

CHAPTER - I

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There appears to be three images of Panchayati Raj afloat in the field. The political image is one which is being conjured up by our responsible leaders through their speeches, statements and writings. The king-pin of this image is management of local affairs by rural people themselves and Panchayati Raj in this definition assumes the form of a charter of rural local government. The public image is one which the rural masses conjure up for themselves - to them the Panchayati Raj has meaning only in terms of solutions that it can offer to their felt needs and problems which pertain more to administration and revenue than to development. Finally, there is the statutory image of the Panchayati Raj which is essentially the bureaucrats' viewpoint. This image strikes, by and large, three key notes : the almost exclusive development bias of Panchayati Raj institutions, the emphasis on their agency role and the need of safeguards so that peoples' representatives may not misuse the trust which is being reposed in them.

-- Iqbal Narain
("The Emerging Concept")

CHAPTER

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THE PANCHAYATI RAJ SET-UP
IN GUJARAT STATE; ITS GENERAL
BACKGROUND AND PRINCIPAL DIMENSIONS
IN EDUCATION



1.1 INTRODUCTION

The present study constitutes a critical inquiry about how the Panchayati Raj bodies set up in Mehsana District of North Gujarat under the Gujarat Panchayats Act, 1961 Section 3, have succeeded in achieving the tasks entrusted to them in the field of democratisation and development in the administration of primary education in general and in the accomplishment of the task rôle assigned to them in universalising primary education for all children of the age-group 6-14 in particular. Though the study is limited in scope to only one district of the State, its findings have general implications for understanding the working of the new system and determining its future directions and dimensions of reorganization. The tasks involved are : effective implementation of the State law on compul-

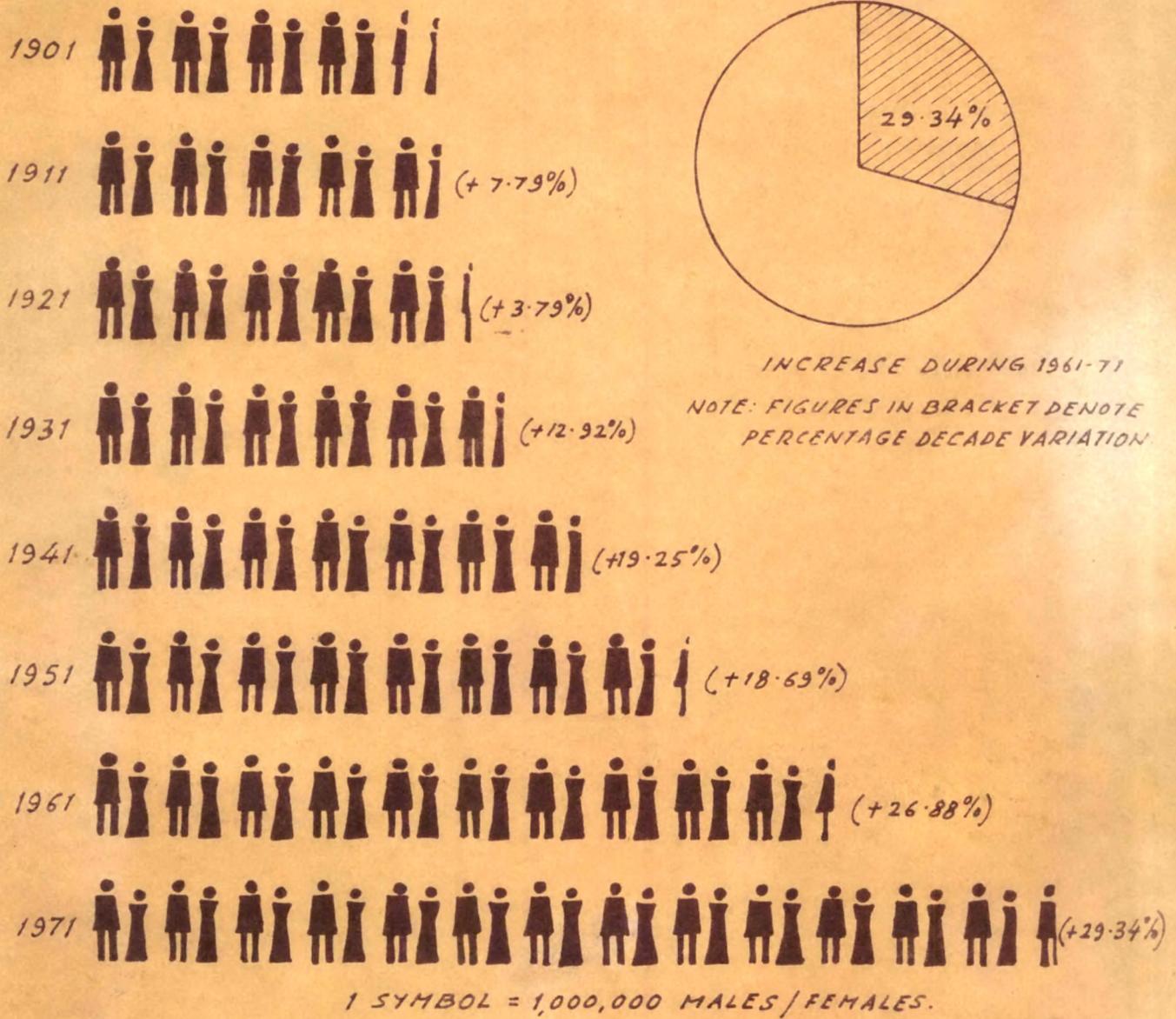
sory primary education resulting into universal school provision, universal enrolment and universal retention (i.e. complete prevention of dropouts), maintenance of school achievement index at satisfactory level, adequate provision of student welfare services, maintenance of teacher morale at a reasonable level of satisfaction and creating an organizational climate for professional growth of teachers. These tasks, it was felt, would be better accomplished by an administrative machinery under the Panchayati Raj Set-up, because the rural communities at the level of village, taluka or block and the district will be closely associated with important decision-making relating to these tasks, and a kind of initiative, interest, dynamism, spirit of public service and a trend towards democratisation and development would be engendered. The measures of democratic decentralisation in leadership acts and decision-making in administration of primary education were calculated to arouse interest and efforts of the entire community to provide adequate and quality school education to their children. Such an approach to the administration of primary education was conceived as a better alternative to what existed before, viz., the centralised District School Board Set-up at the district level, in drawing nearer to the achievement of the goal (which is in fact a directive for State) of Universal, Compulsory and Free Primary Education

