The political life of the tribals of India reflects a paradoxical situation in which democracy and monarchy co-exist. Every head of a community at different levels like clan, village and territory is generally honoured, obeyed and accepted as the head of the group. Every tribal has a share in the political ties of the village and the region. The tribal leader governs the community only because he is backed by the majority or the whole of the group. There seems to be no society where political activities are non-existent. Even the smallest community requires some form of government.

Every society operates by one principle of organisation or other or a combination of principles producing different political systems. They are mainly 'stateless system' and 'state system.'
The political organisation of the Sugali tribe comes under the stateless system because it has no formal government embracing the entire society. The political organisation of the Sugali is based on territorialism and is not based on any genealogical or associational units. Thus, the Sugali 'thanda' or settlement is the smallest territorial unit of organisation represented by family. There is no headman for every clan. All clans enjoy equal status. In Sugali political organisation, there are no special associations such as military organisation, religious organisation etc.

Changes in the political organisation of a community usually occur with respect to the spatial and organisational aspects, type of leadership, legal system, military organisation and warfare. It is against this background that this chapter discusses covering the customary codes and traditional polity and organisation of Sugali. It also examines and evaluates the impact of the sponsor of government institutions on the traditional political organisation of the Sugali.

The Sugalis possess their own distinctive political organisation which controlled the socio-economic life of Thandas (Moving camps). Craufurd (1742) a British historian\(^1\) gives earliest reference with regard to their social control. The Sugalis live in tents and travel in separate bodies, each of which is governed by its own particular regulations. From the 14th Century when the Sugali first accompanied the Mohammedan armies which invaded the Deccan from the North until the present century, there were records,
though scanty, written by Persian and British historians, travellers, missionaries and administrators. Between the late 15th and middle of the 19th century, there was considerable political upheaval in India in the form of wars between indigenous kingdoms in the pre-European period and between the native kings and the British, the French, and the Portuguese after the 17th century. In these wars the Sugali played an important role on payment, as carriers and suppliers of provisions to the armies. The patrileneal clan systems by which the caravans, or Thandas were organised was very strong till the last quarter of the 19th century. The strong patrileneages and the well defined authority of the caravan headman were the direct results of their peculiar economic pursuits. In order to understand the traditional political organisation of the Sugali, a reference to their economy as nomadic bands of carriers becomes necessary.

The importance of their services to the armies becomes evident from the fact of their having received from Moghul Emperors, even the right to plunder the enemy's country. So whenever they went, even in times of peace, they were the most cruel robberers on the highways. But theft by the nomadic Sugali was not considered as a crime. Early accounts in travellogues and gazetteers make frequent mention of the two clans, Rathod and Burthya (or) Vadtya, having played a prominent role in transport and trade.

In the last quarter of the 18th C.A.D., a Rathod Sugali chief, Sarang Bhangi formulate code of laws which continued intact till the end of 19th century and formed the basis of the Sugali
community governance. Rathod Bhangi found that the personal character of the chief alone could secure the obedience of his clan and that, as all the family heads were proprietors of a general stock of bullocks, any member, if he so chose, could emigrate, thus dividing the formidable power which the leader had brought together. He thought that, amongst a body of proprietors, there must be a certain number amendable to be called a Naik, who was to be elected by the proprietors of the horde or Thanda. All Naiks, had to pay obedience to the chief of all of them, who used to sit on a Gaddi. Thus, each of the several hordes which had joined him had a Naik, who acted as the Community Magistrage. It was subsequently agreed that the Naikhood should devolve patrileneally on the nearest relative and that he should be set aside only by the majority opinion of the proprietors (owners of trading animal) composing the Thanda.

In the beginning of the 19th century, those proprietors possessed a good number of bullocks each, and a band possessed in times of great demand 30,000 to 40,000 bullocks. The only privilege of the chief Naik was the right to appropriate for his own use an amount of the total amount paid by the employers. Thus, the Naiks must have been men of considerable wealth. Each horde comprised a single corporate clan, and not several clans as the present day settlements do. Long before the time of Sarang Bhangi Rathod, it was usual for the Sugali to select their wives out of a clan other than their own to prevent promiscuous inter course between the sexes within the single clan, which used to camp in the open tents. To ensure clan solidarity, clan exogamy was
instituted by Sarang, lapses of such norms being considered incest punishable by expulsion from the clan. This custom was adopted by every horde, and the chastity of Sugali women had its origin in this code.

