CHAPTER III

THE VILLAGE

(a) General features of the Kaira District.

(b) Village Mogri.

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MAP OF KAIRA DISTRICT
The focus of this study is Village Mogri of Anand Taluka situated in the fertile Charotar region of the Kaira District, Gujarat State.

(a) General features of the Kaira District:

Kaira District lies between 22°-7' and 23°-18' north latitude and 72°-15' and 73°-37' east longitude. The total area of the district is about 7149 kilometer. The population of the district, according to the 1971 census, is 24,51,387 indicating a density of about 939 people per sq. mile (341 per sq. km.). This is the highest density among all the districts of the Gujarat State.

Topography:

The Bombay Gazetteer, Gujarat Vol. III describes the Kaira District in the following manner:

"Except a small corner of hilly ground near its northern boundary and in the south-east and south, where along the Mahi the surface is roughened and furrowed into deep ravines, the district of Kaira is one unbroken plain, sloping gently towards the south-west. Though almost all fit for cultivation, the land varies much in Charotar. In the north and north-east, with patches of rich rice-land,

1. Charotar comprises of four talukas of Anand, Borsad, Nadiad and Petlad. Most Patidars of Kaira District are concentrated in Charotar. Among Patidars also there are two communities. One is known as leva. Its members do not themselves work in the fields. The other is known as

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much lies open and untilled; covered in places with little but low brush-wood. In the centre is the Charotar or goodly land, a tract of most fertile and well-titled soil. The people are skilful cultivators and rich, live in large but well-built villages. Their fields yielding the choicest crops, are sheltered by high hedges, and the whole country is clothed with rows and clusters of large shapely tracts. Westwards this belt of rich vegetation passes into a bare, though well-cultivated tract of rice land. This, towards the south, grows barrener and more open, till, as it nears the gulf of Cambay, the fields are separated by unfruitful patches, whitened by saline deposits."

By and large, the district is an unbroken plain. There is only a small hilly arch in the northern part of the Kapadwanj and Balasinor talukas. The river Mahi has also very deep ravines which at present remain mostly uncultivated. The district has a panoramic beauty of its orchards and fields.

Soil:

The soil of the district can be divided into four main categories, namely, (1) goradu (2) kyari (3) black cotton and (4) low lying alluvial or Bhatha land. In the 1921 census

(continued from p.60...)

Kadva and its members do work; the latter are considered inferior. George Gierson writes about Charotar in the Linguistic Survey of India -- "The Charotar tract comprises of country between the Mahi and the Vatrak rivers, that is Borsad, Anand, Nadiad, Mehmadabad and Matar sub-divisions of the Gaekward's territory. Charotar is generally derived from charo - grass land."
of India Report the soil of Charotar has been described as of the recent alluvial formation, mostly light (gorat) or a little mixed (Besar) in colour and capable of producing all kinds of crops.  

Goradu soil is mainly found in an area known as Charotar in this district. Mogri is situated in Anand Taluka at a place which is in the heart of the Charotar region. The soil is largely sandy loam capable of growing rich cash crops like, tobacco, banana, variari (fennel) etc.

Climatic conditions:

The climate of the district is mainly of an extreme type, very hot in summer, and fairly cold in the winter. It is not very dry but is sufficiently dry due to the combination of extreme of temperatures and low rainfall. The prevalent climatic conditions are determined, among other factors, by the lack of forests and mountain ranges in the district. Climate of Village Mogri is similar to that of the Kaira district. The rainfall has also the same pattern.

Historical Background:

Crossed by so many of the chief lines of traffic between upper and central India and the coast, the district contains

settlements of very great antiquity. Under its different Rajput dynasties (746-1290 A.D.) the lands of Kaira were, except perhaps Thaera and Kapadvanj, included in the settled and directly-managed portions of the Anhilvada domain. At the end of the fourteenth century they passed under the Musalman kings of Ahmedabad, and were, in turn, transferred to the Moghals in 1573 by the crown. From about 1720 to 1750 the district was the scene of almost unceasing conflict between the Marathas and the Muslim Viceroy's and nobles. Except that the Kaira estate was for ten years left in the hands of the Babi family, on the capture of Ahmedabad (1753), the districts were shared between the Peshwa and the Gaekwad, and remained with them till made over to the British, partly in 1803 and partly in 1817. Thereafter, the Kaira district remained under the British rule and formed part of Bombay Province. On the bifurcation of bilingual Bombay State, it formed part of Gujarat State from 1st May, 1960.3

The Famous Patel Brothers:

The late Patel brothers Shri Vithalbhai and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the two of the most illustrious sons of India, belonged to Karamsad, a village of Anand Taluka. The front rank statesman and politician Shri Vithalbhai Patel was a great constitutionalist and the first Indian President of the Imperial Legislative Assembly constituted during the

3. Ibid., p.4.
British regime. He fought the alien rule from the legislative platform up to his death. Services rendered by him to the nation at the time of Salt Satyagraha at Dharasana are well-known. Late Shri Vallabhbhai Patel became the acknowledged 'Sardar' (leader) of the whole nation consequent upon his success in the no-tax campaign at Bardoli in 1928. As the first Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister of Independent India, he accomplished the herculean task of integrating the native States -- with his unparalleled tact, ingenuity and forthrightness matched by a keen foresight and appraisal of the country's situation handled with a firm hand. As first rank fighters in the cause of freedom, the contribution made by both these brothers have earned for this district a good name throughout the country.

