CONCLUSION: POLITICIZATION, CHANGE AND PERSISTENCE

This study entitled Politics, Development and Modernization among the Bhils of Rajasthan has been addressed to three fundamental questions: (1) What patterns of social relations mediate these processes? (2) Why do they exist in the manner they do? (3) And, in what way they are socially consequential?

Methodology for this study may be delineated at several levels. This is a systemic study which examines the Alsigarh Gram Panchayat body in the context of the Bhil social system -within which it exists- to bring out structural particularities and output-input dynamics (developmental works, cooperation and conflicts) during its functioning for a span of three decades. Had the study not been undertaken in this perspective, the phenomenon of gram panchayat in the tribal context would have ended up merely as a study in cultural innovation rather than a structural innovation. As a cultural innovation, the panchayat is a phenomenon of limited scope and significance, while as a structural innovation it is holistic phenomenon. The panchayat system being a clustre of three villages led the study a certain longitudinal character. This also results in the application of comparative method in such a context of study. Sharing several obvious similarities the three villages; viz., Alsigarh, Pai and Aad are independent socio-territorial and revenue units within the panchayat, situated elongatedly in the same physiographic topographical context and part and parcel of the same socio-cultural region of the tribals. But even within these parameters, the three villages differed from each other in several ways. For example, Pai is a village of the largest territorial size, population and topographical variations followed by Alsigarh and Aad -the smallest village. Also, Pai is bi-sected by the state highway from Udaipur to Jhadoi/Phalasia by-passing Alsigarh and Aad which,
therefore, remains much more interior to the road. Also, Pai is structurally differentiated into 25 gotras (clans), 7 castes and 3 religious denominations (Hindus, Christians and Muslims), Alsigarh into 11 gotras and 2 castes and 2 religious denominations (Hindus and Christians) and Aad into 8 gotras. In addition, Alsigarh acquires added geo-political significance as the panchayat headquarter village flanked by Pai and Aad. These differences have been responsible for differential leadership patterns, Politico-developmental dynamics and modernization in the three villages of the panchayat. Had the study been limited to a single village, these differences and the resultant phenomena would not have been highlighted for comparative understanding in the study. It is also a historical study undertaken to understand the process of panchayat formation to bring into relief the leadership phenomena: Emergence, continuity, discontinuity and re-emergence. Identification of these leadership patterns, their structural bases and processes have been possible only through historical method of processual understanding of the panchayat formation in the given time-space perspective. Had the study been a synchronic or even a merely diachronic one, such leadership phenomena would not have come into focus.

Dialectical-structuralism deriving its methodological richness from, both, dynamic class analysis and structural functional analysis has been applied to understand: Integrative functions of the panchayat in the Bhil setting; nature of inputs (extra-political stimuli and responses) in its working and structural contradictions of gotra, village, phala or others as there emerged during its evolution. In absence of such a blend of dialectical, historical and functional methods the variety of contradictions and their growth would not have come into focus in the present study. Empirical method of deductive-inductive reasoning to understand the panchayat was applied in an appropriate mix of techniques to penetrate the multi-layered and complex reality. Therefore, the technique multiplex constructed for the purpose included participant and non-participant observations of sociocultural institutions such as traditional leadership, caste-tribe interactions, fairs, festivals, death feasts and worship of deities to understand their socio-cultural matrix, informal and unstructured interviews of the persons in situation to arrive at a traditional understanding of the villages and panchayat system, formal and structured interviews of the leaders of the panchayat, yet alive, to understand leadership-structuration and role-performance in the panchayat and case studies to analyse the politico-developmental process of the panchayat's functioning. By a simplistic technique, it would not have been possible to draw the data of different dimensions, depths and richness out of this typical field of study. And, lastly, while being delimited to a microcosm of the village panchayat for understanding of the grass-root polity, society and change, the study has also a macrocosmic relevance in understanding of the present context of tribal setting. Such a perspective is also appropriate for a pluralistic society like India wherein the microscopic studies of diverse societies and communities are required to be extended to understand the macrocosm and to seek connections between the two and also between facts and theory. Without such microscopic studies, it is possible neither to focus on plurality nor on particularity, neither on historicity nor on differentiation and syncretism of Indian tradition.

