CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION
An attempt has been made in the foregoing chapters to analyse the various aspects of political life in village Mogri with particular reference to its panchayat. We have now come to the proper stage to pose a question: What impact has the introduction of Panchayati Raj made on the political structure as well as behaviour of village Mogri? We may now close our study by attempting an answer to the question posed above.

The post-Independence efforts to reconstruct the political infra-structure of rural India and to endow them with new responsibilities in the context of the economic development of the country constitute a significant aspect of political development of India. The reconstruction of the panchayat system would appear to be both a consequence of the process of democratic modernisation of the political system of the country and an important instrument of this process for rural India. The village panchayat has thus come to constitute an inextricable part of the democratic framework of the country, as well as an important agency of public administration designed for rural development.

**Traditional Authority Structure:**

Before independence, Mogri was a part of the erst-while Baroda State. Although panchayats were constituted as early as 1930 in the Baroda State, the experiment was on a very restricted scale. The structure of the panchayat as envisaged...
in the Act was not designed to embrace the whole spectrum of populous democracy as understood in the modern sense. In fact, it was an experiment of progressive and enlightened administration at the grass-roots. The various qualifications such as education, property, income etc. prescribed for being a voter had practically eliminated all the backward classes and scheduled caste people from participation in the panchayat. This virtually left to the dominant Patidar caste a free field to enjoy the fruits of 'democracy'. The Patidars, being economically powerful and numerically largest group (40%), enjoyed the monopoly of political power in the village to their utmost advantage. They did not allow any non-Patidar to be a member in the panchayat. Although a facade of 'democratic election', was maintained, the fact remained that at no time elections were held. Nominations to the panchayat were largely a matter of social and economic background. Consequently, no Bariya could become a member of the Panchayat. Hardly any female member was appointed. The system of appointing Matadars from among the leading Patidar families had helped them to perpetuate their hold over the village. Even Talatis were, as far as possible, recruited from the higher castes. When the provision of a reserved seat for the scheduled caste was introduced, it did not make any substantial change in the situation. The member from the scheduled caste was, for all practical purposes, a nominee of the Patidar Sarpanch. Adult franchise, free-elections, voting by secret ballot, etc.
which symbolise the present day democracy were unheard of in Mogri at that time. Political power was concentrated in a small circle of elites. Its apparatus was controlled by the dominant caste. The Brahmins, Banias, Harijans and Musalmans were out of the ambit of power.

Democratic Decentralisation:

After independence, an intensive and co-ordinated programme of democratic decentralisation has been undertaken by the various state governments on the basis of the recommendations made by the Balwantrai Mehta Committee. With the introduction of Panchayati Raj, a new dynamism has been introduced in the existing structure of group relations in the village. New political forces have started operating in the rural society. It has stirred up the people and has created in them a new expectation of change in the political contours of the village. Obviously, Mogri has gone through the strains and stresses of political change. The political consciousness generated by it has shaken the old, traditional, social and political structure of the village.

The innovation of one-man-one-vote has caused political mobilisation of big segment of the population in Mogri which was hitherto dormant. In other words, it has brought about the politicisation of those segments of the society which may be identified as the Bariyas, the Valands, the Harijans etc.
The second most important change has been effected in the method of selection of the members of panchayat. The method of appointing panchayat members in the days of old regime has now gone. Nomination is rejected as a method of selection. Instead, direct election with full adult franchise has taken place. Thus, the panchayat system in Mogri has travelled a long way from progressive enlightened administration to complete democratic self-government.

Challenge:

Being a traditional society, Mogri was, however, slow to internalise the process of democratisation started after independence. The result of the first election (1951) of Mogri panchayat had resulted merely in the institutionalisation of the traditional leadership. In a sense, it was merely a formal exercise in reinforcement of traditional leadership. All the members were chosen from the dominant Patidar caste through the process of informal consultation. A former Matadar was elected as a sarpanch. A female-member was persuaded to lend her name. The scheduled caste representative was nominated by the sarpanch. The election of the second panchayat (1966) was nothing but another exercise in perpetuation of the hold of traditional leadership. The head of a family which enjoyed tremendous economic status in the village was chosen as a sarpanch. Rest of the members were the same as in the first panchayat. Consequently, the Bariyas
and other communities which constituted about 50% of the population were kept out.

However, the locus of authority and pattern of power relationship were not taken by the people as a static arrangement. The growing power struggle in the dominant caste itself was slowly becoming manifest in the successive panchayat elections of Mogri. Contest for leadership through popular elections had brought into prominence new elements, both from the rich Patidar middle class and numerically strong lower class, like the Bariyas. Introduction of adult franchise and holding of elections on that basis acted like magnets to unify the erstwhile disparate groups. The dormant groups like the Bariyas started thinking in terms of their group interests and were mobilised.

The major breakthrough in the process of democratisation was achieved in the third election (1961) when two candidates, one from the Bariyas and another from the Valand (Barber) communities successfully defeated their Patidar rivals. This was the first real election after ten years of panchayat rule in Mogri. The scheduled caste had also doubled its quota. Women also came out, for the first time, to contest seats in the panchayat. The Bariyas realised the significance of the "politics of numbers". The process started in the third election (1961) was intensified in the fourth election (1965). As a result the Bariyas made their first inroads
in the Panchayat. Now they had three members from their own caste and two from the Harijans in the total of thirteen. That they were serious in their fight for representation is borne out by the fact that in the 1967 general election, the Bariyas had their caste-fellow elected in the Anand constituency defeating a Patidar stalwart.