Administrative set-up:

For the purpose of revenue administration, the district is divided into 3 sub-divisions with 10 talukas. The collector is in charge of the general administration, law and order and civil supplies. He is assisted by Deputy Collectors in charge of 3 sub-divisions having their headquarters at Anand, Petlad and Nadiad. There are 10 Mamlatdars in charge of 10 taluka offices.

Out of the 10 talukas of the district, 7 talukas are comprised of the former Province of Bombay and 3 talukas, namely Petlad, Camdy and Balasinor, were comprised chiefly of the former Baroda, Cambay and Balasinor States respectively.

Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies:


Panchayats:

The number of panchayats in the district at the end of 1970-71 were 810 including group panchayats, covering in all 967 villages and the population of 20,96,620 (i.e. 100%).

According to the provisions of the Gujarat Panchayat (1971).

Act, 1961, a gram panchayat consists of not less than 9 and not more than 15 members, while a nagar panchayat consists of not less than 15 and not more than 31 members. Provision has been made to reserve seats for women and members of scheduled castes and tribes. A Taluka Panchayat, consists of ex-officio, elected and co-opted and associate members. Similar pattern is also followed in the formation of the District Panchayat.

To enable the panchayats to carry out numerous activities entrusted to them, Government has transferred/deputed a number of its employees. The staff of the District School Boards and District Local Boards has also been transferred to taluka/district panchayats. A Panchayat Service Selection Board has been constituted for the purpose of recruitment in Panchayat Service.

**Demographic Features**

In 1961, the population of the district was 19,77,540. In 1971, it went up to 24,51,387. According to the 1971 census, the growth rate of population is $3.96\%$ which is very high but less than the rate that obtains in the State of Gujarat ($29.39\%$). The lower rate of growth can be due to the mobility of the people of this district who move out to business centres not only in the country but also outside.

The growth of numbers between 1961-71 can, however, be attributed to the decline in death rate, accompanied by
steady improvements in medical and public health services available to the people since Independence.

Rural Population:

The total number of villages in the district is 967 of which 5 are uninhabited. The total rural population of the district is 19,62,357 giving an average of 2,033 persons per inhabited village. The proportion of rural population (80.05%) to the total population in the district is higher than similar proportion in the State which is 71.02%.

13.17% of villages in the district have population less than 500 while 51.52% villages have population varying from 500 to 1,999, 35.31% of villages are large size villages (2000 and above) covering 62.74% of rural population. It is significant to note that the major part of the rural population (86.28%) is concentrated in villages having population of 1000 and above. 7

Large size villages is the feature of this district. The tendency of villages to grow in size and the concentration of rural population in medium and large size villages are noticeable from the above figures.

7. 'District Analytical Report' of 1971 Census is yet not published. The above figures and the figures mentioned hereafter are supplied by the Statistical branch of the Kaira Zilla Panchayat Office, Nadiad.
Urban Population:

The urban and semi-urban population of the district, numbering 4,89,030 persons is spread over 17 towns of different sizes of which only two come under Class II and has population over 50,000. Nearly 1/5 of the total population (19.95%) lives in urban areas, as against 28.08% in the State. There is no town which has population below 5,000. The average population of a town in the district is 22,575 persons as compared to 30,580 for the State. The extent of urbanisation is thus found to be comparatively less than that obtaining in the State as a whole.

Density:

The area of the district in 1961 was 2670.8 square miles. In 1971 it was 7194 kilometers or 3.76% of the total area of the State. The average density of population is 939 (341 per km) persons per square mile as against 290 for the State. The highest average density 1,195 is found in Anand Taluka and the lowest 393 in Cambay Taluka.

Literacy and Education:

There were 4,65,380 literates in the district in 1951 (29.18%). Percentage of male literates was 40.80% while that of female literates was 16.42%. In 1961, the percentage of literacy rose to 33.26%, 48.45% for males and 22.74% for females. In 1971, 42.01% persons, including 54.37% males
and 28.20% females, were literate.

The highest percentage of literacy among male persons is found to be in the age group of 15-34 both in urban and rural areas and among females in the age group of 5-14 in urban and rural areas, whereas the percentage of literacy in the higher age-group progressively declines. This indicates keen interest taken by people in female education in recent years.

As for the highest percentage of literacy in rural areas, Anand taluka with 45.46% ranks first and Balasinor taluka with 26.89% comes lowest. Among urban areas, Anand taluka stands first with 63.89% of literacy. The highest percentage of male literates is to be found in Anand taluka (62.52%).