Thus, the study is a methodological multiplex consisting of systemic, longitudinal, comparative, historical, dialectical, structural, empirical and microscopic perspectives. The study has also been instrumental in examining the very familiar and interrelated phenomena of the modern world, i.e., democratic structure (politics), development and modernization, particularly in context of the Alsigarh Gram Panchayat in the Girwa Panchayat Samiti of Udaipur District in Rajasthan.
Politics meant for dynamic democratic structure is defined as a social process of actions for attaining or retaining, distribution and exercise of power in a society. Democratic structure defined as a set of political relations patterned out of interactions for allocation of values in a society is applied here to the gram panchayat body constituted for the three villages through periodical elections and viewed as a process of political formations over a time-span in the given context. The study, in all, covered five bodies of the gram panchayat constituted, right from its inception in 1960 till the last one became defunct in 1992, under effect of the Gram Panchayats Act 1953 and the Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad Act 1959. Owing to the re-organization of gram panchayats under the recently passed Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act 1994, there have come out from the Alsigarh Gram Panchayat two new gram panchayats; namely, the Alsigarh Gram Panchayat consisted of Alsigarh and Aad only and the Pai Gram Panchayat consisted of Pai and Pipalawaas. Their elected bodies have been constituted by elections held in December-January 1994-95. The study excludes the leaders constituting these bodies from its purview because field work for the study had been already over before they came into existence and, moreover, they are structurally different from their antecedent.

Development defined as a process of advancement and improvement in social, economic and political aspects of a society is referred here to the infra-structural investments made in these aspects of life in the gram panchayat. Modernization as a process of rationalization occurring in the form of role differentiation and multiplication within a means-end frame in a given society has empirical referent in the processes of accretion, plurality, differentiation and syncretism in physical, social, occupational and political aspects of life in the Gram Panchayat. The processes are interrelated and the influence between them is a reciprocal affair, which is brought out in context of the Gram Panchayat. The three processes have been working in the macro as well as micro spheres of society, which also have been influencing each other.

Following are some of the substantive findings of the study:

1) Traditionality, unanimity, continuity and bi-tenuriality of leadership are prominent features of the structuration of the Alsigarh Gram Panchayat. Most of the panchayat leaders were waataawaalas (traditional-reputational leaders) elected by unanimity at periodical elections and continued in power bi-tenurially and, in a few cases, multi-tenurally. When screened over a temporal continuum of panchayat formation, the leadership is found attributed with the phenomena of emergence, continuity, discontinuity and re-emergence. It is classifiable under four types: (i) Individually as well as structurally continuing leaders, (ii) individually discontinuing but structurally continuing leaders, (iii) individually as well as structurally discontinuing leaders and (iv) individually emerging but structurally re-emerging leaders. Structural continuity or re-emergence along with individual discontinuity of leaders in power is the dominating feature which indicates the process of power circulation and replacement of individuals within a few of structural units in the panchayat. These structural units are 4 gotras -Kataara, Kharadi, Solanki and Vadera from four phalas (sectors) -Mual, Vadla, Waada and Kheria of two large-sized villages- Pai and Alsigarh. The factors responsible for entrenchment of a few structural units in power is found embedded in their traditional influence, numerical strength, socio-economic position and locational advantages. The waataawaalas who responded quickly to the introduction of the Panchayati Raj had a very significant role in the traditional power structure. They were drawn from a few gotras, phalas or families of socio-economic significance or central location in a village. Moreover, in the democratic politics of a panchayat constituted as a cluster of villages, the numerical strength of the
structural units within a village and the size of a village in the panchayat as a whole also assumed a political significance. The centrally located phalas of the waatawaalas inherited other attributes also such as concentration of particular gotras, traditional seats and source of power, better lands, infra-structural and situational advantages of approach to outer world. These structural sources and the leadership drawn from them worked as feedback to each other in a constant circulation of power between the two. Whatever the contest for power emerged in the panchayat was also mostly between the waatawaalas or their sons or kins. The contest may be, to some extent, explained in terms of change of certain socio-cultural characteristics of the leaders. Over the years, the number of adults (21 - 35 years), literates and educated and agriculturists-cum-labourers increased over middle and old aged, illiterates and agriculturists. But the leadership persisted among the power sharing structural units and, therefore, no change was affected in the structural base of power. This summation of structural and cultural sources of power can only be rendered ineffective through mass literacy and developmental distribution among the marginal or peripheral structural units - an objective which is rather difficult to be achieved among a backward people on account of their strong allegiance to those already in power. This fact indicated the structuring of a tribal panchayat going along the lines of traditional panchayats in rural India in general. Therefore, any attempt to promote larger participation, both, of individual and structural units in a tribal panchayat can only be taken up at the level of the larger socio-political milieu, i.e., the rural and the tribal society.

