

Traditional Tribal Leadership and Modern Polity : An Interface

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THE PROBLEM

Leadership is the essential structural feature of a social organization which is ever problematic from within and without. A few members (leaders/ superordinates) always come forward to lead the rest (followers / subordinates) in solving the problems – internal and / or external. The phenomenon of leadership has constantly been in the focus of rural studies in India. Studies of rural leadership in India which included tribal leadership also have historically evolved through two phases; viz., (i) the village studies mostly of the early fifties as a rule dealing with the phenomenon of leadership as sub-system (Srinivas 1955; Dube 1955; Marriot 1955; Chauhan 1967) and (ii) the studies of rural leadership, independent of other questions, ushering in the late fifties, i.e. the time of democratic decentralization through Panchayati Raj institutions in rural India (Park and Tinker 1959; Govt. of India 1965; Vidyarthi 1967). Studies of the latter type revealed two different types of the new leadership: (a) the new leaders are from high economic status, upper caste and old age (Roy 1951 ; Lewis 1954 ; Dhillon 1955 ; Bachenheimer 1956 ; Singh 1958 ; Barnabas 1958 ; Orenstein 1959 ; Opler 1959 ; Hitchcock 1959 ; Retzlaff 1962 ; Berreman 1963 ; Srivastava 1965 ; Kumar 1965 ; Asthana 1965 ; Gupta 1966 ; Sudhansu 1967 ; Singh 1967, 1968, 1969, 1985 ; Ranganath 1967 ; Rao 1968 ; Khan 1969 ; Jha 1972 ; Mehta 1972 ; Sachchidanand and Lal 1973 ; Muthayya and Raju 1973 ; Lakshminarayana 1985) and (b) the new leaders are young and educated drawn from all castes and classes (Beals 1955 ; Cohn 1955 ; Govt. of Rajasthan 1961 ; Dayal 1962 ; IIPO 1964 ; Narain and Mathur 1967 ; Bhatt 1967 ; Krishn 1967 ; Ganguly 1967 ; Chauhan 1968 ; Beteille 1969 ; Seth 1969 ; Sarkar 1971 ; Somjee 1971 ; Govt. of Maharashtra 1971 ; Gangrade 1974 ; Sharma 1974 ; Jain 1976 ; Shiviah, et. al. 1978, 1986 ; Sharma 1979 ; Bhargava 1979 ; Prasad 1981 ; Lakshminarayana 1985 ; Singh 1985 ; Pamecha 1985). Full length studies on leadership in rural setting engaging sufficient attention in the seventies have continued to conceptualize the phenomenon of power (leadership) alongwith its ever increasing complexity. The question of tribal leadership in India has so far remained almost unattempted and barring a few studies, only stray remarks are available. Reports of the Sadiq Ali Committee on Panchayati Raj in Rajasthan (1964 : 150 – 1) and the Rajasthan State Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Commission (1964-65 : 10) pointed out failure of the Panchayati Raj in attending the welfare of weaker sections. The emerging leadership (Narain, et. al. 1966 :283) or new

elite (Roy – Burman 1965) drawn from influential and traditionally upper sections is accretive of the traditional leadership (Mann 1978 : 101 – 2; Pamecha 1985).

The new leadership emerged in a very limited number even in the areas preponderantly populated by tribals and it just ratified the decisions taken in the traditional tribal councils in Rajasthan (Chauhan and Swaroop 1966 : 159 – 65). Traditional, transitional and emerging patterns of tribal leadership in Bihar indicated that traditional leadership was under stress in the wake of forces of change and had ineffective articulation at the state and the national levels (Vidyarthi 1978). The politics of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Gujarat signified that although the tribals entered competitive politics much later than the Harijans, they have gone far ahead of the later on the race of power politics owing to the tribal concentration in certain areas (Shah 1976). Thus, in India a bulk of tribal people have undergone the experiences of emergence of elite followed by a series of transformations. The area has mostly remained unresearched and the available studies whatsoever generally discuss the patterns of emerging leadership and the experiences of traditional leadership in the new situation, leaving the question of its working uncovered. The Panchayati Raj institutions presently provide a systemic purview for the comprehensive understanding of the emerging patterns of structuring and functioning of tribal leadership in India.