Educational levels:

In 1970-71, the number of villages having primary schools was 907, with 60 villages having no schools at all. The school/teacher/student ratio per village is 1.5:7:265 respectively. In 1970-71, there were 276 secondary institutions with 3,593 teachers and 99,286 pupils giving an average of 28 pupils per teacher. There were 43 institutions for higher education having 1108 teachers and 20,634 pupils, besides a residential university at Vallabhbh Vidyanagar, at the end of the Second Five Year Plan. The number has gone up

9. Ibid.
considerably since then.

Religious status:

According to the Kaira Zilla Panchayat Statistical Abstract, 1971, 88.52% of the total population were Hindus, 9.14% Muslims, 1.76% Christians and 0.70% Jains. Among others, 853 were Sikhs, 25 Buddhists and 171 belonged to unspecified categories of religions and persuasions.

Scheduled Castes and Tribes:

The total population of Scheduled Castes as per 1971 Census is 1,48,198 which forms 6.06% of the total population of the district, of which 1,24,055 and 24,143 live in rural and urban areas respectively. There are 30.84% literates among them, of which 29.45% live in villages. The working population accounts for 45,437 persons or 39.15% of the total population in the district. The predominant Scheduled Caste in the district are Mahyavanshi, Dhed and Vankar.

Scheduled Tribes claim 17,480 (0.88%) only of the total population of the district and 0.63% of the Scheduled Tribes of the State. The literate and educated among them number 1,868 or 10.69% of whom 1,543 are living in rural areas and 325 in urban areas. 10

Agriculture:

The area under cultivation in the district, in 1970-71 was 75.70% of the total geographical area and land put to

uses other than cultivation formed 24.30%.

The principal food crops of the district are rice, wheat, bajri and tur. Groundnut, cotton and tobacco are the main non-food crops. It is noticed that food-crops are gradually declining from 59.89% in 1965-66 to 55.96% in 1968-69, with a corresponding increase of 4.72% in cash crops. Among cash crops cotton claims 10.33%, tobacco 11.49% and groundnut 4.88%. Tobacco is the most important cash-crop of the Charotar region in the district.

Cooperation:

Kaira district has made considerable progress in the field of cooperation. At the close of the cooperative year 1969-70, there were 1,864 cooperative societies having a membership of 4,54,408 and Rs. 430,79 lakhs as share capital. The total working capital of these societies was 4061.27 lakhs. Average membership of the society comes to 238 whereas average share capital comes to Rs. 13,590. Average loan advanced is Rs. 79,010, whereas average loan advanced per member is Rs. 441. Cooperative movement has covered nearly all villages in the district. The progress made and work done by the Milk Producers' Cooperative Societies is indeed unique and noteworthy.

Economic Activity:

The population of the district is distributed into

12. Ibid.
workers and non-workers in the ratio of 29.17 : 70.83. The striking feature of the economic pattern obtaining in the district as elsewhere in the State is predominantly agricultural as revealed by 72.18% of workers engaged in agricultural pursuits.

There were 521 registered factories, 77 joint stock companies, 139 banks both scheduled and cooperative, and 79 industrial cooperative societies at the end of the year 1970.

**Community Development:**

The Community Development Programme was inaugurated in the district in October, 1953. The programme since then has undergone various organisational changes as a result of the recommendations of the Balwantrai Mehta Committee. By March, 1961 the entire district was covered under the programme. The total expenditure incurred till that date amounted to Rs. 14,978,000 as against people's contribution of Rs. 5,029,000 or 33.58% of the total expenditure. The principal achievements were construction of 301 school buildings and 202 reading rooms, starting of 85 ordinary schools, making 16,802 adults literate, starting of 6 veterinary dispensaries, supply of 99 pedigree bulls, bringing under irrigation an additional area of 32,709 acres, starting of 6 dispensaries and construction of 2,677 furlongs of kutch roads. The amount of improved seeds and manures distributed was 131,109 B. maunds and 1,050,212 B. maunds respectively.  

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13. Census of India, 1961, op. cit., p. 34.
The People:

The all-round development of the Kaira District is so impressive that it is difficult to find out any single factor responsible for it. It can be ascribed to a combination of several factors: an inflow of capital earned abroad, native business acumen, resourcefulness and energy of the people, strong impact of political movements, \(^{14}\) and stimulus from political and social consciousness.

The economic and social structures of the rural community in the District are largely shaped by two main castes -- the Patidars and the Bariyas (a lower section of the Kshatriyas.) They are more active and politically conscious in Kaira than elsewhere, e.g. in the districts of Ahmedabad, Baroda, Mehsana and Sabarkantha, where they equally dominate the demographic statistics. Political importance of these two castes will be immediately understood if one looks to the list of successful assembly candidates of the last general (mid-term) elections (1972). Out of total 15, 9 were Kshatriyas/Bariyas, 4 Patels, 1 Brahmin and 1 Bania. There is nothing surprising in it. Combined together, these two castes constitute 76% in Kaira district \(^{*}\) and 60% of the population of Gujarat.