as outlined in Article-45 of the Indian Constitution.¹

It is true that the statutory Panchayati Raj institutions came to be established in Gujarat State only from 1963, a tradition in village administration by the local community existed right from ancient times in every part of the country. There existed for long in India a system of village and inter-village organizations. In India Epic literature, as well as in the literary works composed in Sanskrit language of the later period, numerous references are found to the existing village organizations and their functioning which suggest that the village in ancient India was the fundamental unit of local democratic administration. There was a built-in long tradition of democratic village community leadership, which was motivated by a spirit of social service and community welfare. The rural communities integrated themselves to constitute a culture-area or at least a sub-culture area. The community had its own structure, organization and ethos.

These village administration units run on indigenous cultural lines came to be destroyed during the British Rule of a century and a half. The Britishers during their rule over India did try to reorganise the Village Panchayat Units, but the efforts were largely half-hearted - it was voluntary for village communities to have their Panchayats and only limited powers supported by limited funds, were

CHART- I



GUJARAT
GROWTH OF POPULATION
1901 - 1971

(SOURCE: CENSUS OF INDIA-1971, PROVISIONAL POPULATION TOTALS)

given to these bodies. These powers were also nominal and of superficial nature. The village communities had also become by this time static and changeless. Time and interplay of historical, sociological and political factors and forces had sapped the vitality of Indian villages and the rural communities living therein had lost much of their traditions in community spirit, selfless social service, public spirit, democratic fervour and dynamism.² The institution of caste, social forms and values, the economic infra-structure, the divisive and disintegrating influence of religious sects and communalism, had sapped the vigour and vitality of village communities to serve as powerful units of democratic decentralisation in the administration of community affairs. Therefore, though popular organizations of Village Panchayats existed during the British rule, they no longer remained effective units of local administration and welfare.³

It was only after the attainment of Independence that the process of rebuilding up the village panchayats as decentralised units of administration began. It was the Second Five Year Plan that recommended that Village Panchayats should be remodelled and strengthened and they should be organizationally linked up with democratic self government organizations at a higher level. This thinking paved the way for constituting democratic institutions at the village, taluka and the district levels. An ideology had begun to deve-

lop that the entire administration and development of the district and its sub-divisions of talukas and the base components of each taluka - the villages should be taken over by the representatives of local rural communities. The National Development Council of India had appointed, in 1957, the Balwantrai Mehta Study Team, popularly known as the Democratic Decentralization Committee, to suggest future directions and dimensions of reorganization of the district administration. The Balwantrai Mehta Committee's two important recommendations,⁴ which are pertinent to this study, were : (1) For every Development Block a Panchayat Samiti should be constituted from among the Village Panchayats established in that area, and all development activities of the Block should be carried through this Block Panchayat Samiti, and (2) for the existing District Local Boards or such other institutions at the District level, an advisory committee in the form of a Jilla Parishad should be constituted.

Thus, it was enjoined by the Balwantrai Mehta Committee that over the stage or the tier of the Village Panchayat, the Block or Taluka Panchayat Samiti as the intermediary tier and the Jilla Parishad as the top tier should be constituted, and to these democratic decentralised institutions, all development work to be carried on within their area of jurisdiction should be entrusted. The development work

was also to include the development of primary education, to begin with. It was also envisaged that the existing District School Board in charge of the Administration of primary education in the district be replaced by an Education Committee of the Jilla Parishad to be set up in the place of the then existing District Local Board.

Prior to 1960, Gujarat was an integral part of the bilingual Bombay State. The recommendations of the Balwantraji Mehta Committee had evoked favourable reactions in the then Bombay State. The State Government accepted the basis and the principles on which the Balwantraji Mehta Committee recommended the introduction of democratic decentralization. The process of reorganization began in 1958, with the enactment of the Village Panchayat Act which came into operation from 1st June 1959. This Village Panchayat Act made provision for making Village Panchayats effective institutions of local self government and development. But it was felt that the question of the constitution of the Block Panchayat Samiti needed further thoughts and examination. It was, therefore, decided to leave this question at that stage for decision to the new States of Gujarat and Maharashtra which were soon to be carved out from the bilingual bigger Bombay State. The New Gujarat State came into existence on 1st May, 1960. The thread of democratic reorganisation of local self government units at district level left incomplete by the former Bombay

State was taken up immediately in hand. The Gujarat Government soon set up a Committee under the Chairmanship of Shri Rasiklal Parikh, the Minister, Lands and Home in the New Gujarat State Government, "to take an overall view of the working and achievements of the various existing popular institutions and of the recommendations of the Balwantraji Mehta Committee and then to suggest a coordinated detailed programme for democratic decentralisation."⁵

The Committee made some valuable recommendations in the direction of initiating a change in political, revenue, economic developmental administration as well as in educational administration at primary school level. It observed :

"We, therefore, recommend the establishment, below the State level, of strong and efficient institutions of elected representatives of the people at the district level, the taluka or block level and the village level. These democratic bodies should be organically linked; the State administration should be decentralised and responsibilities should be duly developed on these bodies. National planning, State policies and important programmes can be easily and successfully implemented only through these organically linked democratic bodies constituted at these three levels. The country can advance harmoniously only if these institutions become parts of one arrangement and work according to their own lights in their own fields and at the same time supplement and complement each other."⁶

The Gujarat Panchayats Act, 1961, was enacted on the basis of this and other recommendations of the Rasiklal Parikh Committee. This Act was amended two times, first in 1968 and second in 1973. The amendments were effected to

make the institution of the Panchayati Raj a better medium to realise the rising aspirations and desires for development becoming more pronounced among the rural community and bring it closer to the realisation of the ideal of building up a socialistic pattern of society. The three principal needs of village people, viz. the employment potential at home, land for living and the provision of adequate social services including education have been acquiring increasingly greater focus in the last decade, and it was felt necessary to strengthen the Panchayati Raj bodies in leadership acts, programme inputs and financial resources at all the three tiers so that the needs of the developing rural communities can be better and expeditiously met with. The impact of these amendments in the administration of primary education by the Panchayati Raj bodies in the State will be described and discussed later, in appropriate context, in the present study.