This paper deals with the patterns of structuring and functioning of the leadership emerging at successive political formations of panchayat in the tribal matrix of overlapping social, cultural, economic and political relations. The response of traditional tribal leadership, collective and undifferentiated, to the introduction of a formal panchayat may lead to traditionalization of the latter or to modernization of the former or to somewhat of mixed type. The question which arises here is : What are the structural and functional patterns of tribal leadership emerging in the wake of modern polity, i.e. Panchayati Raj in India ? To attempt the question the discussion is placed in the context of a Bhil Village Council, i.e., Alsigarh Gram Panchayat in Rajasthan. The massive Bhil tribe of India is found in numerous groups in the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. It is at present the oldest and second largest tribe in Rajasthan living largely at subsistence level. After a long spell of their social life in the autonomous political communities in the past, the Bhils of various socio-economic levels have become participants in the modern polity of India after Independence. Nature of their response, experiences and consequential transformations within the parameters of a panchayat are brought out by using a methodological and technique multiplex in the study.

METHODOLOGY

As a polity referring to organizational aspect of a society functioning for realization of its common goals (Chauhan 1968) the panchayat is a structural arrangement constituted by leadership drawn from the society in a given space and time. In a civilizational society of regional diversities and historical depth like India, the geographical separateness and the experiences of constant interactions have been going on although the history. Unlike those in the west, Indian tribals

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have since immemorable times been in the contacts with the majority of caste/ non-tribal people that worked for their economic and, to some extent, social integration in various regions and historical periods in India (Shina 1962, 1965, 1980, 1981; Bose 1980). Briefly, time and space are the two essential references for analysis of a structure in India and, therefore, the panchayat is here treated in the time-space perspective. To understand the various patterns of emerging leadership and its working and interrelationships, the historical process of periodic political formations of the panchayat has been undertaken for analysis. Synchronic and diachronic analyses are not appropriate to understand the phenomena of historical experiences because these analyses can examine a phenomenon only at one point or two of time-reference. Thus, the historical structuralism has been used for analysing the structuring and functioning of the emerging panchayat leadership. But, in view of this mode falling short in understanding behavioural dynamics of ever-increasing complexity, the dynamic class analysis has been applied to discuss the various forms of constantly increasing conflicts. Hence, dialectical structuralism deriving its richness from both historical structuralism and class analysis (Singh 1987) has been used for analysis of the entire political process in the panchayat. Owing to the historical context, the tribal microcosm is also complex, multi-layered and locus for working of forces of change. Therefore, a technique multiplex consisted of observations, interviews and case studies was administered to collect data for the study. Lastly, for the sake of in-depth, comparative and longitudinal understanding of a political reality, the single but significant cluster panchayat was selected with a view that the inferences derived here would be discussed alongwith those of the studies conducted in other parts of India in order to develop a theoretical perspective on leadership studies.

CONTEXTUALIZATION

The Alsigarh Gram Panchayat is a politico-administrative constituent of Girwa Panchayat Samiti in Udaipur district which alongwith Banswara, Dungarpur, Chittorgarh and some parts of Sirohi districts of Rajasthan forms a part of the historical region of Bhils extending into the aforementioned neighbouring states. It is a cluster of three elongatedly connected villages; viz., Pai, Alsigarh and Aad situated at a distance of 26 Km. in the hilly tracts. The state Highway (the Udaipur-JHadal-Phalasia Road) in the south-west of Udaipur city. Alsigarh, the village of panchayat headquarters is flanked in south by Pai - the village largest in area, population and social differentiation and in north by Aad - the smallest one of them. The highway almost bypasses Alsigarh, virtually bi-sects Pai and leaves Aad far in the interiority. The panchayat is spread in a total area of 5,935 hectares comprising 3,018 hectares of Pai, 2,380 hectares of Alsigarh and 455 hectares of Aad and populated by 5210 persons comprising 2518, 2109 and