To avoid the possibility of jealousy against the Chief and the Naiks, likely to result from an undue exercise of authority, Sarang Rathod resolved that all punishments should be limited to pecuniary fines or expulsion, that no single Sugali should be liable to suffer death sentence from the community Magistrate, since it meant vesting too much power in them and making them analogues to a 'master' rather than a father. Further, Sarang laid down the rule that no man could be punished in any way without being first tried by a Jury of five of the proprietors (Panch) in the horde. And an accused had the right to object to any or all of the proprietors being nominated as Jury. The freedom allowed to the culprit extended even to denying the power of the Jury; but he rarely dared to do that for fear of excommunication. To prevent an expelled person from improperly entering the community, it was ordered that no individual or small body of Sugali should be received as members of an established horde.

If a serious dispute took place between two Sugali individuals, to prevent its proliferations to their kin and often to the drawing of swords, each Sugali was duty bound to throw himself
between the disputants so that it might be settled by law. If swords were drawn and if it appeared imprudent, the mediator was supposed to take off his turban and holding one end in his hand, throw it at full length between the disputants. This seldom failed to remind both parties of their customary rules and the necessity of abiding by them. To continue the quarrel after the intercession of a mediator was a crime punishable by the Jury.

The unanimity or consensus that prevailed in the Thanda and the punctuality with which they adhered to these customary codes probably prevented the recurrence of minor crimes. But whatever the minor crimes, it was punishable by a Jury, the extreme fine being Rs. 30/- before 1800 A.D.6 The money thus collected as fines was spent on liquor, the only exception being a rupee which went to the Chief who kept a register of such fines.

During the prosecution of the crime by the Jury, the plaintiff and defendant were asked to sit side by side. Some pulverised opium leaf was placed in the right hand of each person and they blew it off from their hands to symbolize that their quarrel was blown off. The rest of the horde sat round in a circle and drank and it was at this time that their 'Bhats or Bards' (Dhadi or Dhalia) sang the songs of their illustrious ancestors.

The Sarang Rathod thought that power of life and death should not be vested in the hands of his successors. He decreed
that, in case of murder, the friends and relatives of the murdered could put the murderer to death within three days of the murder. Any revenge after that period would invoke the same retaliation. By this simple code, a murderer seldom escaped from death, although it frequently led to excommunication of one of the parties on account the protracted fends. The power which Sarang Rathod organised as the Chief of the Sugali community, and the favour with which he was treated by Aurangzeb, the Moghul emperor, and the insignificance into which his rival Bhagawandas Vadtya had sunk, made the latter jealous of Sarang Rathod's power, and as a result, Sarang was murdered. Since then, there had been interrrcine wars between Rathod clan and Vadtya clan.  

The relationship of the nomadic Sugali with British were primarily political and economic, but characterised by expediency and embivalence. The role of Sugali in the two wars with Tipusultan of Mysore in 1791-92 and 1799 and the wars with Mrnathas in 1803 has been highly praised. But because of the breach of trust as well as the cruel practices of the Sugali as robbers they also became targets of censure, leading in some cases to charging to death some of the Sugali by the British. It was advantageous to the British to employ the Sugali in preference to other types of transport as the caravans could move through the country side away from the main roads, which were not sere because of the unsatisfactory law and order prevailing in those days. The services of the Sugali were most sought often in times of war. Without the need to employ many
troops or permanent public servants for the supply work, and without the risk of speculation in prices of grain or fraud and defalcation of supplies the allied armies (comprising the British and the Nizam of Hyderabad) which had already been plundered by Marathas at such a place and time Sugali supplied grain at a fairly reasonable rate to the armies.

However, subsequent to the establishment of direct British rule in India in 1858, substantial improvements in the transport system were introduced and as a consequence in the last quarter of the 19th century, the Sugali lost their occupation as transporters of grain and other supplies. Therefore they resorted to predatory methods as a way of life, which they had acquired while they were serving the Moghul armies. With this change the community Magistrate, the chief of hordes all lost their customary importance and the Naiks who were heads of the hordes got the prominence.

TRADITIONAL POLITICAL ORGANISATION

After the breakdown of the great organisation of the nomadic Sugali the Chieftainship among the Sugali lost its significance. In spite of occupational changes the Sugali society has also been greatly affected by the administrative measures introduced by both British and National governments. In spite of sedentary life the continuance of the term 'Thanda' (caravan, horde or band) for denoting even the settled groups highlights the importance of the past mode of life for the Sugali. The following are the leaders and institutions which
have survived since their nomadic past.

SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE

The system of governance resembles that of political system with a hereditary chief assisted by a body of hierarchically placed officials. It however differs from feudalism to democracy in its functioning, since the officials have no absolute powers to enforce their decision without consulting the community elders. Thus the system is comparable to the modern panchayats of Rural India.

The headman or a chief of a Thanda is called Naik. Naikship was an important institution and the post was hereditary. The mode of inheritance of chieftainship is generally based on hereditary and the chief of the 'Thanda' presides over the Gwar-Panchayat. The early Sugali settlers could afford to have Chieftainship with an uppervoice in view of their economic soundness. H.A. Stuart 10 says that the Sugali settlements are named after their headman, who is accorded great reverence believed to rule the caravan most vigorously and to have the power of life and death over its members. No-body came forward to speak to a stranger in the 'thanda' without the prior permission of the Naik who was not only respected but credited with the possession of supernatural powers. Thus, the Naik as the Sugali chieftain, occupies an important place in the traditional political organisation

The succession to the office of the Naik is hereditary. The Naik is expected to exhibit justice, rightfulness, patience reason
and wisdom. Observance of monogamy and restraining from heavy drinking habit on the part of the Naik are the appreciable qualities apart from honesty and good nature. Upon the death of the Naik his eldest son succeeds him, if he is intelligent and is known for his understanding and capability of managing the affairs of the thanda. Otherwise the settlement people select one of the sons of the Naik possessing these qualities to function as the Naik.

The succession to the office of the Naik is characterised by a special ceremony attended by the Naiks of the neighbouring thandas on invitation. The elders of the 'thanda' on behalf of the residents of the settlement bring a 'Pagidi' (turban) measuring sixty yards which will be presented to the man selected as Naik. Then the Naik arranges a non-vegetarian feast to all those who attended the function.

If the family from which Naiks are drawn has no representative, a fresh selection is made, usually within the same clan. But the selection of the Naik within the clan is not obligatory; other clans within the settlement may also be considered for this position. If the Naik dies leaving behind an infant male child, another person preferably the brother of the deceased, provided he is considered suitable, functions as the Naik of the settlement until the child comes of age.

The Naikhhood in Sugali settlements is not entitled to any type of regular or voluntary gifts either in kind or in cash and
compulsory dues such as tribute or tax. But there is a traditional obligation that when a goat or ram is sacrificed at thanda level to appease their thanda deities the head and legs of the sacrificed animal are presented to the Naik as a mark of respect. Then the rest of meat is equally distributed among all the families. In addition, during the process of dispute settlement liquor and non-vegetarian food is served first to the Naik as per tradition.

In the traditional structure the Naik is assisted by the Dhavo, Karbari and other officials (Diagram). The office of Dhavo is non-hereditary and temporary and occupies second place in the traditional political structure. The incumbent of the office the Dhavo renders his advice out of his experience and well-versed in knowledge with the Sugali culture to that the Naik can arrive at a decision during the dispute settlement. Dhavo may change from one panchayat meeting to another. The office of the Karbhari is hereditary and permanent, who helps the Naik not only by his opinions regarding issues but also acting in the names of the Naik in the latter's absence. Even though the Karbari is empowered during the absence of the Naik to deal with ordinary cases, he awaits the Naik's return in case an important decision has to be taken or a complicated case is to be settled. However, during the process of dispute settlement he is served liquor and non-vegetarian food only after the Naik.
GWAR PANCHAYAT
(SUGALI TRADITIONAL COUNCIL)

NAIK
(President)

| KARBHARI
(Secretary)

| DHAVO
(Vice-President)

| PANCH
(July)

| SIPAI BHAI
(Constable)

| JODIwalo
(Surity Agents)

| MEGHAPANI
(Acts as Mediators between Panchayat and victim)

| DHADI, DHALIA
(Bards)

| NAVI
(Barbar)

| SINGADIA
(Horn Blower)
The appointment of the Sepaibhai is purely temporary and a non-hereditary. He hails from a clan different from those of the Naik and the Karbhari. With regard to the duties of the Sepaibhai he has to bring all the people concerned to the place where the process of dispute settlement takes place. The post of Jodi-walo is generally held by two persons whose offices are neither hereditary nor permanent. During the process of dispute settlement the persons functioning as Jodi-walo act as surety agents for the parties concerned. The post of Meghapani is carried out generally by more than one person who act as mediators for the parties concerned. They hold discussions with either of the parties and the Naik concerned and finally render verdict. The Dhadi, Dhalia, Navi and Singadia were treated as outcastes and they always assisted with the Gwar Panchayat. With sedentarization, the Sugali have lost the charm of the office of the Naik and most of the traditional office bearers disappeared except Dhavo and Karbhari.