However, there is a vast difference between the two castes. Patidars, who constitute the chief farming and land-owning section in this region, are known for "high mobility and


\(^{*}\) 48% Bariyas and 28% Patidars.
shrewd eye for business opportunity, excellent husbandry in agriculture, and above all a consuming ambition, combined with necessary will and drive to make money;" the Bariyas are socially and educationally backward, politically dormant and economically suppressed.

Patidars are at their best when they work under hardship and in adverse circumstances. Many families migrated to east and south Africa in search of fresh opportunities at the time of the famine of 1900, and made good fortune there. In spite of their being away from the home-towns, they have kept contact with the motherland and have generously contributed to the development of welfare institutions in their home areas. As for example, they have contributed more than Rs. ten lakhs toward the establishment of Vallabh Vidyanagar, an educational township in Kaira district. Similarly, they like Mr. Lavingwala of Mogri, have donated for Tower, Water-works, Dispensary etc. in their native villages. An old description of the Leva Kanbis as "the aristocracy of Gujarat agriculture" holds good to-day.

Attitude of self-reliance and general indifference, if not actual contempt, for official assistance and institutions is widespread among the patidars. For them, agriculture is not the sole pursuit, though technological farming is

15. Ibid., p.171.
perhaps more advanced in Kaira than in any other district of Gujarat. Enterprising as they are, besides being progressive farmers, they would not depend upon business community for processing and marketing their produce. Either they will do it themselves or they will rely on the cooperatives. As a result profits remain in the village.

Patidars heavily invest in land and prefer cultivation of cash crops like cotton or tobacco, because of their better return. With an eye on the rapid stride of industrialisation many big and prosperous farmers have started disposing of some of their land and have gone for small and medium scale industries. The number of iron foundaries, tobacco factories, pulse and rice mills, ginning factories and power looms, cement pipes and tiles factories, chemicals and pesticides industries etc., that have come up in the district bear testimony of this trait.

These varied activities have started changing the economic complexion of the region. The tempo of industrialisation has got accelerated with many Patidar - settlers repatriated from East Africa. With the establishment of industrial estate at Vitthal Udyog Nagar on Anand-Karamsad railway track and elsewhere, the scope for employment for backward class people has developed. The employment of the Bariyas and the Harijans from the dormant castes in industrial units has provided them with an opportunity of developing 'working-class' consciousness rather more rapidly than their counter-parts (i.e.
agricultural labourers) scattered on the innumerable farms. 17 Next to Paticars come Kshatriyas. They account for two-fifth of the population of Gujarat. The rough picture of areas of Kshatriyas concentration (with approximate percentage) is as follows:

Kaira 50%, Banaskantha and Baroda 45%, Mehsana 42%, Ahmedabad 40%, Panchmahals and Broach 35%, Various districts of Saurashtra from 30 to 35%.

Social composition of the Kshatriyas reveals very interesting features:

"They are mainly composed of the Bariyas and the Rajputs. "Socially" there is great distance among the various castes and lineage groups in the Kshatriya hierarchy, although Rajput hypergamy does permit the daughters of Bariya chiefs to be married into some Rajput families. Economically barring well-placed Rajput nobles most of these castes are poor and landless, some of the Rajput families as destitute as the Bariyas, if not worse. It is common interest and a growing secular identity of common resentment against the well-to-do castes that have brought these different castes together in a broader organisation." 18

The Kshatriya community had in the past enjoyed certain

privileges as a caste. With changes taking place in the social and economic organisation, these privileges were infringed at some stage. And this, in turn, led to a rallying together for the preservation of privileges and interests in a deliberate and organised manner. Ascriptive status turned into a symbol of mobilisation for building up an interest organisation. With this took place a marked shift in both the nature of their caste organisation and its idiom of communication.

Kshatriya Sabha:

It is a movement that has gained in importance over the years in the mobilisation of mass political support in the State. One of the main purposes of the Kshatriya movement in Gujarat was to reform and upgrade the Bariyas, Thakardas and Bhils, the lower castes in the Kshatriya hierarchy.

The movement had its roots in the Gujarat Rajput Kelavani Mandal, established in 1946. In order to broad-base its activities, it was turned into what is now known as the "Kshatriya Sabha". The Sabha is largely responsible for spreading the "Kshatriya" label and the consciousness that goes with it, to many caste groups ranging from all the way from Rajputs who are highest in the Kshatriya hierarchy to Bhils who are semi-tribal, with Bariyas in the middle. 19

The most important outcome of Kshatriya Sabha's role

19. Ibid., p.73.
MAP OF ANAND TALUKA
was that it hastened the process of political awakening of lower echelons of the Kshatriyas, especially the Bariyas. This was reflected in the various elections. The results in the third general election (1962), for example, showed that the Kshatriyas realised the importance of their numerically preponderate position, and could come out politically triumphant by capturing both the seats of Lok Sabha and 10 of the 15 assembly seats. 20 This trend continued, more or less in the subsequent elections of 1967 and 1972. In the fourth general elections (1967), they had captured 7 seats out of 16 assembly seats and retained both the seats of Lok Sabha. Their over-all position in the Gujarat Assembly was more than satisfactory. They had increased their total number from 14 (in 1962) to 45 in 1967, 21 belonging to the Congress and 24 to the Swatantra Party. 21 In the fifth general elections (1972), the Kshatriyas had won 9 seats in the assembly from the district and one seat of Lok Sabha.

