a way, being a constant source for power attainment, developmental functioning of panchayats has overshadowed the political functioning and has given rise to a process of intense politicisation at the rural level. During developmental activities undertaken by the panchayat in a given rural setting, traditional co-operation among the villagers is perceived to be criss-crossed by their conflicting interests in various governmental investments and programmes. Politicalization of developmental investments and programmes thus entails politicization with increasing consciousness and involvement of the people. Such a situation is found to be articulated clearly in the Alsigarh Gram Panchayat as examined in the present study.

Developmental activities -projects/proposals- in the panchayat with their political significance have been related to: (1) Water facilities- drinking as well as irrigational, (2) forest lands, (3) construction of farm- boundaries, anicuts/water tanks, roads, etc. and (4) distribution or creation of facilities such as Indira Aawaas Yojna, Aanganbaadi, dispensary, school and electricity. These areas of activities are concerned with two types of needs of villagers; viz., (1) primary needs such as water, land and shelter almost totally dominating the life of tribal villagers characterized by the subsistence economic level and
(2) secondary needs such as health facilities, education and electricity mostly arising, in their view, for fulfillment of primary needs, i.e., for generation of employment opportunities and other benefits for livelihood through the formal structures. The felt needs of the secondary variety, though meagre and subtle in size, are found to be dependent for their origin on the primary needs of the villagers. The significant issue here is the differentiation of villagers’ needs - though still at the initial stage - mediated through the politics of surficial co-operation, unanimity and continuity and, also, through the under-currents of conflicts, frictions and fragmentation. The under-current dimension of the panchayat politics is variously formed of conflicts such as inter- and intra- gotra, inter- and intra- village, inter- and intra- phala, and inter-generational conflicts, etc. There are, both, types of developmental activities which have been undertaken by the panchayat, i.e., which go on without conflicts and which result in conflicts. The conflictual issues could either be resolved or they remained unresolved. Still more, the resolutions of conflicts were brought about by emerging leadership through different techniques, i.e., either by conciliatory methods or by brute force or through democratic exchange of power occupancy. Analysis to follow is to bring out what developmental dynamics and functioning patterns emerged during the structuration and functioning of panchayat in Alsigarh.

The Panchayat - I

The three constituted villages of the panchayat under study rose to the occasion of constituting a formal (statutory) democratic panchayat - a circumstance which was to prove highly potential for the village systems linking them with a larger and multi-structured rational legal system, both, of administrative - bureaucratic and political- governmental structures. Traditional leadership of the largest village - Pai - highly suspicious of external interference in their internal (village) affairs could, at last, agree to send only two aged waatawaalas and one Balaai member from the only significant Scheduled Caste family in the panchayat. The leadership of the second largest village, Alsigarh, headquartering the panchayat, found no suitable literate candidate and threw the gauntlet of their choice on Shanti Lal Mahajan, an adult grocery shopkeeper in the village for the position of Sarpanch and on Khema Kharaadi, middle-aged waatawaala tribal doyen, for the position of Up Sarpanch along with six other tribal ward panches including two co-opted women. However, the traditional leadership of the smallest village - Aad - remained unconcerned of the circumstance owing to a rather subsidiary position of their village, which was only a part of the ward in Alsigarh. The entire leadership, except the outsider Sarpanch, was deeply saturated into traditional tribal influence and drawn by unanimity at elections. It took up a little of precious developmental work and even that much came to cause fissures in the body polity of the panchayat.

Row over the Community Well in Alsigarh

The panchayat was granted a sum of Rs.500/- for digging and construction of a well for drinking water in Waada phala of Alsigarh with the pre-condition that shramdan (free labour) be contributed by the villagers. The panchayat leadership lacked consensus for the mode of disbursement of the funds for the work to be carried out under supervision of the Sarpanch. The tribal leadership of the villages including the one in the panchayat
body itself looked for employment opportunities to be given to the villagers and insisted on engaging 20-25 paid labourers from the villages instead of going for free labour. But the non-tribal Sarpanch, over cautious of working with the tribals and being accountable for proper utilization of the funds, could not agree to this proposition. With a view to keep himself in a safe situation and, also, to get the work done, the Sarpanch proposed to adjust 5-6 tribal labourers by making payments to them within the cost of material for the work alongwith the free labour, but the tribal leaders suspecting the Sarpanch to be misusing the funds failed to agree to this suggestion. Consequently, the Sarpanch already lagging behind the time schedule in his shopkeeping activities thought it appropriate to resign from the office, suspecting the villagers making efforts to corner government money. His deputy Khema Kharaadi in the office of Up Sarpanch automatically stepped up to fill the vacuum for the remaining one year’s tenure of the panchayat and the work was completed under his supervision.

This investmental conflict within the panchayat signified a host of sociological implications and complication:

1. Incapability of a grass-root level rural self government body in handling of the investmental works,
2. Instability of the body exhibited in the dispute over the mode of disbursement of the developmental funds,
3. Pre-dominance of traditional informal mode and leadership in the working of a panchayat,
4. Stamping (approving) of the decisions of traditional leadership in the panchayat body.
5. Surfacing of the caste - tribe dichotomy of world-views,
6. Emergence of fissures in the traditional social structure,
7. Failure of the outsiders in carrying out developmental works and
8. Success of the insiders in managing their affairs.