GWAR PANCHAYAT: The traditional panchayat of the Sugali is called as Gor or Gwar panchayat. It is the oldest traditional council of the sugali. It consists of the chief of the settlement, Naik, the Karbari, Dhavo and members of Jury (Panch). And elders who attend the panchayat deliberations need not be the representatives of every clan in the settlement. Women are not allowed to participate in the Gwar-Panchayat. The main function of Gwar or Gor Panchayat is to settle disputes among the community members in the settlement about marriages, divorce, land etc. Each family has to be represented
at the panchayat. Generally the head of the household or in the absence of the head of the household an active member of the family represents.

In the Gwar-Panchayat deliberations, all the members need not be present, but the presence of the Naik, Karbhari and three or four elders are essential. Members of the Gwar Panchayat express their opinions on the merits and demerits of the case and assist the Naik in arriving at a decision. Ordinary disputes and settled by the Panchayat concerned, whereas serious offences and complicated disputes are often settled with the assistance of the Naiks of the adjoining settlements.

The Panchayat does not meet to settle all disputes or award punishment for every single breach of the tribal laws. It has been reported in many cases that social disapproval expressed by the elders of the local group is generally enough. The Gwar-Panchayat assembles and takes into consideration only the comparatively serious breaches of tribal law and custom. For the Sugali as a whole there is no central authority. Instead of it, a group of settlements adjacent to one another form their own panchayat which enjoys supreme powers in the socio-religious matters of the members of the Sugali living in the constituent settlements. Children, youngmen and women of all ages are excluded from this membership. The decisions arrived at in the Panchayat are unanimous or majority decisions. The people assembled can air their views but their opinions are not counted
statistically in order to arrive at decisions. There is no superior authority than the panchayat which can itself overrule decisions of the family elders.

In judging a case, the panchayat hears from both the sides, Eye witnesses are specially relied upon and the accused persons are allowed an opportunity to explain their position. Intention and motive are subordinated to the consequences of an act, and punishments are awarded in terms of these consequences. Now-a-days cases of such offences as homicide, grievous bodily hurt and thefts of a very serious nature are taken to the Indian courts. Adultery, witchcraft, black magic, killing a cow or a bullock having vermin in one's wound, elopment, and breaking the rule of clan exogamy are some of the actions which are regarded as breaches of tribal law by Sugali. Offences against persons and property are not numerous and are rarely treated as serious. Authority naturally devolves on men of age and experience. The elders of the tribe are the guardians of its laws and order. They are both interpreters of the tribal code and adjudicators of disputes.

FUNCTIONS OF THE NAIK: In the traditional political structure of Sugali, the Naik enjoys the socially approved privileges of settling the troubled cases, and consequently he is empowered with official authority. The Naik is entitled to back his decisions with penal sanctions like imposition of fines and excommunication of the persons involved in the tribal exogamous marriages. For giving a final
judgement in a particular dispute, he mainly relies on the precedent set by his predecessors, and his counterparts in other political communities of the Sugali and views of elders expressed in the Gwar Panchayat. He takes initiative in representing the matters of the settlement to the Government officials. Tradition governs every member of the Sugali community to consult the Naik before starting any significant undertaking. He gives gifts to the Sugali of Dhadi division who often visit the 'thanda' for narrating the origin of clans and for giving an account of the Sugali customs, traditions and festivals.

The Naik in all Sugali settlements even today performs an important functions during the incorporation ceremony after the completion of which the adopted non-Sugali (Jangad) would be recognised as a member of the Sugali community. During the incorporation ceremony those who are to be incorporated into the Sugali tribe have to tie a red or white coloured head cloth called paga, measuring approximately two and half feet in breadth and six to seven feet in length and eat the cooked rice and meat along with the Naik in a plate. Then the Naik burns the tongue of the Jangad with a heated golden ornament called 'Bhuria'. With this ceremony Jangad will be considered as Sugali.

The Naik also performs some other traditional functions. He officiates as a priest in the case of widow re-marriages and he acts as sacred specialist during the conduct of 'Maolipooya' when
the epidemic diseases like cholera and small-pox break-out in the settlement. He first offers worship to the deities such as sevalabhaya, Meetu Bhukya, Sunkalamma and Maremma. Then as stated earlier, the head and legs of the sacrificed animal are given free to the Naik as a mark of respect. But he has no role to play in any life-cycle ceremonies except during the marriage ceremony. On the occasion of betrothal ceremony, the Naik is given a rupee coin called 'Sake-ro-Rupia' with which the Naik comes under the traditional obligation of settling the marital disputes of the couple might arise in the course of time.