Anand Taluka: Socio-Economic Contours:

Anand Taluka is core area of the fertile Charotar region - which covers the vast tract between the Mahi and the Vatrak rivers. It presents " a panoramic beauty of its orchards and


fields." According to the Census of 1971, it had a population of 3,99,076 out of which 2,92,966 people reside in rural area. There are also 18,846 people belonging to scheduled castes and tribes out of which 14,662 reside in rural area. There are 2,00,387 literate people in the Taluka which forms about 49% growth of education as against 42.53% of the district and 35.79% in Gujarat. The density of the Taluka is the highest i.e. 590 people per sq. kilometer.

There are three distinctive features of the socio-economic contours of this area. They are (i) cultivation of tobacco, (ii) successful milk cooperative movement, and (iii) enterprising settlers in Africa. The real clue to the prosperity of Patidar peasantry lies in their choice of cultivation of cash crops, especially, tobacco. Most of the Patidar lands are irrigated, almost entirely from privately owned wells fitted with pumps and underground channels for the distribution of waters. Kaira owns, perhaps, the largest number of pump sets as well as tractors, than any district in Gujarat.* The economic prosperity of the Patidar community has helped them to capture the power-centres through which they exercise their dominance.

The most outstanding achievement of the Taluka is Amul Dairy run by the Kaira District Milk Producers' Cooperative Union with more than 600 feeder village societies and the

* So claimed by an official of the Taluka Panchayat. According to the Kaira Zilla Panchayat Office, there were 10,868 pumping machines in 1971-72.
largest and most modern dairy in India. It is entirely a private cooperative enterprise. It supplies pasteurized milk as far as Bombay, 250 miles away, and makes excellent butter and other processed milk products which are marketed throughout the country. Although the day to day management of this huge organisation is in the hands of extremely capable and technically qualified team of managers, the coveted position - the Chairmanship of the board of directors - is being held by a person who once held the presidency of Gujarat Congress party. It is generally believed that this provides a powerful support structure in the hands of Congress, which if used skillfully can be of immense advantage during the elections.

The settlers in Africa have served the purpose of providing an important element of infrastructure for the rural economy in terms of capital to the prospective entrepreneurs of the Patidar community. This has, in turn, helped them to maintain their economic superiority over other communities. Thus, financially relaxed Patidar takes himself to the lure of local politics, which sometimes provides him with necessary change in the otherwise hardworking life. The money that easily flows in his hands makes him status-conscious and determines his position in the political arena. A Patidar is generous and extravagant when flattered but stubborn and unbending if challenged. That is why the "formidable opposition tradition" is found in this Taluka. The fact that the first two Presidents of Gujarat's main opposition party have come
from this Taluka and belonged to Patidar community is not an accident.

The Bariyas are numerically the majority community (55%) in the Taluka. But economically and educationally they are backward as compared to Patidars. This highly unequal state of affairs made the distribution of political resources and skills, and consequently, that of power almost highly unequal. The Bariyas virtually remained dormant until 1957. Now they have become politically conscious and can be called the emerging dominant caste. By organising themselves into an articulate body called Kshatriya Sabha with non-political comonflage, they are in a better position for political bargain. The process of assimilation of the Bariyas into the upper-fold of the Kshatriya hierarchy can best be explained by the term 'sanskritization'. According to M.N. Srinivas, "sanskritization is an influence that leads lower castes to emulate the Brahminic castes in their search for status and prestige while the latter are exposed to another influence namely westernisation." One aspect of this process of assimilation was

"group enfranchisement whereby entire caste and caste-groups were 'accepted back' into the Kshatriya fold. There was a conscious and deliberate attempt on the part of the leaders of the movement to break the shackles of tradition. Symbols of caste pollution were deliberately done away with. One of the first to go

was the eating restriction. High and low were made to sit together in common feasts. Thus the Kshatriya Sabha has proved to be the great levelling force for its various constituents. Such a process of assimilation (has) led to two important results. Firstly, the lower castes like the Bar-yas felt up-graded and readily accepted Rajput leadership of the movement. Secondly, a common lack of economic and political power forced upon these various caste groups the need to depend upon the numerical strength as the only effective weapon in pressing their demands. 23

In the first general election the Kshatriya Sabha was politically aligned with the Congress and was responsible for ensuring its success in the elections. However, in 1962, the Swatantra party turned the table against the Congress by skillfully wooing the latter. 24 In the 1967 general election Congress again retrieved the position by causing schism in the Kshatriya Sabha. This time Congress took advantage of grumblings and dissatisfaction among the lower echelons in the Kshatriya hierarchy by organising them into a rival body called Kshatriya Seva Samaj and translating their political aspirations into reality by choosing a Bariya candidate against the Patidar stalwart of the Swatantra party. Bariyas, who provided mass base to the Kshatriya organisation, solidly voted, irrespective of the political affiliation or considerations, for 'their own man' and trounced the rival. They have

retained the same seat — Anand constituency — in the mid-term elections of 1971.