583 persons of constituent villages respectively (Census of India 1991) and differentiated into 19 phalas (sectors), viz., Mual, Vadla, Gawaadi, Nichla, Hamli Pipla, Paaba, Kemri, Khildi, Nalla Nalvat, Dhindhwaar, Waada, Kaatya, Naal, Kheria, Kaada, Uparla and Hetla - first eleven from Pai, next five from Alsigarh and last two from Aad; into 31 gotras; viz., Aahri, Bhagora, Bhudra, Bodar, Chhaanya, Chunkara, Daama, Daamar, Dungri, Hagya, Heeravat, Holki, Kalaawa, Kasota, Kataara, Kateria, Kharaadi, Kharwad, Kher, Khokharia, Mori, Od, Paargi, Patela, Relat, Sapania, Sokaara, Suwaan, Taavad, Talovia and Vadera - found twenty five in Pai, eleven in Alsigarh and eight in Aad; into 6 castes; viz., Balai, Bohra (Muslim), Khatik, Nagaarchi, Mahaajan and Naath - found all in Pai, two in Alsigarh and none in Aad; and into 3 religious denominations; viz., Hinduism, Christianity and Islam - found all in Pai, first two in Alsigarh and only first one in Aad. Hindus are further differentiated into Bhagats and non-Bhagats or into various panths and the Christians into the churches of two denominations; Viz., the Philadelphia Church and the Penti-Coastal Church.

Under the effect of two legislative Acts; viz., Gram Panchayats Act 1953 and Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad Act 1959 there were constituted five consecutive panchayat bodies of 45 leaders, in all, filling 67 seats - 11 seats each in the first two bodies and 15 each in the next three in January 1960, December-January 1964-65, March 1978, December 1981 and May 1988 during a period of over three decades until the last one was dissolved in 1992. Of 45 leaders, one has migrated out for good from the panchayat, seven are dead and thirty seven are still active to matter in the panchayat politics. Recently the Panchayati Raj has been re-organised under effect of Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act 1993. Elections for the constitution of panchayats under this Act were held in December 1994 and January 1995. Salient features of the panchayat bodies constituted under the new Acts are the provisions of constitutional status for the Panchayati Raj institutions, a state finance commission for distribution of resources between state and PR bodies, direct elections of the representatives at all the three types of PR and reservation of seats in the bodies to ensure representation of the weaker sections; viz., Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Women. How far do these provisions are proved effective for any difference in structuring and functioning patterns of the newly constituted leadership as compared with the previous one ? The question remains to be attempted in future.

TRADITIONAL POWER STRUCTURE

As an autonomous political community, the traditional Bhil village, generally a pall (valley) or phala (sector) governed by a collective body of a Da

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Mota (Elders Council) comprises of three streams of leadership, viz. : (1) *Gameti-Bhaanjgadia* (Secular institutional), *Waatawaala* (secular-non-institutional) and *Bhopa, Bhagat, Sewaadar, Kotwal*, etc. (sacred-institutional).