PROCEDURE OF ADJUDICATION: The Gwar Panchayat takes important decisions to settle the disputes of the settlement in matters related to adultery, elopement, divorce, theft etc. However it does not assemble to consider all breaches of the established norms of Sugali way of life. In some cases social disapproval is expressed by the elders of the settlement. In ordinary cases such as abusing members of the family or fellow Sugali, simple breaches of the laws of community for the first time etc., the offender is let off with a warning. If he deliberately repeats the mistake, the Gwar Panchayat demands from him an assurance on a legal document (abond of 1000/- or more) that in future he would not deviate from the established norms of the community.

With regard to the procedure of adjudication the offender places his grievances before the Naik who informs the same to the
Karbhari and fixes the time, date and venue for convening a meeting. The usual meeting will be held under the shadow of a huge tree or outskirts of the 'thanda' or convenient place within the 'thanda'.

The Sepaibhai is sent to bring the accused as well as other members of the panchayat. When the traditional council assembles, the victim places his case before and begs for justice. Then the person accused is asked to given an explanation. The parties concerned express freely what they feel about the matter. They make charges and counter charges before the Gor-Panchayat and serves arrack to all the members of the traditional council. The first cup would be served to the Naik followed by the Karbhari and Dhavo. If the arguments prolong up to the lunch time, the victim usually arranges non-vegetarian food to the members of the council. After hearing the arguments from both the parties and assessing the opinions of the Panch or Jury the Naik finally gives his judgement. If the victim wins the case the entire expenditure incurred by the victim towards liquor and non-vegetarian food is to be paid back by the culprit. Some times, the accused challenges the judgment given by the Gwar Panchayat. In this case he can seek interference of other experienced Naiks belonging to the neighbouring Thandas by paying of Rs. 25/- to the local Gwar Panchayat for defying the judgement.

NATURE OF FINES AND PUNISHMENTS: The tradition of the Sugali has defined various categories of disputes and varying rates of fines are imposed in order to compensate the loss, and the punishments include apology, the culprit has to give a beedi (a country smoking
# IMPOSITION OF FINES BY THE GHAR-PANCHAYAT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of deviant behaviour</th>
<th>Fine in Rs</th>
<th>Narasampalli</th>
<th>Pedapalli</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Min.</td>
<td>Max.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For an attempt to beat with foot wear</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For a single beat with foot wear</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For a single beat with stick/stone</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For accepted adultery</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For accusing a person</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For defying judgement</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For stealing a fowl</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For abusing a person in the Gwar-Panchayat</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For making an attempt to rape one's neighbours wife</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For killing a domestic animal</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For killing a Man</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
cigar) to the victim and hold the latter's feet seeking pardon for his misbehaviour and request to continue to be friendly with him. On the other hand, excommunication is imposed on a person who does not obey the orders of the Gwar-Panchayat or who fails to confirm to established norms of the community. The excommunicated are ill treated in all respects and their belongings are thrown out of their houses by the people of the 'thanda'. Such persons experience non-co-operation in their day-to-day life. They are not even allowed to draw drinking water from the community well. This kind of punishment continued until the culprit begs pardon and accepts the terms of the traditional council. The traditional panchayat, as stated earlier, deals with issues related to thefts, adultery, incest premarital-marital sexual relations, divorce, elopment etc., and imposes fines on the culprits as per the norms of tradition. The Gwar-Panchayat imposes maximum amount of fine on the convicted depending on the seriousness of the crime and existing value of money (see Table).