The upper castes — Brahmins and Banias — are mostly engaged in their traditional occupations, and being numerically insignificant play marginal role in the political field. Similarly, other minority communities such as Muslims and Christians, also suffer from the same 'cumulative inequalities', enjoying sometimes chance importance as and when some occasions and regroupings and alignment in panchayats arise.

In a traditional but plural society like ours, where dormant communities are fast becoming politicized due to the advent of adult franchise and popular democracy the chances for minorities to manoeuvre politically will be more than marginal, at least during the transitional period.

(b) Village Mogri: The setting:

Village Mogri is situated at a distance of about 3½ miles from Anand, the Taluka head-quarters, of the Kaira district in the State of Gujarat.

The village is surrounded by other villages of similar type — Jitodia in the West, Sandesan in the East, Gana in the South, and a University township — Vallabh Vidyanagar — in the North. This township has come into being only during last 25 years.
Until recently, there were hardly any industries in or around Mogri, except some factories for bidí making. But a novel development has taken place since 1960. Another town­ship called Vitthal Udyognagar, quite different from that of Vallabh Vidyanagar has come up with a nucleus of medium and large scale industrial units. Moreover, the Institute of Agriculture, a centre for research and training is only at a distance of 3 miles from the village. So far the impact of these surroundings has not been spectacular; but it is bound to change the whole out­look of the village in not too distant a future. In fact, the shifting scene can be gleaned from facts such as: 37 boys including two from lower castes have graduated and 25 are, at present, studying in the different colleges of Vallabh Vidyanagar; some 250 workers from the village employed in the Vitthal Udyognagar support as many families. The facility of purchasing improved seeds from the near­by Institute of Agriculture greatly helps 56% of its population which is engaged in agricultural activities. And last but not the least, the Amul Dairy, one of the biggest dairies in India, is about 4 miles from this village, which collects the milk not consumed by the village at substantially high rate. These are some of the benefits one would hardly miss to notice.

Population and livelihood pattern:

According to 1971 census, the total population of Mogri was 4,173. It had 616 households out of which 615 (809 in
in 1971) were occupied. There were 350 people belonging to scheduled castes and 56 to scheduled tribes. A little more than 50% of the total population was literate in this village. The corresponding figures for the Gujarat, being 35.79% and for Kaira district 42.55%. Thus, Mogri showed a high degree of literacy. This may be due to steps taken when Mogri was under the jurisdiction of the Baroda State which had made primary education more or less compulsory.

The livelihood pattern is typical of any Charotar village, i.e. 64% of the population depending on agriculture and the remaining on non-agricultural pursuits. Among those depending on agriculture, a predominant proportion (55%) was engaged as owner cultivators while 27% of them were working as agricultural labourers. A few of them have found new openings as factory workers in the nearby industrial township.

As regards the type of tenancy mainly prevalent in this village it seems that there has been no perceptible change in the system despite various land reforms. Share-cropping

25. Prof. R.K. Amin in his study of village Mogri notes:
"The Government has introduced a number of land reforms during these years. During this period of upheaval, it is surprising to find that there has been very small changes in regard to land ownership or land tenancy... of the 52 households which lost their land, only 17 households lost land under new tenancy legislation. In terms of area, 70 acres of land out of 1841 acres of net area sown has been affected by tenancy legislation which comes to not even 4% of the total net area under cultivation. If we examine this question more of land tenancy on the basis of number of households affected -- only 17 households out of 257 were affected by land (continued on page 86)
is the predominant type of tenancy agreement in which about 50% of the gross produce is to be given to the land owner.

**Communication:**

The village is well provided with communication network. The nearest railway station of Vallabh Vidyanagar is at a distance of one mile only. The village is connected with state transport buses plying between Anand and Mogri. The state highway of Anand-Borsad is at a distance of 1½ miles, while the national highway of Anand-Vasad-Bombay is about 4 miles away from the village. It is now connected with a good pacca approach road which intersects the Anand-Sojitra road where frequent bus-connections are available. The taluka head-quarters (Anand) is a distance of 3½ miles while the District head-quarters is about 30 miles from the village.

There is a post-office in the village. It also provides telephone service and a few business houses have already availed of this facilities. There are also a few private cars (five) owned by leading business houses of the village.