The panchayat working body, especially at the initial stage, being provided with a very limited space for its operation, is incapable of resisting personal interests of the face-to-face interacting groups and people in the use of developmental funds. The resignation of Sarpanch failing to process inputs from the traditional social structure into a rational-normative form, which is required for a democratic polity, put a question mark on the persistence of such a body in the wider context of developmental investments in rural/tribal India. The mode of working of developmental works as brought out in the study clearly reflected the possibility of a boundary-maintenance between the traditional/informal leadership and the formal panchayat leadership. Intermingling of the two created a difficult situation of rule-application for the panchayat and led to the informalization of the formal structure. Finally, the dichotomy of caste-tribe worldviews is found highly crystallized in the situation and comes out through the functioning of a democratic structure (statutory panchayat) in a tribal set-up. The tribal worldview of elected and non-elected leadership, innocent and ignorant of formal norms, consisted of a casual attitude towards the government with no proper understanding of objective and significance of the money received from the government for their development. Such an attitude is also nurtured in their suspicion about the governmental interference in their affairs and, also, about the caste people, i.e, Mahajan in the case, with a belief that the non-tribal (Mahajan) alone wanted to hush up the money of government. The belief is derived from their traditional position of the exploited as compared to the Mahajan (exploiter), perceived through a shared history of sufficient depth of interdependence and co-exist-
ence. The non-tribal worldview consisted of the perceptions of incorrigible tribals who could not understand even the compromising attitude of the Mahajan Sarpanch to accommodate tribal views to some extent and, also, to maintain accountability in the given normative structure.

The multiplicity of implications of the developmental functioning of the panchayat brought into focus a few significant sociological complications for the future. The formal panchayat, despite being squeezed from within as well as without by the same traditional (tribal) leadership, did give finishing touches to the developmental work under the changed supervision (leadership) of a tribal Sarpanch. Thus, the insiders can be better managers even of the formal affairs in their setting. Although the Mahajan Sarpanch resigned from the position to keep himself away rather than to burn hands in the tribal affairs, it confirmed the belief of villagers that he had embezzled the money of government, though it could not be vindicated. The political dynamics of development brought into sharp relief two opposite processes in the panchayat; viz., the clear-cut segmentation of the two worldviews dichotomized as tribal versus non-tribal and the consolidation of tribal uniformity of view. Thus, suspicion and mistrust, dispute and fissure and inter-community segmentation and intra-community consolidation of worldviews marked the politico-developmental functioning of the First Panchayat in Alsigarh.

The Panchayat - II

By the elections to the next panchayat approaching in December-January 1964-1965, the constituent villages, mainly Alsigarh and Pai, had realized what the panchayat -specially the office of Sarpanch- was meant for. The traditional elders of Pai on the eve of elections staked the genuine claim for a turn of their man in the prime office of power, i.e., the office of Sarpanch, and their counterpart from Alsigarh -in a traditional good will-readyly conceded to it. Subsequently elders from all the three villages decided to elect by unanimity Dhana, son of Pai's most shrewed waatwaala and de-facto gameti -Nara Kataara. But by the time for nomination, it was turned down by a sizeable people, specially from Alsigarh and Pai, on the plea that election of his son into the prime office would help more to shrewed Nara Kataara in fleecing them off in their mutual disputes. An another youth, Dhana, son of a reputed waatwaala and de-facto gameti of Alsigarh, Mangla Kharaadi, and nephew of Khema Kharaadi, was brought forward to enact the electoral tussle. In an electorally surcharged and tense situation of polling, the then patwaari, Chimaj Singh, on being threatened by Nara Kataara for adopting a partisanry attitude of diverting his votes, conveyed a wireless message through the police post at Alsigarh to the Police Station at Nai. The Superintendent of Police from Udaipur and the Inspector of Police from Nai alongwith a police force reached to the spot for counting of votes. Dhana Kharaadi was declared as elected. The S.P. pacified the people saying that in elections only one wins while others lose but, above it, they were, all, brothers to work together. Soon after the election fever came down, the new Sarpanch, Dhana Kharaadi, already having experience in the panchayat, while being around illiterate Khema Kharaadi in the office, opened his account of developmental works regarding construction of the buildings for primary schools each in Alsigarh, Pai and Aad, the Baavdiwala Water Tank (Anicut) in Alsigarh and the Dara Maata Water Tank (Anicut) and the community well in Pai. A few of the affairs gathering political dust are given below.
Dara Maata water Tank

In 1964-65, the tribal labourers of Pai, while constructing the Dara Maata Water Tank in Gawaadi phala and paid in grains measured by a container of 5 kilograms came to suspect the officials of Girwa Panchayat Samiti giving them 5 kilograms less of the actual accrual. On complaint by Kesa Vadera and some other ward panches from Alsigerh in the panchayat, the Block Development Officer (BDO) rushed to the site of construction and weighed the grains of container to convince them by demonstration that the container also measured the grains accurately of 5 kilograms. Kesa till date believes that the officials colluded to conceal the official cheating and deceived the tribal folk to prove him and others as the liars (source: Kesa Vadera, Dhana Kharaadi and Lalu Ram Daamar).