TRANSITION OF THE TRADITIONAL POLITICAL ORGANISATION

With the passage of time of the traditional charm of the office of the Naik has been lost. When the Sugali were nomads, living on trade and transportation the office of the Naik was all powerful, his word was law and everyone obeyed the Naik and all economic activities of the 'thanda' (camp) decided by the Naik
himself. Now this practice has been completely changed due to the sedentarization. Even today the Sugali tradition expects everyone to consult the chief of the settlement before undertaking any significant thing. The pastoral Sugali of Narasampalli approaches the present Naik, Karamthod Krishna Naik, for his advice in fixing the dates of auspicious programmes. The Sugali say that the Naik has authoritative outlook and impartiality in discharging his duties. He possesses good qualities as a leader and he has very good rapport with the dominant caste leaders (Brahmin, Reddy, Kamma, Balija) and with the government officials. He acts as sacred specialist or Pujari as well as traditional Naik of the settlement. He fulfills all the traditional obligations of the settlement. He officiates as a sacred specialist in conducting 'Maolipooja' and he is presented the head and legs of sacrificed animal. He is also receiving 'Sakero rupiah' (One rupee coin as a mark of respect) at the time of betrothal community. He also performs the incorporation ceremony in which Jangad (adopted non-Sugali) recognised as original Sugali and officiates as a priest in the case of widow re-marriage. All the women of the settlement respect Naik by covering their heads with chantia or pallav (upper veil) and avoid talking to him directly. The educated girls do not strictly adhere to this custom.

An important change which has occurred in the traditional panchayat of pastoral Narasampalli settlement is that the Naik invites Gram Panchayat Samithi President, Bannoth Rambhoji Naik for all Gwar-Panchayat meetings. In any case the Samithi President fails
to attend the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned to some other convenient dates which are possible to the Gram Panchayat President. The Pastoral Narasampalli settlement is one of the best examples of the traditional as well as modern panchayat system.

The traditional political organisation of the peasant Sugali of Pedapalli settlement has slackened due to many reasons. The traditional office of the Naik has lost its charm because of the frequent interference of the non-Sugali leaders of adjacent Pedapalli, a revenue village of Sugali settlement. Here the traditional Naik's position is only nominal. In dispute settlement with the Sugali of the settlement, the caste leaders take lead in solving disputes and most of the Sugali do visit the caste leaders instead of approaching Gwar Panchayat. In addition to this there are some more factors responsible for the degradation of the office of Naik. It is due to the increased individualistic attitude and unmanifested factionalism that the people have started defying judgments given by Gwar-Panchayat. And another interesting change here is that the educated young Sugalis do not like to fulfill the traditional way of providing liquor and non-vegetarian food to the members of traditional council during the process of dispute settlement. They say that the traditional mode of dispute settlement is a time killing process and incurs lot of unnecessary expenditure. Perhaps all these factors would have been responsible for their disloyalty to the community leader, Naik.
With the introduction of the three tier Panchayat Raj System in rural India, dominant caste leaders of the adjacent villages have started establishing good rapport with the Sugali. By this frequent interaction between the Sugali and the caste leaders, the Sugalis have started to learn approach different Government welfare agencies viz., District Tribal Welfare Office, Commercial Banks, Revenue Officials etc.

The Sugalis take unanimous decisions on all purposes especially in pastoral settlement, because they are linked with matrimonial alliances and strong kinship ties. It is stated by the Sugali that they are completely away from the village factionalism. In all matters the word of their traditional leaders is final. They never bothered about the merits and de-merits of the contestants or the political party to which the contestant belonged. They are not conscious of political leadership at the national and state levels. Most of the Sugali expressed their inability to identify the election symbols of political parties. They know only one party that is Congress (I), and identify it with late Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi. For the Sugali the non-Congress (I) political parties are anti-Sugali and are against overall development of Sugali.

The analysis of political structure among the Sugali indicates the existence and retention of their traditional socio-political system. All their internal affairs and disputes are exclusively settled by the traditional panchayat chaired by the Naik. In such an
organisation, the women have been excluded from participation both at the membership and decision-making level. With the introduction of Universal adult franchise in the country, there has been a tremendous changes and the women who were earlier excluded from participation in the traditional political system, have a definite role to play in modern democratic politics.

The introduction of Panchayat Raj system has brought many changes in the traditional structure of the Sugali. This system has affected the existing social system of the Sugali which was hitherto free from this kind of socio-political institutionalisation. This system also gave a new dimension to socio-political development of the Sugali. The emergence of Panchayat Raj created a new political consciousness and caused emergence of new leadership styles. The leaders associated with Panchayats have overshadowed the traditional leaders. The traditional leadership and the modern leadership exist side by side in some of the Sugali settlements. There is no conflict between the new leadership based on democratic ideals and the traditional leadership based on considerations such as heredity and personal qualities. There is continuity with the past in spite of changes that are affecting the traditional political system. It is significant that the traditional political system has acclimatised itself to the new forces of change without losing its identity and command over the people at the settlement level. However Panchayat Raj institutions have played an important role in bringing about modernisation, social change and social mobility among the Sugali.
REFERENCES:


4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., p. 168.


7. Ibid.