(2) Developmental functioning of the panchayat is characterized by traditionalization or informalization, lack of boundary-maintenance between formal and informal leadership, lack of rule-application and multiplicity of conflicts. There being monopoly of the waatawaalas or their wards within or without the panchayat body, the decisions regarding allocation, distribution or utilization of developmental works were taken in informal meetings of elders of the villagers and were formally recognized in meetings of the panchayat body. Even more, the non-elected waatawaalas, too, attended formal meetings of the initial panchayat bodies. Later, the formal leaders either consulted the informal leadership before taking a decision or a resolution or discussed it after the proceedings of the panchayat body. Finally there appeared a total disjunction between the two types of leadership seemingly pointing to the gradual formalization of the panchayat's functioning along independent lines but, even then, the formal leaders in power were not independent actors but were dependent of the extra-systemic political leaders, i.e., two Congress factions and the Bharatiya Janata Party. Thus, the entire process is indicative, initially, of traditionalization of the newly available formal panchayat and, later, of the mechanism within the framework of macro political cleavages. During the process of its growth the panchayat body had to confront problems of rule application because execution of a number of developmental works by the panchayat was challenged or held up by traditional authority in the villages and the ensuing crises could finally be resolved by counselling, compromise or exertion of formal power vested in the panchayat. However, this entire process has been fraught with a host of contradictions, differences, bickerings, factionalism, alignments and re-alignments emerging along the line of various structural units. The panchayat beginning developmental works with cooperation of the insiders (tribals) and conflicts with the outsiders such as the Mahajan Sarpanch and the Panchayat Samiti officials was soon drawn into a vortex of conflicts continuously shuffling and reshuffling the villagers divided into horizontal and vertical divisions. The conflicts which arose during the panchayat process were: Inter-ethnic, inter-gotra, inter-village, inter-
The conflicts largely originated from developmental works which the panchayat leaders as well as common villagers wanted to be carried out to their own advantage and, later, from political differences between leaders of political parties working at the macro level. Therefore, the conflicts, both, of endogenous and exogenous sources, in a sense, indicate political consciousness among the tribal people about their setting and the way they should negotiate with the problems existing therein. So, this new variant of conflicts has come to co-exist with their traditional conflicts, i.e., those covering women, property, cattle, theft, etc. It is likely that the politicization they are going through will increasingly lead the tribals to seek resolution of conflicts through their identification with the political parties which are to concretize their interests rather than structural identities. In the present context, the very structural source of leadership in the panchayat is itself generative of the conflicts and by increase in and better distribution of the developmental works the conflicts can be minimized to some extent.

(3) Modernization of panchayat leaders is differentially visible in political, economic and socio-cultural aspects observed with help of variables such as social standing, political (party) affiliation, land holding, occupational pattern, developmental expectations, house patterns, food patterns, dress patterns and religious consciousness. The major patterns of modernization emerging in various aspects are: (i) The leaders have come to assume a syncretic social standing consisting of, both, their traditional waatawaala position and the modern formal position (Sarpanch, Up Sarpanch or ward panch) in their public life. Also, a majority of them are affiliated either to Congress or to Bharatiya Janata Party or to one or the other faction of the former. This fact directly indicated role of political parties in structuring and functioning of the panchayat which concretized their political position, relations and consciousness for development of a political personality. (ii) Majority of leaders drawn from the land holders of 6-9 bighas having expectations for developmental works related to water for drinking and irrigation, construction of field boundaries and houses and educational, medical and aanganbaadi facilities are tightly cloistered for economic modernization within the given physical conditions of living, which is also an indicator of their vision for modernization. They have adopted regional cropping patterns with a visible capability for risk-judging, risk-taking and risk-minimising in their physical conditions. Also, while undergoing a process of occupational accretion, plurality, differentiation and syncretism they have combined a few occupations such as sericulture, shop-keeping, part-time services and labour with the central position of agriculture and animal rearing alongwith their traditional division of work. These changes mostly owed to depleting forest cover and culturable land, working of macro-governmental agencies in the village, exposure to external world and a little spread of education. (iii) Their housing pattern is indicative of a process of change from the traditional one-room set to the modern multi-room set passing through the traditional multi-room and mixed types. In food pattern, they are in the process to adopt the pattern of the Mewar region, while in dress pattern, they have drawn from the commoners, the Indian neta (leaders) style having dhoti and kurta and the western baboo (clerical) style. In all the three cases the source of change is macro-structures, i.e., the Mewar region in the first two cases and the politicians and bureaucrats of the national and the state level in the last case.