Ration Quota Affair

In 1968, Kesa Vadera and some others from Alsigerh made complaint against Kundan lal Brahman of Sisarma village, the in-charge of Ration Quota Shop under the Public Distribution System in Alsigerh, to the district collector for black-marketing of sugar. An inspector of the District Supply Department sent to investigate the matter found the accused as clean in his affairs and Kesa as a liar. Kesa says that Kundan Lal bribed the inspector as well as the villagers such as Dita Kalaawa, Nara Sapania, Khema Kharaadi and Mangla Kharaadi of Alsigerh and Nara Kataara of Pai to stand by him (Sources : Kesa Vadera). The two affairs point to a good number of sociological implications :

1. The two cases brought out a very complex form of conflicts cutting across tribal folks, tribal panchayat officials, non-tribal officials and non-tribal non-officials. In the first case, there originates a conflict between the tribal villagers and the non-tribal officials out of mistrust of the latter by the former. A third dimension complicates it when Kesa and other panchayat officials complained against the bureaucratic officials. Though the conflict situation still remained bi-polar, active involvement of the panchayat officials in favour of the villagers led it for configuration of three parties. The second case being just reverse of the first one consisted of a conflict between the non-official caste person, the non-official tribals and the tribal panchayat officials on the one hand and the tribal panchayat official and the non-official tribal folks on the other. The conflict situation, here, also, is bi-polar but of greater mass and volume. Thus, in the first case, there are three types of conflicts; viz., between tribal folks and officials, between non-tribal administrative officials and tribal panchayat officials and between tribal folks with alignment of the tribal panchayat officials and the non-tribal administrative officials. The types of conflicts becoming in the second case are such as non-official caste person versus tribal panchayat official, non-official caste person versus non-official tribal folks, tribal panchayat official versus tribal panchayat official, non-official tribal folks versus non-official tribal folks and tribal panchayat official versus non-official tribal folks.

2. The conflicts do not remain simplified in terms of the insiders and the outsiders but cut across the two broad categories. Even then, the overlapping forms of conflicts could not lessen their significance in the tribal setting. As the conflict resolvers in both the cases happened to be non-tribal administrative officials -the outsiders- and their decisions went in favour of the non-tribal officials/non-offi-
cial, it confirmed the view at least of some tribal panchayat officials and the tribal folks that the outsiders -officials and non-officials- are the one to exploit them.

3. Such dichotomy of the insiders and the outsiders when broadly perceived, in a way, strengthened the tribal mistrust for the outsiders, which is deep-rooted in their experiences with them from within or without the social structure. But alignments and re-alignments emerging in view of developmental or other benefits have brought their social structure into a ruffled state despite the persistence of the two world-views.

Thus, the developmental functioning of the Second panchayat brought out an additional feature of multi-dimensional social fissures within the insiders, besides the insider-outsider dichotomy, found in their social structure since long in the past.

The Panchayats - III and IV

During their discussion on the eve of elections to the third panchayat in March 1978 for a unanimous candidate for the office of Sarpanch, tribal elders of the three villages considered a number of options such as Dhana Kataara and Lalu Ram Daamar from Pai and Shanti Lal Mahajan from Alsigarh with a latent structural bias for either of the two villages -Alsigarh and Pai. In the matter of Dhana Kataara, his father -Nara Ba Kataara- this time showed a little of interest in the politics. While considering the candidature of Shanti Lal Mahajan, with a tilt for him specially from Alsigarh, a strong opposition came from the people of Pai who were willing to see this time their man in the prime office and the persons like Khem Raj Bhagora put him down by asking whether he (mahajan) would marry his daughter with a tribal as he was so much interested for the office in a tribal panchayat. Ultimately, unanimous choice went in favour of Lalu Ram Daamar, an educated son of the influential waatawaala -Kala Ba Daamar, having a tailoring shop at the Bus Stand- the centre of his wide contacts. Satisfied with his working style, the tribal elders returned him unanimously for the second time in the fourth panchayat as well. Khema Ba Kharaadi, all the times, elected by unanimity in the panchayat, continued in the office of Up Sarpanch in these two consecutive panchayats as well. The developmental works completed during the tenure of these two panchayats were: Installation of hand pumps in the three villages and construction of water tanks/anicuts, school building and Patwaar Ghar in Pai and Alsigarh-Pai Link Road, boundary walls of farms and Indira Aawaas Yojna Quarters in Alsigarh and Pai. Some of them gathering political momentum and generating conflicts are discussed below.

Water Hand Pumps

To the credit of the Sarpanch, Lalu Ram, there are 24 hand pumps installed at different sites in the villages to meet their urgent requirement of drinking water. He had to face difficulties and pressures during discussion over the proposals for hand pumps to be passed in the panchayat body before sending them to the office of Girwa Panchayat Samiti, which he resolved by fixing need-based priorities. Of the initial ten hand pumps, first and second hand pumps installed by the road in Mual and Vora Ghaati respectively raised no eye brows at all. But the third hand pump while being bored just by the boundary of his own farm bypassing interests and views of the people remaining at more dis-
tance evoked a controversy, though he could not be convinced to shift the site. Unfortunately, there appeared the brackish water and another one, at some distance, was bored to the vantage of disgruntled people, which again normalized their attitudes.