However, the Patidars were not complacent. For a long time they had enjoyed the monopoly of political power in the village. They were in charge of law and order under the Matadar system. Possession of land, social superiority, better education, political experience of the past, connection with the higher circles etc. had conferred many advantages on them. Consequently, a good many Patidars genuinely believed that they were the natural leaders of the village and that they ought to be in power, democracy or no democracy. The fact that they had tried to change the boundaries of Wards to the disadvantage of the Bariyas, showed their determination to stop the inroads made by the latter.

This is how the traditional power structure in the village has been challenged by the release of new forces. That the introduction of the Panchayati Raj has been instrumental of this change should not be minimised. The process of democratisation may appear to be slow, nevertheless, it has taken its roots.

In short, a very fundamental change has taken place in
Mogri's political life. It is a change from traditional authoritarian structure to the democratic polity. Nominations to the panchayat have been replaced by elections. Monopoly of power and representation enjoyed for decades by one caste - the Patidars - has been broken. New consciousness on the part of lower classes has been reflected in the successful dent made by the Bariyas and Harijans in the panchayati raj institutions. "The roles of adult franchise and periodic elections" writes Rajni Kothari, "have been pivotal, not only in displacing the principle of hierarchy by the principle of numbers, but also in establishing a unified focus of attention and affect for the vast masses of people, even before the other learning processes of education and urbanisation begin to play their role."¹

Although a society in transition, Mogri provides clear indications of people having been mobilised for political participation through elections and new awareness toward political power.

New Bases of Leadership:

There is no doubt that the Panchayati Raj has proved to be a major institutional break-through at the grass-roots level and unlike many other state-sponsored schemes it has greatly attracted the attention of rural masses and created a new power structure which has turned out to be a new booster of rural leadership.

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It is but obvious that leadership in a stratified society with traditional authority structure at the apex should come from the higher caste-groups. Owing to their powerful original positions, these traditional conservative elements have gained powerful hold on the democratic institutions through elections. If we look into the various election and selection processes of the sarpanchas and the panchayat members in Mogri, we find that they largely reflect the internal social and economic structure of the village community.

We have discussed in the foregoing pages as to how the first and second panchayats provided traditional leadership in the village. Even the third and fourth panchayats (1961 and 1965) were in many ways traditional. NS, the third Sarpanch, was the son of a former Matadar and leadership role for him was a sort of family function. In both the panchayats, more than 60% of the members still came from the Patidar caste, of which 23% belonged to the big business houses and 37% to the well-off middle class families. More than 50% of them belonged to the upper income group of Rs. 15,000 - 30,000 per year as well as higher age group of 40-60 years. And all of them, including the sarpanchas, were Patidars. In short, the leadership provided by the third and fourth panchayats contained many traditional elements in respect of income, age, business, economic status, family positions, and caste-composition. However, its
The traditional character was on the diminishing scale as compared to the former two panchayats. The female leadership was much more traditional in contrast to the male leadership.

**Numerical Strength:**

The extension of democracy to rural areas, particularly of electing the panchayats on the basis of adult franchise has helped the lower class, especially the Bariyas and the Harijans, to increase their participation in the political life of the village. This has resulted into what may be called 'participant democracy'. It is for the first time, since the advent of Panchayati Raj, that the Patidars have been challenged by the lower class in their monopoly of power. During the last few years, the Bariyas have tried to consolidate their position by taking advantage of their numerical strength, and the recently acquired elan of a rising group.

The first effective challenge to the Patidar leadership was given in the third panchayat election (1961). It was really shocking for the ruling Patidar caste to learn that they could be defeated in the election by the lower caste.

In the 1961 panchayat election, a prominent Patidar candidate belonging to the famous business house of the 'Ahmedabadi' group had contested from Ward I in defiance of the wishes of the Bariya and Harijan leaders, who believed
that the 'seat' rightfully belonged to them. The Patidar candidate had banked on the support of those Bariya and Harijan elements of the Ward who were employed in his two tobacco factories as well as on the farms. His rival, the Waland (Barber) candidate, was in no way a match for him. However, all the down-trodden of the Ward had made a common cause of rallying behind their own man -- labourer's representative. The Patidar candidate was trounced.

The election turned out to be an epoch making event. The Bariyas and the Harijans soon discovered that their own man get elected if they unitedly vote for him. They realised the importance of their numerical strength. Successive general elections (1962, 1967) have strengthened this process of realisation. The result of the fourth panchayat election of 1965 was more convincing to the Bariyas. They got their representation sharply increased from 9% to 23%, an increase of 14% at a stroke.

Thus the traditional leadership of the Patidars has been effectively challenged. Their monopoly of power has ended with the advent of new leadership from the Bariyas, based on the strength of numerical support and the elan of a rising class.

It is true that the lower castes are yet not confident to carry the challenge too far against powerful land-owning dominant caste. However, they are very much conscious of
their constitutional and political rights of equality and freedom. Hence, they are trying to raise their socio-political status through alignments with other groups so that they can also influence the power structure in their favour. As a first traditional reaction to this, the higher and dominant castes which have enjoyed privileged positions for many years find it difficult to treat them as equals.

Apart from the political reasons discussed above, there is also a psychological aspect of the problem which has aroused the lower class, especially the Bariyas, to agitate against the high-handedness of the Patidars. Many of the Bariya leaders have complained about the bad and insulting treatment they have received from the Patidars. This includes the physical beating and the forged charges of criminal nature. The only way to stop this was to raise social and political status. They have considerably advanced in this direction by successfully challenging the monopoly of political leadership of the Patidars.