The democratic structuration and the politico-developmental dynamics have been mutually influencing. The typical structuration of the panchayat by structural units of differential levels led them to conflicts over developmental works and issues which con-
versely accelerated the level of political consciousness and politicization at the very structure of the panchayat. This feedback of the two led to a political differentiation and articulation of their social positions and party affiliation. In the remaining two aspects, i.e., economic and socio-cultural, the changes drawn from macro sources also have their relevance in context of the panchayat. Therefore, the three processes are inter-related directly in political aspect and indirectly in economic and socio-cultural aspects. In brief, democratic structure and development in mutual interaction can be seen to have caused directly or indirectly modernization among the tribals. The modernization in the form of accretion, plurality, differentiation and syncretism in social, cultural, occupational and political aspects goes along the line of modernization of the Indian tradition at large but with a difference that the tribal division of work still persists along with the changes.

The study is significant for the society and the disciplines of sociology and anthropology in various ways. It is relevant to the Panchayati Raj and the changing rural/tribal communities in India. Panchayati Raj in India is today hailed as an effective political mechanism for rural transformation, the relevance of which is well evident from its extension even to tribal communities -most backward as well as distinct sections of India- and the constitutional status recently given to it. This study not only explains effectiveness of the instrument of change in India but also attempts to understand nature of tribal response to the mechanism/instrument and direction of social change in rural India in general and in tribal communities in particular.

The study has extensive relevance to sociological and anthropological studies in theoretical, methodological and substantive areas. It understanks the three processes altogether to understand structure, function and change of a tribal micro system, whereas most of the studies in the area have been related to the occurrence of a single process or to the inter-relationships between any two of the three processes examined here. Then, these processes are generally preconceived to be occurring in the macro context. Here, they have been studied in the context of a tribal system to dismiss the belief that macro and micro are two different compartments and subject to different processes of change admitting of different analytical strategies.

This study avers that at least in Indian situation the polar opposites of macro and micro cannot be sustained. Rather, the two have a lot of similarities in terms of formal processes of change despite many substantive differences. As the study brought out, even a micro system such as the tribal gram panchayat can be complex and multi-layered one and a locus for working of, both, macro and micro forces of change. Dominance of the limited structural units during structuration of the panchayat, role of traditional leadership, emergence of a host of structural conflicts during its functioning and accretive, pluralist, differentiative and syncretic nature of changes in physical, social, cultural, occupational and political aspects are adequate to attest the fact that democratization (Brass 1965, Sisson 1970) development (Panchanadikar and Panchanadikar 1980) and modernization (Y. Singh 1977) of tribals is also found along the lines of modernization in India, particularly in rural India. The study provides certain marked clarity in this respect, even though there are still possibilities for a comprehensive understanding in these dimensions. Moreover, a question the answer of which remained beyond the parameters of the study is: In what manner the structural re-organization of Panchayati Raj assuring representation for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Women through the provisions of reservations of seats has been reflected in the panchayat bodies constituted under the recent Act. The question may be taken up for research in future.
This study also has another pointed theoretical message. Particularistic factors or certain essential elements of the traditional society can be seen to be in the very centre-stage of certain secular processes, such as the evolution and development of panchayat bodies in interaction with modernization and development. That, this is not an aberration is also evident in another study undertaken in an apparently unrelated area, viz.; the study of legal profession at a district court level. Explaining the crystallization of professional career at a district court in Punjab, Gandhi (1987:67-84) says, — a variety of particularistic ties drawn from lawyer’s own and his assistant’s network are instrumental in building up his practice and in promoting his career. In other words, the level of professional achievement is in direct proportion to the volume of network resources available to the lawyers. All this contravenes the theoretically stipulated constituent of universalism independent of primary group relationships.

All this brings one to conclude the present account saying that there is a substantial presence of traditional structural and cultural elements that resonate with a transparent clarity in the process of democratization in their conjunction with change, development and politicisation especially in the context of rural and tribal India.