**The Village Panchayat: Historical Background:**

Before Independence, Mogri was under the erstwhile Baroda legislation. It means only 7% of the total households were affected by the tenancy act." *(Socio-economic study of a Charotar Village, (1964), p.67.*

It seems that the dominant Patidar landowners had succeeded in keeping quiet their low caste tenants by threatening with the consequences of social and economic boycott in respect of some 'errant' tenants and offering financial temptations to the 'willing' tenants.
The system of panchayat autonomy was nothing new to this place, thanks to the enlightened and far-sighted administration of Maharaja Sayaji Rao III of Baroda who, during his regime, promulgated the Panchayat Regulation Act of 1903 with a view to educating and socialising the rural people in democratic self-government. Under the above-mentioned Act, all villages with a population of a thousand and over were to have a panchayat. The panchayat was to consist of elected and nominated members in equal proportion. All persons, male and female, who had attained eighteen years of age and above were given right to vote. The panchayat samiti was to consist of the minimum of six and the maximum nine members. However, the right to vote and the right to contest in the election was restricted as the Act prescribed education, property and income as qualifications. A woman candidate had to be specifically approved or confirmed by the Diwan of the State. The Act of 1903 was amended by the Act of 1921 which was amended further by the Acts of 1926 and 1931. The latest amendment stipulated certain minimum educational qualifications (vernacular VI standard passed) in addition to those of income and property, for being voters and candidates. However, both these qualifications were lowered by further amendments in 1937 and 1944.

Under these Acts, Panchayats were given both civil and judicial authority. Village officials like Police-Patel and Talati were to be appointed by the Panchayat concerned.
Functions allocated to the Panchayats were classified as routine, compulsory and optional.

Thus, the Village Panchayats Act and amendments provided for a qualified representative democracy with some local autonomy. Baroda was one of the progressive States which had clearly visualised the importance of the concept of 'local autonomy'.

Mogri, which had its panchayat constituted in 1930, enjoyed this measure of democratic governance. However, it was a limited representative democracy in practice for it was confined to the dominant Patidar caste only. The qualifications of education, property and income virtually eliminated the Bariyas, the Musalmans, the Harijans and other backward as well as suppressed communities from participation in the panchayat. The Patidar being numerically the strongest caste (40%) in the village would not allow a Brahmin or a Bania to enter into the panchayat. Generally nominations and no elections would be preferred. Almost all the members would be nominated from Patidars. When the provisions of a reserved seat for the scheduled caste was introduced, the nominee would be, invariably, a choice of the ruling Patidar Sarpanch. The actual working of the panchayat in Mogri continued to be the privileged affair of the Patidar caste till the merger of the Baroda State.

In 1949, when Baroda State was merged with the Bombay State in the Union of India, the Bombay Village Panchayats...
Act superseded all the previous panchayat Acts of Baroda administration. After the bifurcation of the Bombay State, and the formation of Gujarat State in 1960, the Mogri Village Panchayat was reconstituted under the Gujarat Village Panchayats Act of 1961.

Development Works in Mogri:

Mogri can boast of having an impressive array of development works. The village is fortunate in having a few prosperous and progressive business houses with a matching zeal for philanthropy. It is equally fortunate in having a band of zealous workers and sagacious leaders who have always considered development of the village above everything. This has helped Mogri to be placed in the list of "progressive panchayats" by the government.

Mogri was included in a block scheme under the C.D. and N.E.S. project and received Rs. 1,100 for the improvement of Mogri-Jitodia Road. The local people enthusiastically responded to this gesture and offered shramdan to complete the road. Looking to the difficulties of housing an ever increasing number of students, the village decided to construct a new building for primary school and collected more than Rs. 50,000/- which included the magnificent donations by the leading business houses. The Kaira district school board also gave a grant of Rs. 13,000/- towards this. There are at present, two schools, one for boys and the other for girls, for whom
a new building has been planned. Although there are a number of high schools in Anand and Vallabh Vidyanagar, Mogri is going ahead with the construction of a new building for High School. This shows their growing realisation of the importance of education, concern for rapid progress in the field of education and capacity to raise money.

There is a water-works in the village with 250 connections and two washing-ghats with stand-posts. Electricity is in use for many years and the streets are lighted. There is one dispensary run from a charitable fund created for this purpose by another businessman of the village. There is also one BalMandir and a library, the use of which is practically confined to the people of higher castes, not because of any discrimination, but due to better level of education and awareness among them. Both the institutions are run free of charge. Rich people voluntarily contribute towards their expenses.

As regards industries in the village, there are three tobacco processing factories, seven tobacco Kharis and a few cottage industries like poultry, oil-ghanis, carpentry, black-smith and fire-arms work.

There are two cooperative societies, one for collecting milk and another for distributing consumer goods and agricultural seeds. There is also one centre for artificial insemination for cattle. A few voluntary organisations have also
been working there in fields like sports, social welfare, village uplifts and religion.

The village has about 16 pacca wells and one tank. Excepting a few wells in the village proper, most of them are fitted with electric motors and provide water for irrigation in the farms nearby. There are also two tube-wells and excess water is rented for irrigating adjoining fields. Thus, the lack of irrigation facility from the canal or the insufficient rain is not allowed to be felt, at least, upon those farmers who are fortunate in receiving this type of help. There are also a few tractors (six) a sign of agricultural prosperity and progress, which the farmers of Mogri have achieved.

Socio-Economic Composition:

According to the Census of 1971, the total population of Mogri was 4,173, distributed among more than 7 castes, Brahmins, Banias, Patidars, Bariyas, Muslims, Christians and Harijans being some of the important ones. However, Patidars (40%), Bariyas(28%) and Harijans(9%) together constitute more than 75% of the total population.