The secular institutional leadership consisted of a *Gameti* and a *Bhaanjgadia* has been hereditary, descending from one generation to another in male line of a family. When the male line of descendants discontinues due to some reason, a male member nearest in the descent has the right to step in the position. But if no nearest and suitable male candidate for the position is available, then the 'Da Mota' have been free to choose from any of the families in the village. The *Gameti* being village headman presided over the meetings of the 'Da Mota' to decide village affairs, looked after the internal affairs and led the village in the matters of external affairs. The *Bhaanjgadia* (truth-finder) assisted him in all village affairs and also acted as the junior *Gameti* in his absence. Vaka Ba Kataara is the *Gameti* of Pai, but not the one invested with the position. Actually his grand father and *Gameti* of Pai, Chatra Kataara, had two wives. From the elder wife he had two sons – Teja and Nanka, and from the younger, only one - Ambawa, Vaka's father. So, by the established custom Teja became *Gameti* who died issueless and, then, his younger brother Nanka stepped in the position. Nanka, too, died soon. But his two minor sons - Hardaara and Maawa survived. In such a state of affairs, the Kaamdar (official from the Darbar, i.e. Udaipur Princely state) keeping in view the wishes of people of pai offered to tie a *pagdi* (turban) on Vaka's head, but he refused to misappropriate the right of his cousin - Hardaara. Therefore, the *pagdi* was tied to Hardaar and Vaka was requested to act as the *Gameti* on behalf of Hardaara. By that arrangement Vaka is continuing till the date as a de jure *Gameti*. Naraa Ba Kataara, a *Waatawaala*, who died two decades ago, has been the de facto *Gameti* of Pai. Hira Ba Kataara is the *Bhaanjgadia* of Pai, who descended into the office occupied earlier by his father, Kamji and his grand father, Lakma in the past. Varda Ba Kharaadi, the *Gameti* of today's Alsigarh descended into the position occupied earlier by his father, Uda, and grand father, Gunja. His uncle, Khema Kharaadi, acted as the de facto *Gameti* until he died a decade ago. In a dispute arising 35 years ago over the village headmanship, four *Gametis* have been being appointed for the village as a whole. Besides Varda Ba Kharaadi, Kesa Solanki, Hagji Vadera, Fauja Kharaadi and Rama Kharaadi are the *Gametis* of Waada, Kheria, Kaada and Kaatya phala respectively. Nathu Solanki, Kesudas Vadera, Kaua Kharaadi and Shankar Kharaadi are the *Bhaanjgadias* of the respective phalas. In Aad, Sawa Paargi is at present the *Gameti* of the village, who inherited this seat from his father, Nana, and grand father, Amma. Hurma Paargi is the *Bhaanjgadia* of the village, who succeeded his father, Thaavra, and grand father, Waala.

The secular-non-institutional leadership consists of a number of *Waatwaalas* (deliberators) who by virtue of their commonsense, shrewdness,

dynamic character and reputation amidst the villagers have always been essential to decide various matters by discussing their pros and cons. That is why sometimes a powerful *Waatwaala* even came to be a de facto *Gameti*. Pai has a large *Waatwaala* leadership stream consisted of Dito Ba Hiraavat, Kanji Sapania, Thaavra Chhaanya, Dhanji Ba Kataara, Virma Kataara, Vira Kataara, Fauja Kataara, Khaatu Kataara Hardara Kataara, Thavra Kataara, Shankar Kataara, Havji Kataara, Rama Bhagora, Dheera Bhai Kataara, Kaku Ram Bhgora, Surji Bhagora, Rama Kataara, Thavra Paargi, Lalu Ram Daamar, Khem Raj Bhagora, Dharam Das Bhagora, Kalu Bhagora, Shankar Daamar, Gopilal Daamar, Chatra Daamar, Kalu Hiraavat, Dharma Hiraavat, Dharma Kharaadi, Kalu Kataara, Harupa Kharaadi, Dola Kharaadi, Bhaga Kharaadi, Kalu Paargi, Kesha Talovia, Ambawa Paargi and Jalma Paargi. In Alsigarh, Kesa Solanki, Naraa Ba Sapania, Sawa Kharaadi, Hurma Kharaadi and Dewa Kharaadi are the prominent *Waatwaalas*.

Aad, too, has a fairly large stream of *Waatawaalas* consisted of Bhuraji Solanki, Nana Kharaadi, Vesya Kharwad, Hakra Paargi, Dhana Paargi, Shankar Paargi, Dhula Paargi, Mohan Paargi, Bhema Solanki, Amvawa Paargi and Virma Paargi.