The present position in respect of Panchayati Raj institutions in Gujarat State is this. There are about 12,000 Gram Panchayats and 59 Nagar Panchayats covering a rural population of 20.8 millions, 182 Taluka Panchayats and 18 Jilla Parishads covering the whole of Gujarat State except the newly created tiny district of Gandhinagar.^{6A} A Gram Panchayat has been established in the State for any local area comprising of a revenue village or a group of revenue villages or hamlets the population of which is not ordinarily less than 500 and

not more than 10,000. A Nagar - Panchayat is established for any local area comprising of a revenue village or group of revenue villages or hamlets, the population of which is more than 10,000 but not exceeding 20,000. By an amendment made in the Panchayat Act in 1968, the State Government is empowered to constitute Nagar Panchayats even for areas having less than 10,000 population having regard to the urban development of the area. At the gram or village level, a Gram Sabha or a Village Council has been constituted consisting of the adult residents of the village. For each of the talukas in 18 out of the total 19 districts a Taluka Panchayat, which is a body corporate, comparable to Panchayat Samiti in other States of the country, has been constituted. All 18 districts of the State, except the newly formed Gandhinagar District, have their Jilla Parishads which represent the top tier in the Panchayati Raj set-up of democratic decentralised administration of all development programmes.

1.2 THE CONCEPT OF PANCHAYATI RAJ AS APPLIED TO EDUCATION:

The Panchayati Raj embodies the concept of both democratisation and community development. It represents a movement of devolution of authority and responsibility in the administration of all services and all programmes concerning development from a district level at the top to a taluka

level and from a taluka level to a gram or village level at the grass roots. The underlying idea is that people - the local rural community - should learn to think of their own needs in terms of maintenance as well as development, engender initiative to make planned co-operative efforts to realise these needs, cultivate ability to raise the needed financial and manpower resources to fulfil their articulated needs, formulate plans of programmes according to their financial resources and ability and implement them methodically and effectively so that their advancement is achieved in the field of social change, economic growth, better health, better housing, better transport and communication facilities and above all in better educated community. The focus is on the improvement and development of rural communities in agricultural production, rural industries, transport and communication, health and sanitation, adult literacy and social education and universal primary education for all children in the age-group of 6-14. It is assumed that with the spread of a minimum primary education of seven to eight years among all school-going children, and as a result of people's experiences to manage their own developmental tasks under the guidance of block development experts and village level workers, the community as a whole will be able to develop "its capacity and natural inclination and wisdom and thus take practical measures to realise people's expectations, aspirations and ambitions of progress and development in all matters that affect their well-being."⁷

The Panchayati Raj, as stated earlier, functions at three levels, viz. the village, ^{the} taluka and the district. The Gram Panchayat forms the base, and above it the Taluka Panchayat and at the top, the District Panchayat are all organically linked up among themselves. They all have a focus on democratic decentralisation and development. The Planning Commission for the Second Five-Year Plan had stressed the need for creating, within the district, a well organized democratic structure of administration, in which Village Panchayats ^{would} be organically linked with the popular organization at the higher level. The Planning Commission observed "In such a structure, the functions of the popular body would include the entire general administration and development, other than such functions as law and order, administration of justice and certain functions pertaining to revenue administration."^{7A}

The Planning Commission for the Second Plan stressed the idea that the democratic institutions at all the three levels - village, taluka and district - should be organically linked up. Gandhiji, in an article published in his Harijan in 1946 had clarified the concept of organically linked up popular institutions. He wrote:

"In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex oceanic circle, whose centre will be the individual, always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance, but ever humble, sharing the majority of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units. Therefore, the outer-most circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle, but

will give strength to all within and will derive its own strength from it."8

This idea of organically linked up tiers is conspicuous in the concept of the Panchayati Raj. The Village Panchayat has emerged as the base, because India is a country of about 5.67 lakhs of villages wherein, of India's total population of 547.9 million, 80.1 percent live.⁹ The higher institution above the village level is the Taluka Panchayat which is to be constituted through the Village Panchayat and the highest institution above the Taluka Panchayat is the Jilla Panchayat (District Council) which is to be constituted through the lower Taluka Panchayat institutions within a district.

As stated earlier, at the village level, Village Panchayats had existed from distant past in certain categories of villages. At the time of the creation of Gujarat State, in 1960, villages and towns having a population upto 10,000 had Village Panchayats. Later on, as previously noted, Village Panchayats came to be established for any local area comprising of a revenue village or a group of revenue villages or hamlets, the population of which is not ordinarily less than 500 and not more than 10,000. Similarly, a Nagar Panchayat is established for any local area of a revenue village or group of revenue villages or hamlets the population of which is more than 10,000 but not exceeding 20,000.

The Village Panchayats and the Nagar Panchayats constitute the first tier in the structural organization of the Panchayati Raj. For every gram, a Gram Sabha is constituted. It consists of all adult residents of the gram. The Gram Sabha is now a statutory body. It presents direct democracy at the individual village level. It meets at least twice every year to consider the budget, programme and progress of the Gram Panchayat. The constitution of democratic committees at the village level is voluntary. In the Nagar Panchayat only two committees, one Executive and the other Production, are compulsory. The Voluntary Committees in Nagar Panchayats cannot be more than 3 in number. If Gram Panchayats and Nagar Panchayats have each its Education Committee, it is of a discretionary nature. For a group of grams and for each Nagar a Nyaya Panchayat (Judicial Council) is constituted. Similarly, Conciliation Panchas consisting of three members are also constituted for each gram/Nagar. Such is the general format of a Panchayat at the grass root level.