In another interesting case of conflict of greater intensity, Kesa Vadera’s long standing proposal for a hand pump at the Maataji Mandir beside his house was at last pushed through the panchayat meeting for sanction from the Panchayat Samiti office. Unluckily Kesa was not present at the time when the boring machine reached. Shankar Vadera utilized the opportunity to get it installed on the Alsigarh-Kalibas Link Road passing by his house. Furious over the mishap, Kesa complained against the panchayat to the District Collector. The panchayat justified before the Collector the change of site of the sanctioned hand pump by giving reason that the predecided site was unapproachable for the boring machine vehicle. This triggered off a long standing conflict between Kesa Vadera and Shanker Vadera on the one hand and between Kesa Vadera and the Sarpanch on the other. Despite the change of panchayat leadership in May 1988, Kesa could fulfill his wish for a hand pump during the period of suspension of the panchayat in 1992 only with help of the present Member of Legislative Assembly from Udaipur (Rural), Chunni Lal Girasia.

These two cases of conflict woven around the installation of hand pumps indicated some of major features emerging in the panchayat:

1. The feature of boundary-maintenance between formal and informal-traditional leaders is seen in the process of distinction. In meetings of the panchayat body, only the formally elected leaders participated to meet, discuss and pass proposals in a formal way. To minimize differences the Sarpanch mostly discussed the proposals with traditional non-formal/vaatawaala leaders before getting them okayed in the panchayat meeting. This connotes for the panchayat to be on move for a gradual maturity and formalization of functioning of the panchayat.

2. There appear two types of conflicts significantly different from the earlier ones:
   (i) Intra-village, intra-phala, intra-gotra/lineage and intra-office conflicts, (ii) inter-village and inter-gotra conflicts and (iii) official versus official and official versus non-official conflicts. The conflict between Lalu Ram Daamar and his phala fellows stands for the intra-village and the intra-phala type; between Kesa Vadera and Shanker Vadera for intra-village, intra-phala, intra gotra/lineal and intra-official; between Kesa and Lalu Ram Daamar for inter-village and inter-gotra types, between Kesa and Lalu Ram Daamar and between Kesa and Shankar for the official versus official and between Lalu Ram and his phala fellows for official versus non-official type.

3. This differentiation of conflicts into various traditional structural levels itself indicates a process of continuously widening scope of differences and disputes during the politico-developmental process of the panchayat.

4. From the role of Sarpanch in meetings of the panchayat body and disbursement of hand pumps, one can derive that the office is gradually coming out of the stranglehold of traditional influence and is learning to exercise the powers vested in it.
Water Tank/Anicut Project

A grant for construction of a water tank in the panchayat staged a tug-of-war scene between the panchayat leaders divided on the line of village units. They tried their best to take the project in their own respective village; i.e., Alsigarh or Pai. Implementation of the project had to be kept in suspension in a situation of no decision. Meanwhile efforts for grant of one more project were made and only after grant of the second one, the two villages, allotted equally, one project each, took up to works in Waada phala of Alsigarh and Paaba phala of Pai.

This case signified a highly concretized inter-village conflict arising out of the panchayat’s developmental functioning.

Pai-Alsigarh Link Road

The construction work on the link road was held up when Nara Ba Kataara, the de-facto gameti of Pai, opposed any bi-secting of his farmlands near the boundary of Alsigarh village. The Sarpanch explained him two alternatives: First, if Nara co-operated, the road in its width while passing through his lands would be 20 feet instead of 24 feet as proposed in the project. Second, if he did not co-operate, the panchayat body could exercise the powers vested in it to construct the road even wider than the proposed one. With assurance from the Sarpanch, Nara chose the first alternative.

In the case, the conflict between the traditional authority and the modern authority (the panchayat) was resolved in a compromising manner. It indicated the slow change occurring in a form of two opposite processes, i.e., ascendance of the panchayat authority and the decline of the traditional authority, bringing therein a state of balance where they could come to the terms of compromise.

School Building in Pai

Having received the funds from the Government to reconstruct the dilapidated Primary School building situated at the Aamli Chowrah of Vadla phala in Pai, the panchayat body passed a resolution to reconstruct it at a new site near the Bus Stand. When the panchayat leaders from Pai-Lalu Ram Daamar, Dita Kataara, Dita Hiraavat and others discussed the resolution with the traditional leaders like Nara Ba Kataara, Vaka Ba Kataara, Poona Ba Kataara, Lalu Ba Kataara, Kalu Ba Kataara, Rama Vadera and Poona Paargi mostly drawn from Vadla, Nichla and Nalvat Phalas nearby the old site of the school, they all opposed the resolution. The panchayat leaders argued to convince the traditional leaders that the old site of school was too interior to the village to check the presence of a teacher whereas the new one would be suitable to everybody to visit at any time. The Sarpanch asked Nara Ba Kataara, How many times a day do you visit the school? But every one of you comes everyday to the Bus Stand either to sip a cup of tea or to purchase essentials or to aboard a bus and this will let you visit the school very frequently in a day. The traditional leadership was convinced of the arguments, but adamant to their position. They even warned the panchayat leaders of removing a single stone of the old building. Taking no further confrontation, the panchayat leaders constructed the school building at the new site with the material bought afresh.
The case implied several important features of the panchayat's functioning:
1. The traditional authority defied the panchayat's authority (resolution) which could not make them to comply.
2. Though traditional leaders were convinced of justification for change of the school site, the reason could not prevail over their short-sighted interests of proximity of the school.
3. The panchayat leaders' decision to shift the site of school had two functions: First, the manifest function was put forth through the arguments for justification that the new site located centrally as well as by the Bus Stand which was approachable to all the villagers for all the time watch over the presence of teachers and, second, the latent one as the Sarpanch personally disclosed was that the centrally located school was also advantageous to his own family and phala.
4. Despite the obstructionistic attitude of traditional leaders, the panchayat leadership seems to be coming of maturity where it demonstrated the capacity to do a work without stretching the disputes to the extend of breakdown of the democratic system itself.