Popular Support:

An important consequence of the new elective system regarding public offices in the panchayat is the rise of the new popular leaders in the village politics. RS, OM, DB, RK and NS in Mogri belong to this category. Because of their formal education, better economic background, resourcefulness, managerial skills and result-oriented approach in the development
of the village, these leaders have come to dominate the entire panchayat scene. They have acquired legitimacy of their leadership by getting elected and re-elected in the panchayat. No doubt, they have replaced the old, traditional leadership in the village. Although these new popular leaders have come from the dominant Patidar caste, their base of power has changed from traditional social and economic status to the democratic support of the masses. Today we see the same band of leaders working in the "changed context". Gradually, as greater number of competent persons from different segments of the society come forward to demand their share of power, the profile of popular leadership in Mogri will get more broad-based and diffusive.

The trend is clearly seen in the altered composition of the last two panchayats. The big business-cum-agriculture community is the first to be affected by this process. It got its representation reduced by 4.3% in the fourth (1965) panchayat. The benefit has accrued to the well-off middle class from which most of the new popular leaders have emerged. These leaders have become acceptable because of their specific achievements in the field of village development e.g. People remember NS and RK for water-works, RS for conflict-resolution, DB and OM for school buildings. However, all of them are not ultra-modern. On the contrary, many of them have 'mixed background'. They, perhaps, may be called 'neo-traditional'
leaders, who combine in themselves both the traits of traditional and modern leadership. What is remarkable about them is the fresh legitimacy they have acquired through democratic process. They enjoy power and position as before, but with the consent of the people.

Economic Base:

The socio-economic composition of Mogri, as we have noted elsewhere, provides classic example of in-built contradiction of our economic system. The Patidars, who form 40% of the total population own more than 67% of cultivable land in the village. It will be interesting to note that out of 80 families which hold 10 acres of land and more on average, 79 families belong to the Patidar and 1 to the Brahmin caste. No Bariya or Harijan family comes under this category. Thus economic structure of the community and leadership pattern, are inter-related. Possession of land is still a major determinant of status and power in an agrarian society like Mogri. Obviously, this has influenced the composition of the panchayat and its committees. It is, therefore, not surprising that a few rich business-cum-agricultural families should have, so far, controlled the political apparatus of the village. Although there is a perceptible decrease (4.3%) in the membership of this group, they still provide an important base for leadership. At least one member from GB group, the richest, has always come in the panchayat. The fact that the second sarpanch, who was unanimously selected, belonged
to this group indicates the amount of influence it wielded. He had offered free poles on the eve of electrification of the village. It may have a symbolic value at that time, but not without psychological appeal in favour of economically powerful ruling faction.

Most of the development projects of public utility nature such as Water-works, High School, Primary School, Dispensary have been financed from the donations given by the rich men of Mogri. This has indirectly helped the donors to project their image as influential and charitable leaders whose support is considered inevitable for any public work. The extent of CB group's economic power can be gauged from the fact that of the total donation of Rs. 2,00,000 given in the village for the development works, almost 75% of it has come from only that group.

Even the new popular leaders (neo-traditional) have come from comparatively well-off middle class with an average income of Rs. 5,000 to 15,000 per year. The intra-caste rivalry for leadership between the 'Ahmedabadi' faction and the 'local' Patidars has also its roots in the economic power of the former. Similarly, the inter-caste conflict between the Patidars and the Bariyas for political leadership, too, has its economic overtones. As landowning class, the former has vital economic stake in controlling the leadership of the panchayat.
In short, our study of leadership pattern in Mogri brings out a few interesting conclusions. Firstly, the old traditional base of leadership is vanquished. Secondly, new bases of leadership such as numerical and popular supports have come up. Lastly, the economic base of power and leadership still persists.

Mogri has been passing through a transitional period. The old leadership is giving place to the new leadership. But the pace of emerging leadership is rather slow. It obviously faces many limitations inherent in the initial stages of democratic modernisation. We find that no leader belonging to the age group of 21-30 has come up. It shows that the people do not consider the young leaders adequately mature for public life. Though over-all educational standard of the panchayat members shows an improvement with the removal of illiteracy, it has failed to attract service minded persons from the higher education group. The female leadership in Mogri has proved to be an appendage to the male leadership. They have yet to break the steel frame of the caste and social orthodoxy, and bring about their political emancipation envisaged in the new set-up. Although the Harijans have well geared themselves in the new process by taking up to education and encouraging new faces in the leadership role, the Bariyas will take longer time to come at par with the dominant caste. They have yet to produce a graduate and a college-going student as against the Patidars, the Brahmins.
the Banias and the Harijans. This may be partly due to the lack of interest and motivation on the part of Bariyas. No doubt they suffer from the traditional backlog. They will have to fight on all the fronts — economic, social, political and cultural — simultaneously if they are not to lose what they have gained politically.

Inter-action Between Caste and Politics:

It is necessary to understand the working of factions as a political process if one wants to understand the village politics in its true nature. Factionalism is an ingrained aspect of Indian political life at all levels, from village to state and nation.

In Mogri, the panchayat politics as a process has become an inter-action between two informal power structures sustained by two communities, the Patidars and the Bariyas. The remaining communities being so small, do not play any significant role in the village politics.

There are three major factions in the dominant Patidar caste in Mogri. They are known as 'Ahmedabadi', 'Local' and 'Gadiawal'. There are also four sub-factions in the 'Local' faction, known as '18-13', '9', 'Khadki' and 'Darwaja'. The Bariyas and the Harijans form factions in terms of political interest groups.

The factional fighting in Mogri assumes two dimensions
Firstly, it is intra-caste rivalry among the Patidar elites. Secondly, it becomes class-conflicts when the Bariyas and the Patidars confront each other as political power groups.

The struggle for power in the dominant caste leads to factionalism. Factionalism in Mogri has given political colour to the traditional hostility waged by elites of the dominant caste. Factions have emerged on the basis of kin-groups. Each major family cluster behaves as a faction and is primarily concerned with defeating its traditional rival. They come to surface only during the panchayat elections. Since all the three major factions belong to the dominant Patidar caste, the result is intra-caste rivalry.