As far as the administration of education is concerned, at the village level, some powers and responsibilities in respect of management of only primary education are assigned to the Village Panchayat. But all Village Panchayats do not have Education Committees. So, the assigned functions in the field of primary education are discharged mostly by the Gram Panchayat. The Gujarat Panchayats Act, 1961 (as amended upto 30th November, 1973)

has vested following duties in the Gram/Nagar Panchayats in the sphere of education.¹⁰:

- (a) To spread education;
- (b) To assist the introduction of compulsory primary education as planned by the State;
- (c) To provide land for constructing school buildings,
- (d) To make available to local primary schools necessary equipment - instructional aids and material;
- (e) To make provision for pre-primary education and child-welfare services;
- (f) To undertake repairs and maintenance of school buildings;
- (g) To maintain school funds;
- (h) To offer financial assistance to needy students;
- (i) To arrange for celebration of school functions and festivals;
- (j) To arrange cultural programmes for the purpose of popular education;
- (k) To make provision, if possible, for light meals for school children;
- (l) To establish, construct and maintain secondary schools.

The Gram/Nagar Panchayats are also charged, under the Act, with the duties of promotion of social and moral welfare of the local village community, removal of untouchability, ^{and}amelioration of the condition of the backward classes among the local community. These steps are helpful in spreading education because they create necessary conditions and climate for the communities of scheduled tribes, castes and other economically

and socially backward communities to feel confident to participate in the educational programmes and activities provided in the village primary school. It has been stipulated that for some years at least the Gram Panchayats and Nagar Panchayats would have responsibility primarily in the field of primary education. But in the near future they will also develop capacity and resources to bear responsibility in the field of secondary education as well, as the aspirations of the rural communities are fast transcending the limits of primary education, and an appreciable number of primary educated children from the villages now join high schools. These rural young boys and girls, after passing the terminal secondary stage examination, viz. the S.S.C. join even colleges and university departments.

Above the tier of Village/Nagar Panchayat, there stands the intermediate tier of Taluka Panchayat. In Gujarat, the Taluka has always been an important unit of administration. Ever since the Development Blocks came into existence in India since the Community Development and National Service Schemes were started in 1952, the tempo of community development has gone on increasing and intensifying. A Community Development Block now generally covers 100 villages with an area of 400-500 sq. miles and a population of 60,000 to 70,000.¹¹ The Balwantrao Mehta Committee (1958) had recommended the establishment of a democratic body at the block level as a second tier between the village and the district. In Gujarat State, the average population of a taluka/

mahal is between 60,000 and 70,000.¹² The Rasiklal Parikh Committee has recommended that a Taluka/Mahal should be accepted as a proper unit and level after the village level for the establishment of the intermediate level of Panchayat, "Since all the advantages of taking a Development Block as a Unit are also available if the taluka is taken as a unit and further the taluka is an important administrative unit already."¹³

In Gujarat State, as indicated earlier, a Taluka Panchayat has been constituted for every revenue taluka excluding the municipal area. On the Taluka Panchayat, besides some co-opted and associate members, all the Sarpanchas of Gram Panchayats and Chairmen of Nagar Panchayats situated within the taluka are represented. This entails an organic relationship with all the Gram Panchayats and Nagar Panchayats of the Taluka and establishes a channel of communication between the Panchayat bodies at the base (gram/nagar) and at the Taluka.

A Taluka Panchayat has two compulsory Committees, viz., Executive Committee and Production Committee. The Panchayat has discretion to constitute about five other committees on a voluntary basis. Education was, formerly, one of these voluntary committees but the recent trend, generated as a result of actual experiences of the functioning of the Taluka level Education Committee, in the past, has not been favourable to setting up Taluka Panchayat Education Committees. The Amendment Act of 1968 has actually abolished Education Committee of Taluka Panchayats.

A Taluka Development Officer works as the Chief Executive Authority in the Taluka Panchayat. There are also Extension Officers in major areas of development. There is one such Extension Officer for primary education also. All primary school teachers in the Panchayat primary schools within the Taluka are servants of the particular Taluka Panchayat. It should be noted here that all Gram Panchayats established within a Taluka are subordinate to the Taluka Panchayat which has power to scrutinise their budget and supervise their working.

The main reason for the abolition of the Education Committee was that its leadership did not function with a clean slate in respect of its intention and behaviour to primary school teachers. Complaints began to flow from the community of primary teachers that the authority wielded by the President and other powerful members of the Taluka Education Committee in respect of teachers' transfer was abused by them and the teacher community was very much and quite often harassed. They began to voice an incessant and powerful demand for the abolition of the Taluka Education Committee. As can be seen from the Report of the Jadavji Mody Committee on the Reorganisation of the Panchayati Raj bodies¹⁴ in Gujarat (1968) and from the statement of the Gujarat State Primary Teachers' Association submitted to the Zeenabhai Darji High Power Committee on the Panchayati Raj¹⁵ (1973) that the Education Committee had miserably failed to create any confidence in the community of primary school teachers about its bonafides

and role in the development of primary education. The Jadavji Modi Committee had to recommend the abolition of the Taluka Education Committees, and, therefore, they came to be abolished from 1st April, 1968. The functions and duties formerly discharged by the Taluka Panchayat Education Committee were transferred to the Present parent body, i.e the Taluka Panchayat itself. Under the Amended Act, Gujarat Panchayats Act, 1973, the Taluka Panchayat has been entrusted with the following duties and responsibilities:¹⁶

- (a) To assist the Taluka Panchayat in conducting and revising educational surveys and in preparing and implementing Five Year Plan for development of primary education and all other educational activities entrusted to it.
- (b) To provide adequate accommodation and equipment for primary schools.
- (c) To open, with the sanction of the District Panchayat, new primary schools.
- (d) To determine the exact location of primary schools.
- (e) To supervise the working of all primary schools and of such other educational institutions under the control of the District Panchayat as that Panchayat may decide from time to time.
- (f) To exercise such powers over the staff employed in primary schools and other educational institutions under the control of the District Panchayat as may be delegated to it from time to time.
- (g) To supervise the activities of the Gram Panchayats and Nagar Panchayats within the jurisdiction of the Taluka Panchayats, to ensure that each such Panchayat pays its contribution to the school funds, and to bring cases of default to the notice of the Educational Inspector of the District and generally guide them and improve

the primary school or schools in their charge.