**Up-gradation of Pai School**

On a resolution for up-gradation of the school of Pai mooted in the panchayat body by the Sarpanch and the ward panches drawn from Pai, the leaders from Alsigarh opposed the motion and pressed for up-gradation, first, of the school in their village. After the personal assurance by the Sarpanch to them for up-gradation shortly of Alsigarh school as well, which he did later, the resolution was passed in the panchayat body.

The case brought two features into focus:
1. The inter-village conflict over this issue of education is in a way sign of their increasing awareness of the external environment. That is why they desired, first, up-gradation of a school in their own village and opposed it otherwise.
2. The leadership in the office of Sarpanch had achieved such a level of capacity for work where the villagers could put their trust into his assurances.

**Panchayat Bhavan and Patwar Ghar**

The Sarpanch and the ward panches drawn from Pai intending to construct the Panchayat Bhavan in their village were vehemently opposed by the Up Sarpanch and the ward panches drawn from Alsigarh and Aad sensing a stratagem of the former to take away the panchayat headquarter from Alsigarh. Solution came out of the discussion undertaken by the Sarpanch with the Gram Sevak (Secretary to the panchayat) who justified the panchayat headquarter at Alsigarh which was located between Pai and Aad. Therefore, Alsigarh was awarded with construction of the Panchayat Bhavan and Pai with that of the Patwar Ghar.

The case brings to one's notice two new features:
1. The villagers initially suspect of and reluctant to the very formal panchayat had reached to the state of involvement into the stratagems or their dismantling to usurp or keep the panchayat headquarter to their own village. This connotes a high state of political consciousness among them.
2. The role of bureaucratic personnel in resolving the panchayat headquarter conflict implied their significance in the tribal context for explanation of normative situation of a panchayat.

3. The panchayat has come to be an emotional feature of their life to the extent that the headquarter issue had vertically divided the panchayat leadership, i.e., those drawn from Pai, on the one hand, and those from Alsigarh and Aad, on the other.

**Indira Aawaas Yojna**

10 houses in Alsigarh built under the scheme under supervision of the Sarpanch, Lalu Ram Daamar, and allotted to Rama Solanki, Dhana Solanki, Nana Solanki, Kalu Solanki, Khema Solanki, Kalu Kalaawa, Dharma Kharaadi, Rupa Daamar, Megha Daamar and Shankar Vadera appear to be very interesting when social background of allottees is investigated. Of 10 allottees, in all, first 5 are drawn from Waada phala; next 2 from the Kaatyia phala and the last 3 from the Kheria phala; 5 from Solanki, 2 from Daamar, and 1 each from Kalaawa, Kharaadi and Vadera gotras. Further, of the first 5 allottees drawn from the same lineage, Dhana Solanki and Nana Solanki are real brothers and Kalu Solanki and Khema Solanki are their cousins (real uncles’ sons). Thus, half the allottees are closely related to each other within a depth of three generations forming an agnatic group.

Two of the allottees are from Daamar gotra which the Sarpanch belonged to. Lastly, four allottees were ward panches in the panchayat. They are Rama Solanki, Dhana Solanki, Shankar Vadera and Kalu Kalaawa. From the analysis, one is to derive that phala, gotra, lineage family and political position caused to the highly skewed distribution of the houses. Kesa Vadera of Kheria phala and Nanga Kharaadi of Kaada phala, as they reported, raised objection to this manner of allotment but were either not listened or assured to be considered in the next allotment. The former is well-off among the tribals. The scheme meant for the needy came to be bungled under influence of various parochial social identities and factors in the panchayat politics.

On the whole, as the political pattern set during the structuration of the third and fourth panchayats, process of politico-developmental functioning of the panchayats seems to be fraught with the upsurge of multiplicity of conflicts such as intra-panchayat (body), intra-village, intra-phala, inter-gotra, inter-village, inter-phala, inter-gotra and inter-leadership, mostly resolved by the panchayat leadership, occasionally with the help of bureaucratic personnel, adopting methods of compromise, persuasion or assurances in a modern democratic manner as it is gradually coming of the age of political maturity alongwith the phenomenon of boundary-maintenance becoming some-what clearer in the given traditional tribal setting. By the time, the panchayat had come to be an integral feature of their societal affair rather than to be suspected for the external interference in their village affairs.