The Patidars attach great importance to the formal position in the panchayat. This gives rise to the power struggle among the Patidars. Power is the main object for which factions so bitterly fight with each other. The Local Patidars, traditional holders of power, perceive the threat to their power not from the Bariyas but from the economically most powerful group known as 'Ahmedabadi' or 'out-siders', and connived at by the 'Gadiawal' faction. Because of the internal feuds and personal rivalries, the 'Local' Patidars have not been able to effectively checkmate the inroads made by the 'Ahmedabadi'. With only ten households in their fold, the 'Ahmedabadi' have been able to send, at least, one or two members in the panchayat. Not only that CB, its head,
had the distinction of being the unanimous choice for the post of sarpanch in 1961. This indicates the tremendous capacity of economic resources to influence politics and political power. The inter-factional rivalry among the Patidars has weakened their bargaining position. The Bariyas have taken the advantage of this situation by helping one Patidar faction against another, e.g. 'Ahmedabadi' candidate's famous election of Ward I in 1961 and DB's election in 1965.

The second dimension of factional fighting in Mogri appears when two communities, the Patidars and the Bariyas confront each other as class. The social and economic environs of these two communities compel them to be political rivals too. They are divided by conflicting class interest and class-antagonism. The history of Mogri panchayat is nothing but the story of caste and class-conflict. We already know the first instance of the election in Ward I (1961). The second occasion was provided when the Patidars had, on the strength of their voting majority, passed a resolution proposing changes in the boundaries of Wards I and II (1964). When the Patidars got a setback in their move, it was a day of victory for the Bariyas. The culmination of the process was reached when the Bariyas and the Harijans worked together to snatch one seat each from Ward I, II and III in 1965.

Caste Politics: Politicisation:

The factional politics in Mogri is, by and large, caste
politics. Mogri provides an excellent case-study of the interaction between castes and politics. The moot point is how they influence each other.

No doubt, factions were there in Mogri even before the introduction of Panchayati Raj. But they were confined, more or less, to social interaction. They became political as soon as the democratic politics under the Panchayati Raj started operating. It may be argued that the introduction of adult franchise has opened a new field for caste and factional activities in the political arena. All political leaders in Mogri fight for power and position in the panchayat. Caste is the first ready-made base which provides them with support structure. Almost all political leaders identify themselves with their own caste and more so in the case of dominant caste or the caste which provides strength of the numerical support. No Patidar or the Bariya candidate will overlook this aspect. There is no chance for a minority or neutral candidate to be elected in the panchayat. The political ideology does not help him, at least, here. The comment made by a prominent Brahmin worker and well-known business man of Mogri is pertinent.* It is on record that except a Valand, no candidate other than a Patidar or a Bariya has, so far, contested the panchayat election. It may be argued that where political society is functioning on the principle of bi-polarity of

* He said: "I may be a good public worker or a business man but cannot win election in the panchayat. A non-Patidar or a non-Bariya has, practically, no chance to win."
castes, (two castes) the minorities have no role to play in the political affairs of the village.

The leaders have to depend upon their kin-groups for support in the election if they are contesting against their own caste-fellows. Thus, kinship-ties become the primary base on whose support candidates fight elections. This makes it inevitable for each major family cluster to behave as a political faction.

A candidate without the support of any one or two of these factors is not likely to win the election, and may not successfully carve out his career as a political leader. A political leader may not last long without the solid support of his faction. e.g., ZM, MS are now lost into oblivion. A faction which does not command respect in terms of solid numerical strength or pragmatic leadership soon fades out. This has happened in the case of 'Gadiawala' faction. A minority faction has got to find out some additional base of support like economic status or business favours to supplement its strength, if it is not to face political eclipse. The 'Ahmedabadi' faction has not only survived this way, it has gone from strength to strength. The emerging factions based on the solidarity of caste or class-feelings, like the Bariyas, are in favourable position for political bargaining. If such factions work in unison and with common understanding like the Bariyas and the Harijans in Mogri, they have no difficulty
in influencing the power structure of the village dominated by high castes. The factional rivalry in the dominant caste provides excellent opportunities to such emerging factions for election alignments.

In short, the struggle for power and leadership position among the various political factions have led them to be more caste-oriented. It has also perpetuated kinship ties in the dominant caste and accentuated class-feelings along the lower castes. The voting behaviour of the people is conditioned, at least at the parochial level, either by the factional or class considerations. In any case, the caste factor is still important in their power relations. The whole village politics is, in a sense, caste-bound and caste-centred. It cuts at the very basis of the existence of a modern democratic process. It is reflected in our decision-making and conflict-resolution efforts. The order of priority given to development schemes in Mogri and the resolution passed by the panchayat censuring the conduct of a local excise official, are instances in the point.

Mobilisation:

However, caste and factions sometimes perform integrative functions like recruitment of new elements in the political organisation, e.g. RS, RK, MO, DB, FM in Mogri have emerged with the backing of their faction or caste or both. Similarly, another important function which factions perform
in society is the politicisation of social and religious
groups in secular terms. The tussle between the lower castes
to get some representation of their interest in the panchayat
and the powerful dominant caste group to secure the control
of the panchayat has resulted into mobilisation and politici-
sation of the vast masses of the village. The way factions
and sub-factions in the dominant Patidar caste field candidates
against one another in the panchayat elections -- there were
20 candidates for 8 seats from the Patidara in the 1965
panchayat election* -- and the way lower class people, especially
the Bariyas and the Harijans, vote en bloc for their candi-
dates, illustrate our point, very well. If factors like
illiteracy and ignorance have encouraged the people to vote
on caste and factional lines, then, they have (caste and
factions) also helped the people to participate in the modern
democratic process. In other words, interaction between caste
and politics has resulted into politicisation of caste and
mobilisation of the dormant masses.