- (h) To be responsible for the enforcement of compulsory primary education.
- (i) To determine, on the recommendation of the competent officer of the District Panchayat, the distance measured according to the nearest road between an approved school and the residence of the child for the purpose of his compulsory enrolment in a primary school and to grant him, on the recommendation of the aforesaid competent officer, exemption from attending an approved school to a child who is receiving instruction otherwise than in an approved school.
- (j) To grant sanction to the changes in the dates of birth and the names of pupils attending primary schools.
- (k) To construct new buildings for primary schools and to carry out special repairs.
- (l) To sanction grants-in-aid to Gram Panchayats and Nagar Panchayats for their Standing Committee on education.
- (m) To inform, and, if necessary, to advise the District Panchayat, generally on all matters connected with primary education and other educational activities undertaken by the District Panchayat in the Taluka.
- (n) To exercise such other powers and to perform such other duties as may be delegated to it by the District Panchayat from time to time.
- (o) To hire buildings for primary schools on reasonable rent, which should be certified by the competent authority.
- (p) To undertake supervision of individual primary school.
- (q) To ensure the enforcement of the State law on compulsory education.

It would, thus, be seen that at the level of Taluka Panchayat some important functions in respect of administration of primary education within the Taluka are laid down in the Gujarat Panchayats

Act as amended upto 30th November, 1973. It is charged with the duty of rendering all possible assistance in conducting and revising educational surveys which are periodically undertaken by the State Education Department at the behest of and under the guidance of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (the NCERT), New Delhi. It has also responsibility in preparing Taluka Educational Five Year Plans and in implementing them when it is adopted by government. In order to accelerate the programme of expansion and development of primary education in each Taluka, it is necessary that universal provision of primary schools be made and schools be equipped adequately with proper equipment, as well as needed instructional aids and material. In this respect, three distinct tasks are to be performed. These tasks are : to determine the exact location of primary schools to improve their availability at a reasonable distance of one mile from the residence of every child of the compulsory school age, to find and provide land and accommodation for new primary schools, to construct new school buildings, or to hire private buildings to house primary schools, or to carry out special repairs in Panchayat school buildings and to equip these schools adequately and in time. The second group of duties of the Taluka Panchayat lies in the sphere of enforcement of the compulsory primary education law of the State in the Taluka. The third dimension of the duties of the Taluka Panchayat in education relates to the propaganda work which it should carry out for the

expansion and improvement of education in general and primary education in particular. Its fourth sphere of duties is the supervision of every individual primary school in position in the Taluka. Its fifth group of functions in the administration of primary education relates to advisement to the District Panchayat on all matters regarding primary education in the Taluka and to exercise all powers and perform all duties in education as are delegated to it by the District Panchayat. Lastly, the Taluka Panchayat is also vested with some powers over the primary school teachers under the employment of the District Panchayat. It is this last power which has become a point of dispute and a focus for teacher agitation. As teachers are controlled by their Taluka Panchayats and as their transfer is also largely influenced by the Chairman and other powerful members of the Panchayat, and as there is so much malpractice and injustice done to teachers on this score, a demand has begun to grow in volume that the administration of primary education should be separated from the Panchayati Raj.

In the Panchayat Set-up, the top tier is the Jilla Parishad or the District Panchayat. As the Taluka Panchayats are organically linked with their Gram/Nagar Panchayat, so all Taluka Panchayats are organically linked with the supreme Jilla Parishad in as much as their Chairmen are the ex-officio members of the Parishad. It is claimed that the most striking feature of Panchayati Raj in Gujarat is "Its District Panchayat constituted

for each district which has been entrusted with full executive authority with respect to the Development functions which were formerly discharged by the State Government at the District level."^{16A} It is said to be a fortunate and richer successor to the former district level bodies of District Local Board, District School Board, District Village Panchayat Mandal and District Development Board. It has added to itself a number of new important functions in the sphere of development. The District Development Officer (the DDO) is the ex-officio secretary of the District Panchayat. He acts, as observed earlier, as its Chief Executive Officer. The D.D.O. is an officer of the rank of the Collector. A District Panchayat has, on an average, 50 members who can be classified in three types, viz. Ex-officio, Elected and Associate. A District Panchayat has two types of Committees, mandatory and discretionary. The Education Committee is one of the five mandatory committees. This Panchayat is an apex body in the Panchayati Raj System. It has powers of supervision and control over the two Panchayats at the lower levels, viz., Taluka and Gram/Nagar Panchayats.

As stated above, the Jilla Parishad has a mandatory type of an Education Committee. Though this Committee is carved out of the parent District Panchayat, it is an autonomous body in the sense that it frames its own budget and for all practical purposes it is independent of the parent body.

The total membership of the Education Committee is 10 or 12 depending upon whether the total elected members of the District Panchayat are not more than 39 or ~~more~~ than 39. The Committee has on it at least one woman, one scheduled caste and one scheduled tribe members. From among the persons residing in the district two or three members are nominated by the District Panchayat to serve as members of the Education Committee, who have not less than five years teaching experience in an educational institution imparting primary, secondary, higher or vocational education. It has one more nominated member who is an educationist having a graduate degree of a statutory University and further one more person who is also an educationist having teaching experience of not less than ten years. The selected women, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe members should be at least S.S.C. passed.