**The Panchayat - V**

The electoral politics of the fifth panchayat in May 1981 is interestingly characterized by a number of political turns and twists taking the panchayat politics in Alsigarh far away. On the eve of elections when deliberations were on to find a suitable candidate for the office of Sarpanch from Alsigarh as it was its turn. Khem Raj Kataara -the then MLA
from Udaipur (Rural)- in general body meeting of all the three constituent villages held at
the Aamli Chowrah in Pai announced for the office the candidature of Nathu Lal Sapania
-a primary school pass Congress Sewa Dal Worker- from Waada Phala of Alsigarh, who
was closely associated with the MLA. The traditional leadership present there amazed of
the announcement, expressed a mixed response, i.e., some of them reluctantly conceded
to the candidature proposed by a big man like Khem Raj Kataara and the others dis-
liked the imposition of candidature by the outsider while ignoring their opinion. Kataara
resented to their dissent and with political undertones curtly remarked: Let the old men
fall into a well; welcome to the youth. This evoked a sharp resentment in the leadership
resulting into a diffused scenario of response addressed to the matter. The elders of
Alsigarh re-set their minds for re-emergence of Dhana Kharaadi in the office and those
of Pai backed Dheera Bhai Kataara -a moderate, humble, straight forward, middle-
aged Christian (tribal) and founder of the Aadiwaasi Mahila Grih Udyog Sahkari Samiti
Limited, Pai. Besides, getting a clue from Roshan Lal Nagda, the ex-Pradhan of the
Girwa Panchayat Samiti, and some of the villagers, Lalu Ram Daamar also intending to
re-emerge in the office threw himself into the fray. During the nomination of candidates
this four -cornered contest again took interesting twists. While filing the nomination
Dhana Kharaadi and Lalu Ram Daamar reached to the accord for contest by either of the
two, in which Dhana Kharaadi agreed to withdraw. The two decided to submit his nomi-
nation form but with a line across the syllable ‘sar’ in the word ‘Sarpanch’ indicating the
post for his nomination. They made the error deliberately. During scrutiny, Dhana’s
nomination was found invalid for the office of Sarpanch but valid for that of ward panch
which, too, he did not like to go for. Of the remaining three candidates, Lalu Ram Daamar
also feeling a pressure of the villagers for his withdrawal in favour of their fresh candidate
discussed the matter with his co-villager candidate, Dheera Bhai, and came out of the
fray. Ultimately, the contest took place between Nathu Lal Sapania -the man of MLA
having the charge of the Ration Quota Shop to allure the people of three villages alongwith
a religious card carrying message of the pollution of people’s faith in case they voted in
favour of the Christian, on the one hand, and Dheera Bhai Kataara- the candidate of
people’s choice from Pai as well as of those who had resentment against Khem Raj
Kataara and Nathu Lal Sapania. Nathu Lal came out of the contest as the winner by a
margin of 64 votes. Subsequently, Prabhu Das Kataara -younger brother of Dheera Bhai
and ward panch elected to the panchayat- emerged as the winner out of contest for the
office of Up Sarpanch. The political atmosphere highly surcharged with internal bicker-
ing and external involvement did find reflection on the post-election functioning of the
panchayat. The Sarpanch and the panchayat could take up only a few of developmental
works such as Alsigarh Bus Stand, Public Sub-Health Centre in Kaatya phala and a room
for the school in Alsigarh. The work style of the Sarpanch seeking the least of co-opera-
tion and involvement of the traditional leadership and even of the elected ones in the
panchayat brought discords, dissents and rows more than the actual work done until the
panchayat body was dissolved in 1992.

Alsigarh School Room

On grant of funds to the panchayat for construction of a room in the school situated
in Waada phala of Alsigarh, the ward panches proposed to the Sarpanch to appoint a
mate of the ward panch from the phala in which the school is located. Actually Dhana
Solanki was interested to be mate under the Sarpanch as the supervisor. The Sarpanch ignoring this proposal continued to carry out the work. The aggrieved ward panch raised the matter in a meeting of the panchayat but in vain.

In this case, the formal leaders are involved in a friction over the mode of implementation of the works, actually over allocation of resources, which at the very beginning divided the panchayat leadership into two factions, mutually distrustful and detractive, each headed by the Sarpanch and the Up Sarpanch. The Sarpanch faction consisted of the followers of Khem Raj Kataara such as Nathu Lal Sapania, Kalu Kalaawa, Devi Lal Vadera and Vesati Bai Kataara (all from Alsigarh), Surji Bhai Bhagora, Bheru Lal Bhagora and Galali Bai Daamar (all from Pai) and Hakra Paargi from Aad. The Up Sarpanch-faction consisted of Prabhu Das Kataara, Waloo Ram Kataara and Bhaga Kharaadi (all from Pai) and Dhana Solanki and Kalu Kharaadi (both from Alsigarh). This factional division refutes any division of the leadership in the panchayat and its villages on the basis of religious faith because two members of the first faction Kalu Kalaawa and Surji Bhai Bhagora -and one of the Second faction- Prabhu Das Kataara were the Christians.

**Hand Pump Row**

Devilal Vadera in continuation of the efforts by his father, Kesa, got passed a proposal for installation of a hand pump at the Maataji Mandir near his house in Kheria phala. When sanctioned by the Panchayat Samiti office, it was taken away, this time, also, by the Sarpanch himself to instal near his own house. Missing the hand pump, again, by the Vadera family continuing in the panchayat body right from the beginning had become a matter of bitter differences and friction between Devilal Vadera and Nathu Lal Sapania rendering useless all the efforts made by the former in future to get a hand pump sanctioned. This family could, as stated earlier, succeed in their efforts for a hand pump only with help of the MLA during the period of panchayat being defunct in 1992.

The event alludes to the fact that developmental work/award had become a bone of contention among the panchayat leaders themselves leading to shifting loyalties of factional members.