The sacred-institutional leadership consists of Bhopa, Sewaadar and Kotwaal who, particularly the Bhopas, are the specialists of supernatural affairs with an additional quality of being *Waatawaalas*. The position of Bhopa is also inheritable if the descendants are able to maintain the qualities. The Bhopas foretold the villagers of eminent dangers, explained adversities and freed them of evil powers. Therefore, they have also possessed influence over the worldly affairs of these people of deep religious attitudes. Dito Ba Hiraavat, Dola Hiraavat, Dharam Das Bhagora, Kaku Ram Bhagora, Thavra Bhagora and Lalu Ram Daamar are the Bhopas and sewaadars in pai. In Alsigarh, Varda Ba Kharaadi, Dhanraj Kharaadi, Kesa Solanki, Harupa Paargi, Hakra Paargi, Lalu Kharaadi, Pema Solanki, Limba Solanki, Gora Kharaadi, Dharma Kharaadi, Mawa Kharaadi, Kodra Vadera and Dharma Vadera are the Bhopas and Savji Kharaadi, the Sewaadar. In Aad, Nana Kharaadi, Bhema Solanki, Dhula Paargi, Hakra Paargi, Dhana Paargi, Rupa Paargi and Holma Paargi are the *Bhopas*. These leadership streams are found overlapping in their life as the qualities of all the three or at least of two streams are seen found in the same person.

Alongwith the presence of the *Gameti* and the *Bhaanwagadia(s)*, the Elders Council has been an informal body varying in size from time to time and case to case. Number of *Waatawaalas* and *Bhopas* in the meetings does fluctuate but the presence of certain *Waatawaalas* is also ensured to decide the matters. The matters that come before the council are adultery, abduction of women, cattle, mango or mahua trees and conflict over land. The disputes are even today brought first to the notice of informal agencies. But when they are not able to settle them, then, the formal agencies like police and courts are invoked to intervene. In the past, all disputes were settled through the *Gameti*, *Bhaaniagadia*,

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Waataawaalas or the *Da Mota* and nobody dared to approach external agencies. Now-a-days, influence of *Da Mota* is waning a bit fast in the wake of the expanding external contacts and spread of education.

EMERGING POWER STRUCTURE

To discuss the emerging power structure in terms of the historical process of change, one is prompted to ask the questions :

1. What kind of relationships does there exist between the two types of leadership, viz., the traditional and the emerging one?;
2. What patterns of leadership are perceived to be emerging out of the historical process of periodic political formations of the panchayat bodies?;
- and
3. What is the nature of functional interrelations of the newly emerged leadership in the panchayat?

A mixed kind of relationship between the traditional and the emerging leadership comes out of the analysis undertaken for understanding the process of political formation of the panchayat. Dislocation of the emerging leadership with as well as belated emergence and discontinuity in power of the traditional secular and sacred institutional leaderships (*Gameti-Bhaanjgadia* and *Bhopa*), on the one hand, and continuity in power of the traditional non-institutional leadership (*Waataawaalas*), on the other, typically characterised the structuring of the panchayat. None of the *Gametis*, *Bhaanjgadias* and *Bhopas* from the constituent villages emerged in power in the first two subsequently formed bodies of the panchayat. The only *Bhopa*, Kaku Ram Bhagora, from Pai and the only *gameti*, Sawa Paargi from Aad emerging in power in the third and fourth panchayat bodies respectively discontinued in the bodies formed subsequently. But the *Waataawaalas* and their kins have been very much in the centre-stage of panchayat's formation right from the beginning. Except Shanti Lal of Mahajan caste in the first body, the sarpanches of all the remaining panchayat bodies. Dhan Raj Kharaadi, Laloo Ram Daamar and Nathu Ram Sapania, have been the sons of *Waataawaalas*. Of the two Up Sarpanches elected, in all, Khem Ba Kharaadi was a towering *Waataawaala* – the de facto *Gameti* of Alsigarh and Prabhu Ram Kataara, the son of the dominant *waatawala* from Pai. Almost all the ward panches were either *Waataawaalas*, or their sons or their kins. Therefore, the *Waataawaala* stream of leadership has been a mainstay of the emerging leadership in the panchayat, which in a sense, signified the continuity of traditional leadership in the panchayat's formation.