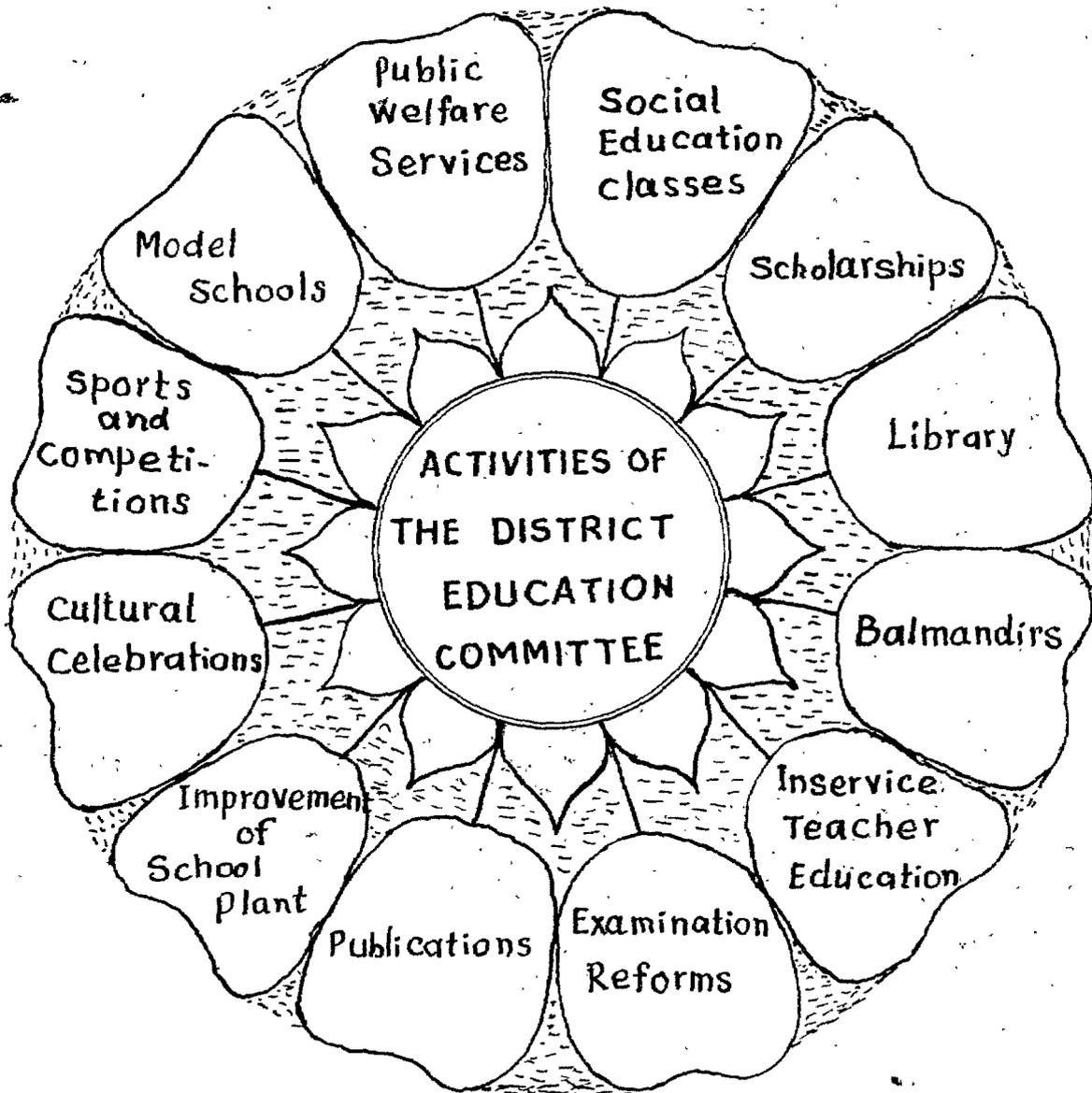
The District Education Committee has three kinds of members sitting on it, viz. (a) selected by the District Panchayat from among the qualified voters in the district, (b) elected by the Panchayat from among its own members and (c) associate members (one in number). Thus, the distinguishing feature of the composition of the District level Education Committee is that the members have high prescribed educational qualifications and a majority of them are educationists having substantial teaching experience and standing in the

professional field. This is supposed to maintain the level of functioning of the Committee at a high or satisfactory level. The term of the Education Committee is co-extensive with the term of the District Panchayat.

Under the Panchayat Act, the District Education Committee is vested with the following duties and responsibilities:¹⁷

- (a) To undertake all educational activities entrusted to it;
- (b) To prepare five year plans of education in the district within the frame-work of the national policy and the national plan;
- (c) To conduct survey and make evaluation of educational activities;
- (d) To distribute Government aid in regard to primary education between the taluka panchayats;
- (e) To recognise private educational institutions within its area;
- (f) To recommend the courses of study;
- (g) To select text-books;
- (h) To implement any programme in regard to secondary education that may be entrusted to it by the State Government;
- (i) To undertake inspection of primary schools managed by the Taluka Panchayats and to conduct their examinations;
- (j) To accept and manage educational funds;
- (k) To assist, encourage, and guide all educational activities in the district;

DISTRICT EDUCATION COMMITTEE
ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMMES 1973.



- (1) To organise camps, conferences, and gatherings of all members, Sarpanchas of Gram Panchayats, Chairmen of Nagar Panchayats, Presidents of Taluka Panchayats and other Panchas in the district.

It will be seen from the above that the Education Committee is vested with educational planning at the district level. This is in consonance with recent trends which favour exercises in five year planning to be begun at the district level. Such an exercise in educational planning makes it necessary to conduct educational survey and make evaluation of the educational activities currently in operation in the district. This Committee performs the function of control within the district in respect of recognition of private primary schools, implementation of prescribed courses of studies and selection of textbooks out of those approved by the State School Textbook Board. It performs two other important duties, one of inspection of primary schools managed by each Taluka Panchayat within the district and to conduct their (schools') Examinations. It is entirely responsible for the management of its Education Funds. Lastly, it assists, encourages and guides all educational activities including adult and social education in the district.

In the Panchayati Raj administration of primary education, some important functions are discharged at the district level. For instance, the recruitment of all primary school

teachers is done by a statutory Staff Selection Committee constituted at the district level. There is also a two man Tribunal at the district level, consisting of the District Education Officer and the Chairman of the District Education Committee, to which any person in the service of the District Panchayat aggrieved by an order of dismissal, removal or any other disciplinary action taken against him by the Administrative officer of the Education Committee may submit an appeal. There is also a district level Transfer Committee which decides all questions regarding transfer of primary school teachers of the District Panchayat. Supervision of schools, supply of equipment and construction of school buildings are more conveniently and more effectively done from the Taluka than from the district level. Similarly, the provision of light meals for school children, free supply of uniforms, text-books and writing materials to children of economically poor parents is better done at the Gram/Nagar level. The enforcement of provisions of the State law on compulsory primary education is better done at the levels of Gram/Nagar Panchayat and the Taluka Panchayat rather than at the district level.