**Ration Quota Debacle**

Nathu Lal Sapania, a good in-charge of the shop in the eyes of the people during the pre-election period, shared the shop with Shankar Solanki from Aad after the elections. Some of leaders from Alsigarh such as Devi Lal Vadera, Kalu Kharaadi and Hagji Vadera complained of negligence and misappropriation of the shop by Nathu Lal and Shankar to the District Collector who got the matter investigated by an inspector of the District Supply Department. On the basis of investigation, the duo-Incharge was penalized for Rs.500/-. The ration quota was given under control of the Tribal Development Corporation which appointed Hardara/Sardara to do the job. Hardara soon came to sink in dues to the Corporation to the tune of Rs. 30,000/-. He had to sell off his land for Rs. 25,000/- for which the rivals accused Nathu Lal. During the tug-of-war to bag the Quota, Nathu Lal could take it over, again. Meanwhile Kesa sought help of Khem Raj Kataara for a government job to his educated son -Devil Lal- which the latter could not do. These two events caused the Vadera family to shift their loyalties from Khem Raj
Kataara over to Chunni Lal Girasia and to see the Congress party off to join the Bhartiya Janata Party.

Thus, the Quota debacle generated political consequences of far-reaching significance, i.e., divisions, alignments and re-alignments, even manifest on the party basis, within the panchayat and extended beyond it.

**Diesel Pump Set Row**

Applications of Kalu Kharaadi, a sitting ward panch and son of Khema Ba Kharaadi - the deceased Up Sarpanch continuing in the previous four panchayat bodies, and four others from the village seeking a loan for purchase of a joint diesel pump set to be used on their wells for irrigation, though duly forwarded as the Sarpanch stated, were turned down at the Panchayat Samiti office because lands of the applicants fell short of the norm requiring minimum land size between $4\frac{1}{2}$ bighas and 2 hectares. Kalu and his would-be partners came to be enraged over the Sarpanch deriving from their factional rivalry with the latter that he maneuvered to deprive them of the loan.

This case shows the height of suspicion and under carpet tactics found between factions of the panchayat leaders themselves and between panchayat leaders and villagers.

On the whole, the variety of cases signified the developmental matters laden with the constant casting and re-casting of differences, alignment and factions gradually leading them towards political divisions. The process of political bickerings has been a two-way affair, i.e., downward factionalization and upward alignment and re-alignment. First, the differences and divisions within the Congress Party at higher levels of state, district and Panchayat Samiti, reflected in the two camps; viz., the faction of the MLA, Khem Raj Kataara, and the faction of the ex-Pradhan of the Girwa Panchayat Samiti, Roshan Lal Nagda trickled down among the villagers in the pre-polls period as well as within the panchayat body in the post-polls period. The Khem Raj Kataara faction of the Congress Sewa Dal Volunteers like Devi lal Vadera (Alsigarh) Dita Kataara (Pai) and Shankar Solanki (Aad) headed by Nathu Lal Sapania of the pre-election period came to be represented in the panchayat body after the elections by Nathulal Sapania, Devi Lal Vadera, Kalu Kalaawa, Hakra Paargi, Bheru lal Bhagora, Surji Bhai Bhagora, Vesati Bai Kataara and Galali Bai Daamar, while the Roshan Lal Nagda faction in the body consisted of Prabhu Das Kataara, Waloo Ram Kataara, Bhaga Kharaadi, Dhana Solanki and Kalu Kharaadi. The process of confrontations and differences on the issues related to developmental works continuously reshuffled the factions by alignments and re-alignments. Hakra Paargi shifted to the Nagda faction of the Congress, whereas Devi Lal, first, to the Nagda faction and, then, over to the Bharatiya Janata Party from the Congress as a whole. Thus, there emerged three factions within the panchayat body as well as amidst the people, i.e., the Khem Raj Kataara (Congress) faction, the Roshan Lal Nagda (Congress) faction and the BJP faction. Of the three factions coming up through the politico-developmental process of the panchayat, the two factional variations of Congress Party crept in from the higher echelons of politics and the BJP faction linked to higher levels of the party came up through the local developmental dynamics of the panchayat.
Developmental Projects

There are two interesting cases of developmental projects attempted by the villagers through their panchayat bodies which never came to be realized.

Kotda Water Tank Scheme

The water tank officially known as the Goraana Water Tank Scheme situated in the Kotda area of Alsigarh touching the baseline of western hillocks running incessantly all along the three villages has been the point of a long-cherished dream of the villagers, specially of those from Alsigarh and Pai, who have, to date, drawn so many cognitive maps for utilization of its water for irrigation in their respective villages and phalas. The people from Alsigarh in general desired for an overhead water tank at Damli point of Waada phala to be filled by lifting of water and supplied through pipelines to various phalas and localities. But sensing difficulties of equal or easy approach of water to all the phalas in the undulated topography, people of the far-flung phalas and localities proposed for separate overhead water tanks at certain locations to the vantage of people from various phalas. The people from Pai also in the beginning put forward their demand for a single overhead water tank at Nichla phala or on the nearby ridges of Nalvat phala to be filled in by lifting of water drawn through a pipe line. But the people of Vadla, Mual, Paba and Nala, of late, realizing no more utility of the tank for them proposed for a pipeline drawn from the Kotda Tank all along the western hill range to be dropped into the Dara Maata Water Tank/Anicut overhead of Gawaadi Phala and, further, extended upto the Nilwa Mahadev Water Tank/Anicut in Mual Phala. Then, the people from Hamli Pipla, Raata Garh, Sindhi Ghaati and Dhora Ghaati looking for opportunity through the project proposed for a separate overhead water tank near the remains of the Raata Garh or at least a water tank/anicut at the Masaania Mahadev in the bed of a rivulet flowing at the footholds of the atolled phala, which is objected by the Department of Irrigation because it will obstruct water flowing down into the Gorana (Kotda) Water Tank. The people of Aad wanted a trench from the Tank to solve their chronic problem of drinking water, which has already been extended to them as the one bifurcated from the trench taking water to Fateh Sagar in Udaipur.