Mogri is a good representative of the caste-structure and cultural complex of Charotar region. The Patidars, who constitute the main landholding caste as well as class, here, are typical of this region. The Bariyas are well spread over in the surrounding districts of Broach, Baroda, Sabarkantha and Ahmedabad while Patidars of Charotar have mostly
concentrated in the four talukas of Kaira district, viz., Anand, Borsad, Nadiad, and Petlad.

While Patidars are real land owners, Bariyas mainly work as tenants or agricultural labourers. Harijans, who form the third largest group employ themselves as contract and day-labourers. There are a few non-agriculturist caste house-holds e.g. Scni, Gosai, Dhobi, Mochi, Darji, Valand, Prajapati, Suthar, Kadia and Luhar, who form a class of artisans, employed in their own traditional family-business. There is no money lender in the village, though there are a few house-holds of Banias, whose traditional profession is otherwise money-lending. It is said that people usually borrow money from their friends or relatives. They also borrow money from the consumer's cooperative society on easy terms.

The socio-economic composition of the village Mogri reveals considerable disparity in the economic position of the main agriculturist castes. Excepting a few of them working in other occupations, Patidars as owner-cultivators own more than 67% of cultivable land in the village. There are only three Patidar families whose members either worked as agricultural labourers or tenants. Of the total of 80 families which held 10 acres of land and above per family, 79 were Patidars and 1 was Brahmin and none from Bariyas, Banias, Harijan and Muslims. By contrast, the total cultivable land owned by all the families of Bariyas comes to
about 273 acres out of 1841 acres of the area sown. In fact, no Bariya family owns more than 10 acres of land. Even after the implementation of the Tenancy Act, there has been no perceptible change in land-holdings in the village. It is reported that only 7% of the total households and 4% of the land were affected by land legislation. It means the land reforms had very little impact on the pattern of land holding. 26

It is interesting to note that there is a sizeable number of marginal and poor farmers among the Patidars and the Bariyas. Some 15 to 20 Patidar families control more than one-third of the total land assets held by the agriculturist castes. This shows an extreme concentration of economic power. Thus, electoral strength of Bariyas and Harijans which together is equal to Patidars is their only comforting political asset in face of overwhelming economic power of the Patidars. There is no other caste which can be said to be in a position to counter this imbalance of economic or political power. There is no doubt that economic and political scene of village Mogri is dominated by the Patidar community.

Patidars in Mogri are highly conscious of the importance of maintaining unity among themselves as a caste. Patidar-leaders, while talking to me, took special care to see that, an outsider like me, should not know that there were groups and sub-groups within their own caste. After considerable

26, R.K. Amin., op. cit., p. 68.
long time and great deal of labour, it was found that there were three groups among the Patidars working behind the scene. They may be named as (1) Ahmedabadi, (2) Local and (3) Gadiawala. While 'Ahmedabadi' group is the powerful in terms of money and economic power but it has only 10 households, the 'Local' group is strong in terms of their numerical strength with 230 households in its fold. However, it is faction-ridden and to that extent weak. The 'Gadiawala' is a small group having only 10 households but cleverly exploits the situation in its favour while working as a balancing factor between the two rival groups.

There are a few Brahmins (about 4%) at the apex and Harijans (9%) at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Brahmins do not participate in the public life of the village, because their occupation of priest-hood or employment as teachers require them to maintain good relations with everyone. At the other extreme Harijans are not active, except during elections, in the public life of the village due to their socially disadvantageous position. Among the remaining castes, Banias, Muslims and Christians are ineffective and do not participate in political life. This leaves comparatively a free political arena to the local Patidars.

The Patidars play a very significant role in the political life of the village. Their educational standard is also comparatively high. Political power, during the Baroda regime was concentrated exclusively in their hands. The
Police-Patel, who is in charge of law and order in the village, has always come from this community. Ever since the statutory panchayat came into existence, the Sarpanch was invariably a Patidar. Participation in politics is for Patidars a social and economic necessity and their main concern is to ensure its continuation.  

This, however, is not the case with the Bariyas. They do not enjoy the social prestige of the upper-caste. They are as a matter of fact considered to be somewhat between the Patidars and the artisan castes in the social hierarchy. Although they are second in population ranking, their all-round low standard prevent them from taking any effective part in the politics of the village.

Extension of democracy to rural areas, particularly electoral politics on the basis of adult suffrage, has resulted in increased participation of the lower castes in the political life of the village. Bariyas, one of the largest castes (28%) in Mogri, have suffered a long period of political segregation. Consequently, very few Bariyas have become members of the Panchayat. During the last few years, however, Bariyas have tried to consolidate their position by taking the advantage of their numerical strength and the recently


acquired elan of a rising group. A few years ago there were no Bariyas in the Kogri Panchayat whereas today there are three out of the total 13. This is not a small gain. Most interesting aspect of this is that Bariyas and Harijans have joined hands, at least in the local elections, in challenging Patidars' monopoly to represent the whole village in the Panchayat.