Secularisation:

There is also another aspect of factional fighting in
Mogri. It is found that the economic interests of the
factional leaders sometime cut across factional loyalties and
kinship-ties. For example, NS and MO, two leaders of '18-13'

* List or nomination forms of the candidates of the previous
elections are not preserved either in the panchayat office
or in the Taluka Panchayat.
are accused of keeping good relations with the 'Ahmedabadi' group for business favours. Similarly, DB, a prominent leader of 'Khadki' was favoured by the 'Ahmedabadi' group in purchasing a piece of land at a nominal price. It is also alleged that NS and MS, leaders of two opposite factions had conspired to purchase through auction babul trees belonging to the panchayat.

This is not confined to the leaders of the Patidar factions only. Even some Bariya leaders have second thoughts about their role in defeating the rich and influential Patidar candidate in 1961. After all these rich Patidars are their employers in the tobacco factories and on the farms. How long can they afford to confront them. In fact, the Bariyas are thinking of helping this Patidar group in the next election.

It is also noticed that the economic resources have been utilised as support structure in place of caste and kingroup. For example, the 'Ahmedabadi' faction has successfully utilised its private economic resources, in terms of donations, employment-offers, and business favours to build and maintain political support for their group.

The fact that leaders have started thinking in terms of economic interest rather than the interest of one's own caste is a good pointer toward the process of secularization. In such a process political and economic objectives replace caste and traditional considerations. As Kothari writes: "...
the politicization of caste makes for outward-looking, upward-moving orientations and as this results in the phenomenon of multiple and overlapping identities, the emerging model of secularism is one in which caste is only one of many components entering into the political process."^2

While discussing role of politics as a secular and modernising influence, Kothari observes, "Politics, of course, is still a big enough influence but it is better understood as an active partner in the modernization process, more as providing schemes of integration and division to the developing social system than as either undermining or replacing caste as a secular entity."^3

Though factions in Mogri appear to be political in nature, they are really not informed by political ideology. Neither they are party-based. They become active only during panchayat elections. The main source of strength for a factional leader is an expected support from his kin-group or class-group.

No political party is formally active in Mogri and certainly not at the panchayat level. Most of the panchayat members have, so far, taken non-party attitude in the panchayat elections. Of course, they indulge in party politics during

2. Rajni Kothari, *op.cit.*, p.239.
3. Rajni Kothari, *op.cit.*, p. 239.
the period of general elections but easily forget them as soon as they are over. The political ideology has yet to shape itself, much less yet to influence their voting behaviour.

The Panchayati Raj has, on the one hand, helped to get new leadership emerge and power position re-distributed, it has in the other hand, perpetuated the existing caste differences and factional rivalries. So long as the partisan politics persists at a low key, the caste-politics is likely to influence the political behaviour of the people in Mogri.

Development

One of the important aims of the Panchayati Raj is to take the development programmes to the masses and to get their cooperation in implementing those programmes. This raises the question of local planning. The local planning has, as its objectives: (1) mobilisation of local resources, (2) initiative as well as responsibility by the local leadership and (3) participation by the people in the programmes. In view of the under-developed conditions of our country it is very important that the Panchayati Raj institutions, as units of local government, should create consciousness for planned development in the minds of people.

Though Mogri panchayat was formed as early as 1930 under the Baroda regime, it was not visualised as an agency for
community development. The present-day objective of mobilisation of forces for local development was impossible at that time, since no financial assistance in terms of development grants were provided for in the budget. Truly speaking, there was no devolution of power and decentralisation of machinery. The most progressive measures, at the village level, were confined to the compulsory primary education and running of a public library.

After independence, the village development programme was entrusted to the Community Development Organisation and National Extension Service. A grant of Rs. 1100 was made available towards the construction of Mogri-Jitodia road under the Block Development Scheme. A second grant of Rs. 13,000 was received from the Kaira District School Board for the construction of primary school building. This was all that Mogri could boast of in the field of development upto 1961.

Institutional Base: Decision-making:

It was after the formal introduction of Panchayati Raj in Gujarat (1963) that the tempo of development took momentum in Mogri. Introduction of Panchayati Raj offered institutional base for all kinds of developmental efforts, and worked as a mobilizer in the field of democratic political process.

Although, the Mogri panchayat tries to meet the statutory requirement by forming three development committees and showing one or two members from the lower class or a scheduled caste
or a female-member on the board, the fact is that these committees are over-represented and dominated by the Patidars. The discussion is virtually confined to the concentric circle of the Patidars and mostly on an informal basis. In practice, developmental decision-making, as it operates through the panchayat, is strongly influenced by caste-politics and elite interest perception. The semblance of representation given to the backward class or the scheduled caste on the various committees loses all significance when we look into the process of decision-making regarding development works. The projects like water-works, electrification, washing ghats, primary schools for boys and girls, distribution of water for irrigation, High School etc. emanate from the civic needs felt and perceived by the Patidar elites. These may not actually correspond with the 'felt-needs' of the lower-class. Surprisingly, the list does not include projects on small-scale industries, cottage industries, development of agriculture in terms of improved seeds, better manures, chemical fertilisers, loans for agricultural implements, animal husbandry and improvement of job potentialities, which would, otherwise, go a long way in helping the lower class people. Out of 300 water taps given in the village hardly 30(10%) of them have been allotted to the lower caste families. Similarly, more than 50% of the houses electrified belong to the upper strata. More than 90% of the irrigation water is also utilised by the rich Patidar farmers. This shows that the decision-making
process in the panchayat is influenced by the elite perception and need of the dominant caste. No doubt, the panchayat has succeeded in mobilising people for development of the village, the benefit has not reached evenly to all sections of the people.