In pursuance of efforts to materialize their hopes, Dhana Kharaadi, the Sarpanch, during the Second panchayat when the tank was being constructed, alongwith other leaders and a proposal, met M.L.Sukhadia, the then chief Minister of Rajasthan. Again, on its completion, the people met Mathura Das Mathur, a minister of Sukhadia’s cabinet, who came to inaugurate the water tank. They kept on pursuing their case with M.L.Sukhadia, even after when he was the Governor of Tamilnadu. They took representations to the district collector and the ministers and kept on sending directly or indirectly the proposals to the government but all in vain. Whenever a higher level leader raised the matter with the Government, it came to be known that the water being purchased for special requirements of the Hindustan Zink Limited, a public sector company at Udaipur, the village could not be allowed to lift water from the tank. Much to the chagrin of the villagers from Alsigarh, despite the tank being located in their village, they are helpless to utilize its water, whereas Goraana situated far behind the western hill ranges was actually honoured by officially naming the tank after it. It was originally constructed to provide drinking water for Goraana through a trench, but, today, good crops are yielded from its
water. Aad, also, has some of the trench water for irrigation and even Nalvat phala people of Pai have taste of the crops reaped from its water, but Alsigarh people are only the on-lookers standing by. The hapless people still kindle their hopes for the gigantic project coming to be true a day.

The project brings a number of points for discussion to the fore:

1. The villagers and their panchayat body through their constant efforts attract the attention of an observer to the drainage of local resources. They are helplessly deprived of their resource due to impositions of the system from above. This question marks the viability of rural local self government itself.

2. The people guided by their parochial situational interests are even seeming to be differing and divided over the project-in-air. This indicates a vastly distributed consciousness of interests among the villagers interacting frequently and that also on the equal footing. If the project could be realized, it would have been fraught with inter-village, inter-phala, intra-village and intra-phala conflicts in the same manner as the developmental works in the preceding discussions.

3. Above all, the tribals driven by their narrow interests continued to elaborate the implementational aspect of the cherished project without looking back to its feasibility in financial as well as topographical terms. Such lacunas on their part are embedded in their mental construction of the Government assumed to be capable of financing whatever gigantic project is there.

**Tractor Purchase Project**

Devi Lal Vadera, the amateur ward panch in the last panchayat body, inventing an idea for purchase of a tractor with compressor under the Apna Gaon, Apna Kam Yojna to carry out ploughing, dredging and levelling of lands and boring of wells on payment basis under control of the panchayat body went to discuss his gigantic scheme with the District Rural Development Officer who asked for a proposal of the intent passed by the panchayat body to be channelized through the Panchayat Samiti and for a 30 per cent matching grant to be deposited in a bank to procure 70% of the cost amounting Rs. 2,50,000/- from the government, whenever the proposal is granted. He mooted the proposal in the panchayat body but in view of its non-feasibility it could not go through and the blame, that the proposal was not pushed ahead, went to the part of the Sarpanch.

The novel idea proposed in the panchayat gave rise to a number of interesting queries regarding planning, financial management and aspirations of the panchayat leadership.

1. The amateur went on endeavoring for a tractor, though appreciable but without any serious deliberations for its feasibility in a topography of too frequently overlapping ridges and hilly terrains with small, dispersed and uneconomic tribal landholdings.

2. Even if it were to be purchased, how it could have been possible to arrange the matching amount from the tribals hardly able to make out their daily bread and, much more to the oblivious amateur leader, how the villagers reluctant to do free labour or ready to hush up the money of the Government could have come forward to contribute for the matching money,

3. From the controversies of Himalayan height over the minor developmental works in the past, one can point to the incapacity of the panchayat body in maintaining a tractor requiring recruitment of operators, technicians, revenue-collectors and,
above all a leadership capable of resolving disputes to be arising daily over it.
Thus, the gigantic scheme points to the immaturity of the panchayat leadership in the matters of planning and financial arrangement in the shadow of their high aspirations.

**Summing up**, the panchayat body in the tribal setting is socially legitimized as an agency for implementation of developmental works carrying **the money of Government** to be spent up without any regard to the formal norms. The developmental works undertaken in the given political atmosphere of the respective panchayat bodies have come to imply factional fragmentation of the people and their leadership right from initiation of the panchayat politics in Alsigarh. By **politicalization** of various structural units over the developmental issues, differences, conflicts, bickering and factionalism through the successive panchayat bodies went on multiplying and crystallising into various forms such as **insiders versus outsiders, officials versus non-officials, tribals versus non-tribals, inter-and intra-gotra/lineal, inter-and intra-village, inter-and intra-phala, and inter-and intra-party factions**. During the politico-developmental process, the panchayat leadership did learn boundary-maintenance with the traditional informal leadership, developed capacity for resolving conflicts and for exercise of power and, lastly, achieved a certain degree of personalized politics. The lay-outs of implementational aspects of the cherished gigantic projects in air interestingly reflected immaturity, helplessness and high aspirational level of the tribal panchayat leadership during the entire process of panchayat formation.