An examination of the leadership emerging through the historical process of panchayat's formation in terms of emergence, continuity, discontinuity and re-emergence in power (Sharma 1979) here leads one to obtain a pattern of fourfold leadership in the panchayat, viz.; (1) the leadership individually as well

as structurally continuing, (2) the leadership individually discontinuing but structurally continuing, (3) the leadership individually as well as structurally discontinuing and (4) the leadership individually emerging but structurally re-emerging. The prominent feature of structural continuity and re-emergence alongwith individual discontinuity in power of leadership is well built in the structural dominance of four gotras (clans); viz. Kataara and Kharaadi, and Solanki and Vadera from four *phalas*, Mual and Vadla, and Waada and Kheria of two larger villages, Pai and Alsigarh, respectively. A number of factors like legacy of traditional power, situational advantages, socio-economic position, and size and concentration of population have a combined role in the continuous entrenchment in power of a few structural units and discontinuity of a number of peripheral structural units and individuals.

The leadership continuing in power mostly emerged out of unanimity at elections among the villagers and meagrely out of contest. This indicates that the leadership structuring is taking place under the traditional influence of the *Waatawaalas* whose voice still prevailed over the meek majority. Then, the contest for power, though a little, is sociologically significant in two senses. First, the phenomenon of contest itself is indicative of emerging differences of the leadership entrenched in power. Second, the contest which took place for all the three offices, viz, sarpanch, up srpanch and wardpanch, and twice for the prime office of sarpanch is enough to attest the assumption that the tribals have come to understand the importance of formal authority which has aroused individual political aspirations. Besides, the individual discontinuity in power of leaders also implies circulation of power among individuals within a few traditional structures. Thus, the structural persistence characterized by traditionally, continuity and unanimity is the dominant feature of the emerging leadership in the panchayat.

But, further, a question arises :who are the individuals amongst whom circulation of power takes place even in the given narrow structural base? Answer to it points towards the cultural background of the power-seekers. The historical process of panchayat's formation depicts a gradual increase in number of literates and educated. Agriculturists-cum labourers, and adults and middle aged over illiterates and literates, agriculturists, and middle and old aged leaders respectively. It implies that the power circulation is explicable in terms of education, internal stakes and external contacts through occupation and adult age which may be viewed in contradistinction with illiteracy, agriculture only as occupation and old age respectively widely prevalent cultural characteristics among the traditional leadership. Education as the enhancer of capabilities, occupation as the source of internal stakes and external contacts and age as the reservoir of energy for actions have culturally redefined in the present times. Earlier, education or occupation was defined as culturally polluting them through external contacts and old age was preferred as to be a source of wisdom. Thus, structural persistence and cultural change can go hand in hand, and in such a situation social change

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enters gradually through the cultural front and the tradition prevails over the structure. Owing to this state of affairs, a leader in the panchayat has in general a composite personality with an amalgam of traits of Waatawaala, Bhopa and formal leader performing both the roles, formal and informal, simultaneously.