**Resource Mobilisation:**

Resource mobilisation has been really a knotty problem with the Gram panchayats. Apart from the fact that no one likes to tax himself, nor to displease his voters, the scope for direct taxation in a village is limited. Recovery of tax-money is another difficult problem. That the Mogri Panchayat had total accumulation of Rs. 8,587.00 in arrears indicates the gravity of the financial situation.

Despite these difficulties, the panchayat has been successful in mobilising its resources. This is evidenced by its impressive array of development projects. In 1961-62, the panchayat's income from direct taxes was only 15.75%. It rose to the maximum of 49.47% by the end of the decade. However, it does not reveal the full efforts of the panchayat, unless we lump it with the efforts made in mobilising non-tax resources. From barely 6.98% in 1961-62, the non-tax revenue shot up to its high level of 38.37% in 1967-68, probably the best year in terms of performance of the decade. This has been done through the sale of babul trees and tax on irrigation water, which provides a fine example of local initiative and
indigenous skill in finding out extra source of income.

It is found that the efforts to mobilise resources meet dead-end if they come into clash with the interests of the dominant group. The question of levying octroi on tobacco has been a bone of contention between the two groups in Mogri. The producers want it on 'processed tobacco' while the businessmen desire it on 'raw-produce'. Both the groups are very powerful; the former being numerous and the latter being rich. Meanwhile, Mogri panchayat loses substantial income of Rs. 15,000 to 20,000 every year. This is a classic example of powerful interest groups working at the village level and using the formal structure for sectional interest. It also explains why a few rich businessmen should have displayed so much interest in the panchayat affairs.

Annual and development grants from the government form another source of income of the panchayat. Annual grant is, no doubt, a permanent source of income but generally limited to the extent of total revenue collection of a given village. As against this, the development grant depends on the efforts made by the village panchayat as it is given in the form of 'matching grant' on a fifty-fifty basis. If the amount of development grant is an indicator of the development works done, then the Mogri panchayat can certainly claim a high position for it. Almost half of its total income (Rs.1,10,018.18 out of Rs. 2,40,337.62) during 1961-70 has been obtained in
the form of development grants. In the totality of its resource mobilisation position, the government grant happens to be the greatest single source of income to the panchayat. It is also true that but for the dynamic institutional leadership provided by the panchayat, Mogri would not have received such a big amount for its development.

**Development and Leadership:**

Working of the panchayat also reflects the type of leadership provided by it. A weak leadership produces meagre results and dynamic leadership would go for more vigorous programme of development. A dynamic leader would not fail to use the institutional support and formal machinery of panchayat in the development of village. NS, the third Sarpanch, could complete the scheme of water-works because of his dynamic leadership, institutional support from the panchayat and the challenge of long-standing problem. The post-NS period from 1967 to 1970 was comparatively lull in terms of development activities. This was so because the Sarpanch himself was not dynamic. The development grants received during this period (11.66%, 36.22% and 18.47%) shows overall reduction compared to the previous years. This shows that an institutional arrangement or structural innovation itself cannot produce 'result' unless it gets dynamic leadership from the Sarpanch. In other words leadership is a differentiating factor that accounts for the high or low
developmental activities.

It is found from Mogri's experience that a panchayat feels financial strain when it goes from one development scheme to another without finding matching resources. A big slice of panchayat's income is required to be spent increasingly on the 'establishment' as well as the 'maintenance'. This hampers the speed of development programme, causing compulsory 'plan-holiday'. The lack of fund compels the panchayat to seek donations from the rich.

Whenever confronted with administrative bottleneck or unresponsive authority, Mogri has successfully used its indigenous political skill in solving them. Thus election periods have proved for them a blessing in disguise. For example, Mogri has skillfully utilised occasions for elections to bring pressure on the authorities to grant their demands. Thus, they have had Mogri-Jitodia road by boycotting District Local Board election and Water-works approved by bargaining with the Congress candidate for political support in the 1957 general elections. Incidentally the above occasion provides another example of leadership with an aptitude for achieving results. This is how a formal organisation like panchayat becomes increasingly acceptable and legitimised when it coordinates its role as a pressure body with the local aspirations.

The use of water-works for irrigation purpose is another
example of local genius in finding out an extra source of income. By its business-like attitude, the panchayat has turned the water-works into an important source of revenue, besides providing drinking water for the public. It fetches nearly 50% of its total income.

Donation is another source that the Mogri panchayat has fruitfully tapped. Its magnitude is understood only when one finds that almost all public projects like water-works, primary school buildings, dispensary, high school owe their existence to the various donations which have now crossed the total of Rs. two lakhs. But it is not without its political effect. The rich donors in Mogri tend to utilise their money power in influencing the decision-making process in and out of the panchayat. The decision regarding the management of the local high school and the sale of land belonging to the Ramji Mandir are two glaring examples. Of course, the rich people may not seem to be interested in the direct control of the political institutions of the village, but these should be amenable to them as and when the need arises.

An interesting aspect of political culture of Gujarat is discernible in the tendency of Mogri people to avoid as far as possible government patronage, e.g. running of local dispensary. This highly individualistic attitude and negative approach to politics stems from their distrust of government and its agencies. In short, the Panchayati Raj has created
development consciousness in the minds of people. Its efforts to mobilise resources for the development has resulted in increased participation of the masses in the political process. Willingness to pay more taxes, joining the boycott call of election, unified support to the agreed candidate, participation in shramdan, ready response to the appeal for donations are some of the encouraging instances in the point. The advantage of having a formal structure of Panchayati Raj at the village level has facilitated, in institutionalisation of development efforts and an attraction for all kinds of forces competing for political power.