Such is broadly the Panchayati Raj administrative organization and functioning in the sphere of primary education.

1.3 IDEOLOGY OF DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALISATION IN ADMINISTRATION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

The base of the Panchayati Raj is democratic decentralisation. As discussed in the previous section, the Panchayati Raj functions at the three levels of District, Taluka and Gram/Nagar. Democratic decentralisation envisages that rural communities at the Gram/Nagar should have freedom to solve their own local problems through a system of decentralised administration. This system should evoke local interest, local enthusiasm and local financial support for piloting all programmes of community developments in all the major sectors. Decentralisation would mean freedom of initiative for all local level units of administration, enkindling of local enthusiasm to fight against possible odds and secure the needed development, pooling together the resources of the local manpower and finance and raising some new such resources to fulfil the needs of development. It would also mean that people would apply their minds seriously and intensively to find out solution to their problems. In order to solve the problems of local community, the people should have representation on their administrative bodies; they should have freedom to elect their leader and an executive under him; this executive should have power of decision-making and financial support to implement the programmes of development prepared by them.

Conceptually, decentralization means delegation of power, responsibility, decision-making and resources from a higher body to a lower body or bodies. When the scheme of development and social welfare are concentrated in the Central Government and a State Government, these schemes do not become the schemes of the people. The communities for which the schemes are intended do not understand them and do not feel enthusiastic about them. Their identification with the development programmes architected under schemes, does not occur. Therefore, these centralised schemes and programmes of development do not succeed to the desired extent. In order that schemes of development and welfare of people succeed in any government set-up, it is necessary that the schemes become people's own schemes. People's representatives should have a voice and a hand in the framing and executing these schemes. It will be only then possible to generate the necessary initiative, interest, and identification of people with all these development tasks.

The Balwantrai Mehta Committee developed a fine rationale for democratic decentralisation of administration of schemes and programmes of development in the following words :

"While operating through the people's local organizations, the programme simultaneously strengthens the foundations of democracy on which our Constitution stands by making the villager understand position in this vast democracy. Thus, community development and democracy progress through and strengthen each other. The community projects are of vital importance not so much for material achievement that they would bring about, but much more so, because they seem to build up the community and the individual and to make up the latter the builder of his own village centres and of India in the larger sense. 18"

The concept of democratic decentralization has some important facets or dimensions. Firstly, it means that there should be democratically operated popular administrative bodies at the Gram/Nagar, Taluka or Block and District level. Secondly, the various programmes of improvement and development of rural communities should be prepared through the participation of people's representatives, executed through the local people's cooperation and where possible through the local people's own initiative. The securing of active help and co-operation of people in all development programmes of local communities should be done by kindling their enthusiasm.

Another important rationale for democratic decentralization is that the democratic government operating over large areas through its machinery cannot adequately appreciate local needs and circumstances.

"It is necessary that there should be a devolution of power and that such power be exercised and such machinery controlled and directed by popular representatives of the local area".19

In terms of administrative tiers, democratic decentralization would mean setting up popular institutions at the Gram/Nagar, Taluka and District levels. It would also mean strengthening and vitalising the Gram Panchayat at village level, making it an important unit for decentralising administration and powers, and giving to it necessary means, and powers, facilities and resources. It also means setting up at the Taluka or Block level a statutory democratic institution at an intermediate level between village and district. This institution will be a Taluka Panchayat which will exercise powers and shoulder the responsibilities for the execution of development programmes in the rural areas in a compact and effective way. It can also take the place of the Block Development Committee and carry on the development programmes further without disrupting the continuity of its activities.

There would be at the top of the Panchayati Raj structure a District Panchayat functioning at the district level. It would be a supervisory and coordinating body. It will have administrative and, to some extent, controlling power. The State Government will devolve, in a progressively larger

measure, the powers exercised by it through its district level officers. But one point still remains important.

"Even though several duties and responsibilities may be delegated from the district to lower levels as a result of administrative decentralization, there will remain a number of important duties and responsibilities at the district level." 20

The objectives of democratic decentralized institutions in the Panchayati Raj system are outlined in the following paragraph in the Report of the Democratic Decentralization Committee of the Gujarat State (1960).

"That people should begin to think of their needs, cultivate ability to raise resources necessary to fulfil their needs, formulate necessary programmes according to their financial resources, ability and limitations for their economic and social advancement, implement these programmes efficiently on the strength of their capacity and natural inclinations and wisdom, and thus take practical measures to realise their expectations, aspirations and ambitions of progress and development." 21

Applying these ideas to the administration of primary education within a district, the Gram Panchayat would be a very important base of this structure. It will assume responsibility for bringing the primary school in close association with the local community, and thus enable it to be a centre of local community. It will play an important role in providing accommodation and equipment for the local primary school. It will undertake current repairs, special repairs and even construction of new school buildings as

directed by the Taluka Panchayat. It will also assume responsibility for providing for the welfare of the children attending local primary schools. It will be able to discharge effectively two important functions, viz. exercising supervision over the local primary schools and enforcement of compulsory attendance in the village in accordance with the State law on compulsory primary education. It will strive to provide play-grounds and school gardens and maintain them. The arrangement for drinking water and other necessary amenities required by school children will be made by it. Among the provisions for school children welfare which the Gram Panchayat can do well are mid-day meals for the poor and under-nourished children, free supply of school uniforms to them and organize excursions, social and cultural programmes and celebrate school functions and national festivals. Some of these applications had already been indicated earlier.

The focus in the assignment of executive functions in primary education at the Gram Panchayat level is that only simple and day-to-day duties and responsibilities which require initiative of the local community should be entrusted at the lower level which would result in a close association of the local community with the school. But more extremely difficult and complex matters should be progressively assigned at intermediary and top levels. The over-riding

principle should be the allocation of executive functions appropriate to their own level of complexity, importance, resources and productivity.