EMERGING FUNCTIONAL PATTERNS

After the foregoing structural analysis of the emerging leadership, a question arises: what mode of working is perceived to be prevalent among the leaders? The functional scenario indicates a process of gradual movement from informalization or traditionalization to formalization in the mode of working of the panchayat. The entire process of functional evolution of the panchayat may be discussed under the following four stages : First, the stage of traditionalization or informalization of the panchayat's working: During the period of initial two subsequent panchayat bodies the leadership had no clear perception of roles and their performance in the panchayat. Intermingling their roles, the formal and informal (traditional) leaders even sat together in the meetings of the panchayat and took decisions which were stamped by the formal leaders only. Second, the stage of wire-pulling by the traditional leadership during the tenure of the third panchayat : The educated sarpanch, Laloo Ram, and others in the panchayat made a bit of demarcation between the traditional stranglehold in the panchayat and decided the matters in some informal meetings with the traditional leaders and took them in meetings of the panchayat just to have a formal approval. Third, the stage of persuasion during the tenure of the fourth panchayat body: The continuing sarpanch, Laloo Ram Daamar, and his team of ward panchs, again, taking a step forward on the way to formalization of panchayat's working began to discuss and decide the matters within the formal meetings of the panchayat but before their execution they convinced the traditional leaders about the decisions. Fourth, the stage of total dissonance between the two during the tenure of last panchayat body : The sarpanch, Nathu Ram Sapania - a hunch man of the MLA - Khem Raj Kataara, with his supporters emerged to carry out activities independently despite the opposition from his rival faction headed by the Up sarpanch, Prabhu Ram Kataara, as well as from the Bharatiya Janata Party faction in the panchayat body. But the politically surcharged working of leadership within the panchayat not only enraged the traditional leadership but also took it far away in formalization of activities. Thus, the functional process over the years has been a gradual process of emancipation of formal leadership from the traditional stranglehold in the panchayat.

The analysis of mode of working of the panchayat leadership, remains incomplete unless it is undertaken for understanding the contents and issues worked upon and the consequences thereof. A question arises : What kind of matters were worked upon and in what manner did they have been sociologically

consequential ? The panchayat bodies and leadership throughout the period worked upon the developmental aspect while leaving the governance side. A number of activities like preparing proposals, pushing forward or pursuing them, allocation and utilization of the developmental funds received, execution of various developmental projects and implementation of schemes for individual or group upliftment constituted the working of panchayat bodies and leadership therein. In a tribal life of scarcity, the presence of or demand for developmental funds and projects came to be a concern for everybody, leave apart the leaders. They wanted the projects worked out for their own advantage or benefit. This developmental object of alien nature gradually drew the people, leaders and officials in a vortex of ever increasing conflicts depicting the emergence of a typical pattern of social relations among the tribals. The patterns of conflicts also evolved through four stages : First, the stage of emerging differences between insiders and outsiders : Though a non-tribal Sarpanch of Mahajan caste was elected unanimously, differences of the tribal ward panches and villagers with him soon came up over a fund received for digging and embankment of Relya Talai (water tank) in Alsigarh. Following the norms of utilization, the sarpanch pressed for free labour and meeting cost of material only from the fund, while the tribals wanted wages for work from fund and also suspected the sarpanch of misappropriating the **money of Government** (not of the people). In view of the widening differences of outlooks between the insiders (tribals) and the outsider (Mahajan Sarpanch), the latter resigned from the office to save his hands from burning in a **tribal affair**. Second, the stage of emergence of factionalism among the tribals : The tribals working at the site of Darra Maata Anicut (water tank) in Pai complained against the block officials of incorrect measuring of grains for the work while some of the tribal leaders stood in favour of the officials. Though the officials tried to dispel their mistrust, this event created not only a division between the tribals and officials but also factionalism among the tribals. Third, the stage of multiplicity of conflicts : During the terms of the sarpanch, Laloo Ram Daamar, in the third and fourth panchayat bodies, the issues regarding water hand pumps installation really happen to play a havoc with the tribals who involved into bickerings of various kinds, viz, : inter-and -intra- ethnic / gotra / phala / village / office / party. Fourth, the stage of political alignments and re-alignments : Alongwith the emergence of Nathu Ram Sapania in the office of sarpanch in the last panchayat body., the leaders of the panchayat body as well as the people aligned, first, in two camps : One headed by the sarpanch himself toeing the line of Khem Raj Kataara (MLA) at the grass root level and the other headed by the Up Sarpanch, Prabhu Ram Kataara, drawing support from the ex-Pradhan of Girwa Panchayat Samiti, Roshan Lal Nagda. Later on, a third faction consisted of the Bharatya Janata Party supporters also cropped up within the panchayat body. This fragmentation vertically divided the leadership and people after a lot of shuffling and re-shuffling. In such a conflictual atmosphere of functional evolution in the