Performance and Perception:

The performance of panchayats at the grass-roots has a vital bearing on the functioning of the upper tiers. The success of a panchayat largely depends upon the personality of its sarpanch and the profile of its leaders. The major difficulty is that most of the panchayats do not get really qualified sarpanchas. Even talati-cum-secretary has no interest in his work. He has very little incentive to improve professional skill. He is the least motivated official in the whole of the administrative machinery.

At the base lies the gramsabha. So far it has remained an ineffective body. It is feared that the panchayati raj institutions have, by and large, been playing an agency role and, as such, cannot be said to have become the nerve
centre of ideas and initiative at the rural local levels. Performance of the Mogri panchayat, examined in the above context, provides very interesting reading of its institutional behaviour.

Sarpanch:

The Mogri panchayat has failed to give an impressive outlook to its office, mainly due to lack of interest shown by its occupants. In all four incumbents, all Patidars, have held so far the office of the sarpanch, a prized-post for a member of the dominant caste. Four factors – ascriptive status, economic position, group-politics and popularity – have played an important part in the selection of a sarpanch. It is not necessary that all these factors should combine together. It is found that a compromise candidate does not prove to be effective. His ascriptive status alone does not help him to sustain his position. This has happened in the case of ZM, the first Sarpanch. * Similarly, an experienced and wealthy person does not, ipso facto, prove to be a popular leader. Economic status in itself is not sufficient to earn popularity. One has to establish his credentials by concrete achievements. CB's failure as a sarpanch exactly pinpoints this attribute of leadership. It is true that a popular person has not come out as a dynamic sarpanch. Popularity helps a candidate to be acceptable to all, but lack of dynamism and ambition mars the success of a popular leader. DB, the fourth Sarpanch, suffers from these limitations. On the contrary,

* Vide Chapter V, pp.
A dynamic sarpanch has become controversial. Dynamism, no doubt, is a force. But a dynamic personality proves to be must have credible integrity. NS, the third sarpanch, had proved to be dynamic but was not like Caesar's wife. Of all, group politics has been found to be the most important factor that has influenced the choice of three of the four sarpanchas, although no definite co-relation can be established between these factors.

From the viewpoint of professional equipage, none of the sarpanch can be said to have read any basic literature on the Panchayati Raj. None of them has also attended any seminar or conference or shibir in this regard. The second sarpanch, CB, has had better exposure in view of his early association with the District Local Board, the Congress party, and wider business contacts. But this has not helped him to be an extra-ordinary sarpanch -- as distinguished from others, say, an efficient administrator or a dynamic leader.

No sarpanch in Mogri has cared to develop a uniform system of office administration in the panchayat. It has worked as an appendage to Sarpanch's main business. All of them have looked at it as a centre of power politics. Nobody has thought of it as a development administration.

If we look into the motives of various sarpanchas who ruled over the Mogri Panchayat, we would be able to appreciate their perception of their (sarpancha's) role. The first
sarpanch, ZM, looked to this post as restoration of his old status of Matadar. It can be said without prejudice that he did not grasp at all the wider role of the panchayat either as a unit of self-government or as an agency of local development. To CB, the second sarpanch, it came as a recognition of his very prominent position in the village. His status as a leading citizen was already acknowledged outside the village. He happened to be a member of the District Local Board. He was also known as a philanthropist and an educationalist. He belonged to the old guard of the Congress, having had his early political socialisation in the days of nationalist struggle. But he was too big a person for his small post. He could really not get interested in his work as a sarpanch. Besides, he had too many commitments of his own business outside the village. No doubt, he was well aware of the usefulness of the panchayat as a tool of development. In fact, he had voluntarily offered free poles on the eve of village electrification. But in the ultimate analysis, the panchayat was for him a means, not an end, in his varied interests. As a businessman, he was rather interested in stalling panchayat's move to introduce octroi on tobacco. As a leader of 'Ahmedabadi' faction, he was keen on maintaining his faction's influence in the panchayat. In short, he was more interested in increasing his sphere of influence, rather than providing leadership to the panchayat.
NS, the third sarpanch, was motivated in the post for more than one reasons. He would like to have it as a symbol of his traditional status and authority of former Matadar. As a leader of 'Local' Patidars, the major political faction in the village, it was necessary that he should be in that position and thus prevent leaders of his rival factions occupying the prized-post. He was also not happy about the representation given to the 'useless Bariyas'. He did not overlook the 'economic benefit' of his post. No doubt he was most dynamic of all the sarpanchas and had correctly perceived the development-potential of the panchayat machinery. To his credit lies some of the important development projects like water-works. In short, he worked with both, political and achievement motivations.

The fourth sarpanch, DB, was really indifferent to his position from the very beginning. He was not hopeful about the success of the panchayati raj experiment and thought it to be 'waste of time and energy'. However, he was sincere and honest, but least motivated for his job.

So, we get from these leaders a sort of 'mixed' perception of their roles vis-a-vis panchayat. Experience in Mogri shows that it is difficult to find a sarpanch possessed of ideal qualities. So long as a sarpanch remains dependent on his faction for his political survival, he will not be an ideal one.
Apart from the above analysis, we also find elitist-perception in the decision-making process. e.g. disregard for the basic needs of the people like urinals, latrines or negligence for agricultural activities helpful to the poor farmers or high priority given to the projects required for the upper class. Many leaders look upon the panchayat as a centre of politics rather than an instrument of service to the people. Its democratic frame is twisted to suit the interests of the elite. Traditional power holders and the economic bourgeois class look upon it as a preserve of their status and privileges. However, the introduction of Panchayati Raj has come as a liberating force for the vast masses. And to some dynamic persons it has come as a mobilizer of development efforts.