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panchayat, the traditional authority, frequently came in conflicts with the formal authority, which were resolved by concurrence, persuasion, compromise or even sheer exertion of formal authority. Thus, during the politico-developmental process of panchayat's functional evolution, a series of differences, factions, bickerings and fragments constantly went on through multiplication of conflicts of various kinds and by politicization of structural units and individuals. Through this course of events, the emerging leadership did learn to maintain boundary of actions with the traditional leaders, developed a capacity for resolving conflicts and exercise of power, and above all, achieved a certain degree of personalised politics.

STRUCTURAL PERSISTENCE, POLITICIZATION AND CHANGE

Interface of traditional tribal leadership and modern polity in the Alsigarh Gram Panchayat signifies a process of political evolution characterised by structural persistence, politicization and change. The process is highly Indianized in the sense that it leads to the accretion of modern element with traditional structures as reflected in the political and personality formations of leadership stretched over a period of three decades. The political formations have although been mediated by a few of traditional structures; viz., family, gotra, phala and village, and visualized in the constant features of traditionality in origin, continuity in power and unanimity-at-elections of emerging leadership of composite personality in the panchayat. This gives the impression that stability rather than change of / in structure is maintained by the emerging power structure under the democratic (modern) garb. But it is not fully true. Of course, the structural persistence is the all pervading phenomenon of the panchayat formations. The patterns of leadership such as the total dominance of traditional leaders, specially of the Waatawaalas, the leaders individually as well as structurally continuing in power, all, attest the fact of persistence. However, the phenomenon like individual discontinuity, structural discontinuity, structural re-emergence in power and contest-at-election of leaders seeking power, although of small size, do indicate that (i) there is, to great extent, a circulation of power among individuals within the structures entrenched in power; (ii) there is a belated and meagre emergence, discontinuity and re-emergence in power of peripheral structures; and (iii) the differences over sharing the power have soon surfaced within the entrenched structures. In brief, a process of politicization mostly within the entrenched structures. And sometimes outside them has been constantly increasing during political formations and this has induced a dynamism and competitiveness in the panchayat politics in the same manner as perceived in other parts of rural India (Brass 1965; Sisson 1972; Nagla 1984).

The competitive political dynamics show the emergence of educated, agriculturist-cum-labourer and adult leadership replacing the old one. This change-over to a new type of leadership owes to the re-defining of its educational,

occupational and age qualities in terms of changing cultural and ideological preferences. This cultural change mostly occurred alongwith the structural persistence. There is the sanskritization-westernization frame of analysis (Srinivas 1966) that explanins how culturalor positional changes can take place even without any corresponding structural changes. Therefore, it seems that in India the structural shell tribal or non-tribal, is rather impermeable for change whereas the cultural front is a window to enter in. The structural persistence initially resulted into the traditionalization of structuring and functioning of political leadership but alongwith gradually occurring cultural changes and increasing politicalization constantly paved way for its formalization. The behavioural dynamics in the political process are replete with divisions, factionalism, alignments and re-alignments, and fragments. This political character is not a tribal specific or a phenomenon of rural society, but a feature of Indian politics in general. Alike India at large, a number of traditional structures that persist between state and citizen and clash with each other prevent the making of a civic society in the Alsigarh Gram Panchayat also. At macro level, the problems of casteism, communalism, regionalism, lingualism or ethnocentrism are, all, the outcome of such mediating traditional structures. A thaw in their mediation can be made through mass distribution of socio-cultural resources like education and occupation. Only then, a participatory politics can be realised to function. But looking to the present position of human resource development in India, this goal seems to be too far. Finally, the structural persistence, politicization and change in the Alsigarh Gram Panchayat has confirmed that the polarity of tradition or tribalism and modernity is not tenable, at least, in Indian situation. Rather, it is evident that the more stronger the traditional social structure, the lesser is the possibility for breakdown of political modernization.

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