Talati-cum-Secretary:

The innovation of combining two positions -- revenue clerk and panchayat secretary -- into one has turned out to be a curious mixture. In these days of specialisation, this all purpose mixture, has proved to be ineffective. Indeed, the poor secretary has found it beyond his capacity to please two masters -- revenue and panchayat -- at the same time, with the result that neither is satisfied with his performance. The talati-cum-secretary in Mogri, though honest and hard-working, was never found interested in the development activities of the panchayat. A person trained for revenue with different goal perception is quite unsuitable for the
job in the panchayat, which is essentially a development oriented. The talati-cum-secretary needs thorough orienta-
tion in his new role if he is to contribute anything to the success of the Panchayati Raj.

**Working:**

Business of the panchayat is conducted through its meetings. Frequency of meetings, attendance of the members and quality of deliberations reflect upon the working of the panchayat. One meeting per month is the minimum statutory requirement. Work experience of the Mogri panchayat shows that it has not always been possible to hold meetings as per the statutory requirement. Informal rather than formal consultations often suit them well. The low ratio of non-quorum suggests that when the members decide to meet, they mean business. It is found that the member's interest in attending the meetings decline soon after the election is over. However, the fact that almost 96% of the total meetings were attended by more than 50% of the members, indicates perhaps their sense of responsibility. Unauthorised construction and recovery of arrears seem to be posing grave threats as two urgent meetings were needed to discuss the problems.

The study of the Mogri panchayat's agenda provides interesting reading. With an average of 30 items and 10 meetings per year, the panchayat handles 3 items per meeting. Out of these 3 items, 1 turns out to be special and 2 of
general nature. It is found that the election period provides the busiest schedule of agenda for the meetings. The financial and administrative matters alone consume 80% of panchayat's time. Of course, the panchayat does not seem to be negligent to the development functions, as the items regularly show on the agenda. The political items on the agenda clearly prove that the Patidar members do not feel inhibited in using the panchayat machinery against their rivals. There are only two cases of conflict (breach of regulations) between the panchayat and the residents which highlights its 'attitude of conflict avoidance'.

At the base of the Panchayati Raj lies the gram sabha composed of all the adult citizens who are eligible to cast vote. The experience of Mogri shows that so far the gram sabha has remained an ineffective body, occupying back seat in the whole set up. Its influence on the decision-making process in the panchayat has been rather negligible. The panchayat does not even hold minimum two meetings per year as required by the Act. It meets on 'New Year Day' at such time and place so as to coincide with the meeting of the people, assembled to exchange New Year greetings; thus cleverly solving the problem of 'large attendance'. This shows, once more, the panchayat's genius of utilising indigenous method to fruitful use. No agenda is prepared for the gram sabha. However, some official work like reading of statement of accounts is done in the beginning, to be
followed by open discussion. Participation in the discussion is confined to a few elders. The effective participation instead of being popular participation is limited to a few belonging to the higher castes of the rural society who dominate these institutions. Minutes are hardly kept or maintained. Its recommendations are not seriously taken up and implemented. However, it provides valuable occasion to the people to discuss their problems, openly and under common roof.

So we come to the end of our assessment. We may repeat our question posed in the beginning: What impact has the introduction of Panchayati Raj made on the political structure as well as behaviour of village Mogri? To recapitulate, we might briefly say, that Mogri was a highly traditional society on the eve of independence. The Patidar caste completely dominated the political scene of the village. Introduction of 'democratic decentralisation', along with its concomitant of adult franchise and free elections at the panchayat level affected Mogri's political life in a big way. It brought about political modernisation of a big segment of the society which was hitherto apolitical. In a very real sense, it loosened up the network of traditional relationships.

Democracy, then, provided a new definition of political authority to the downtrodden. Soon it became clear to them that political authority is neither given nor inherited but
emerges out of the numerical strength and popular support. Further, democracy taught the rural community that the decision-making process, which was formerly rather autocratic, can now be the privilege of many.

With the change in bases of leadership, the old privileged class gave place to the new leaders. However, the new awareness that the election is an efficacious instrument to change the power structure, only encouraged the power struggle. The power struggle brought factional fighting on the surface. The Patidars being more conscious of the power-status quickly developed intra-caste rivalry on the one hand and inter-caste conflict (with the Bariyas) on the other. The result was that the panchayat politics became caste-politics. However, the new role of politics as secular and modernising influence did make its imprint on the interactional process. The inter-action between caste and politics thus resulted into politicisation of caste and mobilisation of dormant masses. Admittedly, the process is very slow. This is how the Panchayati Raj has democratised politics in Mogri.

Another primary objective of the Panchayati Raj is "development." There is no doubt that the introduction of Panchayati Raj has offered much needed institutional base for development work. It has also mobilised the people in terms of committee-formation, willingness to pay more taxes,
participation in shramdan, raising contributions or donations, etc. to make sense of what we claim as "participant democracy". This is not so easy against the odds of traditional social structure, inhibitions of the dormant masses and overall poverty of the people. It needs a few dedicated, dynamic leaders to take them to the path of development. But, as Mogri illustrates, such leaders are not easy to find out. In the process, the panchayat appears more as a centre of politics to the power-mongers rather than an instrument of service, with the result that the various organs of the panchayat also function in the same spirit and same direction.

No doubt Mogri is a society in transition with clear indications toward mobilised people, participatory democracy and a new political consciousness. But it should be acknowledged, as a matter of reality, that there is a wide gap between the performance and perception of the Panchayati Raj. Though it has initiated the process of democratisation and created development consciousness at the grass-roots, it has yet to penetrate into the hard core of the rural society, which is highly hierarchical and paternalistic in character. The formal observance of democratic rule in the panchayat is not enough. The greatest barrier seems to be the marked disparity in economic, social and cultural status of the various sections of the population. The less privileged
social groups and minorities still find it difficult to participate meaningfully in the democratic functioning of the panchayat.