At the Taluka Panchayat level, such executive functions should be assigned as can be conveniently performed at this level. The basic thinking that had been put forward emphatically was that the block or taluka should be adopted as the fundamental unit for the administration of primary education. However, some functions to be discharged at the Taluka or Block level like supply of equipments can be jointly performed at the Village Panchayat and the Taluka/Block Panchayat levels. The initiative will be of the Village Panchayat; assistance, direction, coordination and supervision will be exercised by the Taluka/Block Panchayat. Functions such as construction of school buildings, supply of equipment and of supervision of primary schools should go to the Block or Taluka level. The centralisation of executive functions at the district level could be reduced by transferring some functions at the Taluka Panchayat or Block level which can better be discharged at that level.

The following comments regarding the supervision functions to be performed at the Taluka/Block level need to be noted:

"The function relating to the supervision of primary schools and other educational institutions is very important. It is practically impossible at present for the District School Committees or Officers to supervise efficiently the work of every individual school. It is obvious that the supervision, to be really effective, must have a personal element in the sense that the Officer entrusted with supervision must be in a position to maintain a personal contact with the persons or institutions whose work is to be supervised. At present, the magnitude of primary education has grown to such an extent that it is impossible either for the Chairman or the members of the District School Committees or for its Chief Executive Officer to maintain any personal contact with individual primary schools and their head masters and teachers."22

It might be said that in discharging some functions like construction of school buildings, purchase of school equipment, the Taluka Panchayat will assist and supervise the work of the Gram Panchayats, and in matters which cannot be taken up by the Gram Panchayats, such as the supply of costlier types of equipment to primary schools, the Taluka Panchayat would bear the responsibility. The responsibility for enforcement of the State law on compulsory primary education will also be shared at the Village and Taluka levels. Administrative matters relating to pupils such as special cases of admission or grant of accelerated promotions should be delegated at the Taluka/Block level. The grant-in-aid to Gram Panchayats for education will be sanctioned by the Taluka level Panchayat.

The District Panchayat will have an Education Committee. It has to be a mandatory Committee. All such functions which affect the district as a whole and which necessitate an overall approach, policy, uniformity, maintenance of standards, general approach to development tasks or programmes should be performed from the District level. Educational planning is a very vital undertaking and it should be delegated to the District Education Committee, which will assist in preparing District Five Year Plans with the help of feedback and assistance of Taluka/Block Panchayats and the latter with the help and feedback from their respective Gram Panchayats.

Functions may be assigned at the District level Panchayati Raj popular institution to assume responsibilities for pre-primary education in the areas inhabited by tribal people, secondary schools in rural areas where private efforts are not forthcoming in an adequate measure, providing hostels for poor and deserving pupils from rural areas, continuing education for the children of the age-group 11-14, social education classes as well as libraries in rural areas, etc.

The recruitment of primary school teachers, their transfer, their promotion, disciplinary actions against them and tribunal for appeal against grievances or injustice can better be performed at the district level than at the other

two lower levels. As the recruitment and control of all the staff (including the staff of the Taluka School Committees or Taluka Panchayat for primary education) are governed by the general orders of the State Government, it is very much necessary that this function is delegated at the district level. Educational propaganda and publication of annual reports of progress are more appropriate at the district level. It is from this level that publicity could be given to the progress already achieved and highlighting the issues for which special efforts need to be done.

"If the good work done by the Village Committees and Taluka/Block Committees is systematically brought to the notice of the people, it may lead to a healthy competition which would be of great benefit to the cause of education".²³

Financial assistance to needy (poor) but talented school children and to girls in the form of scholarships, etc. should be performed by the District Education Committee within the areas of its jurisdiction.

Since all residuary functions in respect of primary education vest in the State Government, it is necessary to include a provision in the duties and responsibilities to be delegated at District Panchayat level that the Education Committee will discharge such functions as may be delegated to it from time to time by the State Government.

This is broadly the pattern of delegation of powers and responsibilities in the administration of primary education which is an application of democratic decentralisation effected through the Panchayati Raj.

1.4 ACHIEVEMENTS OF PANCHAYATI RAJ IN GUJARAT STATE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

As stated earlier, the Gujarat Panchayats Act, 1961, came into operation in 1963. Efforts soon began to implement the objectives of the Panchayati Raj in primary education. Under these objectives, it was stipulated that (a) Primary education will be made universal in the age-group 6-11 in the first instance and in the age-group 11-14 covering the age range of 6-14 subsequently; (b) local village communities will come to be more closely associated with the working of the local village primary school; (c) interest for sending their sons and daughters of the compulsory education age-group to the neighbouring primary school will come to be evoked among scheduled caste and scheduled tribe sections of population; (d) girls' primary education will begin to expand at a much faster rate than was the case in the pre-Panchayati Raj administration; (e) Primary schools will begin to have better school buildings, adequate equipment and instructional aids and materials, and repairs needed to school buildings will be speedier attended to (LP) reforms introduced for all children, but particularly for children

of economically backward parents; (g) primary school teachers will have better security of job, better service conditions, more job satisfaction, improved teacher morale and better motivation and stimulating climate for work; (h) the achievement index of primary schools in terms of better teaching-learning would result; (i) there would be substantial fall in the rate of pupil dropouts and stagnation; (j) the literacy index of rural population will increase.

A decade has passed since the introduction of the Panchayati Raj in Gujarat State. It is, therefore, necessary to take a stock of achievements and failures of the Panchayati Raj in perspective of its objectives.

There are some major difficulties in attempting to evaluate the outputs of the Panchayati Raj in the administration of primary education in the State. Firstly, no comprehensive data about the dimensions of the Panchayati Raj functioning in spheres (a) to (j) listed above are available. Secondly, such an evaluation has not been attempted by State Government and the statements that are being made from State Ministers and officials of the State Government often do not present objective and propaganda-free dependable facts. Researches on the role of the Panchayati Raj in education in Gujarat State are yet to come - only one bold and pioneering attempt has been made in this direction, viz. the doctoral research work done by

Dr. H.R. Joshi²⁴ of Surat in the field, but limited to the region of South Gujarat.

Therefore, the appraisal of achievement and failure of the role of the Panchayati Raj in primary education in Gujarat can only be made here on broad general lines and it will be more of suggestive type than of prescriptive or conclusive nature. Such a deep appraisal will come at a later stage when researches would be done in North, South, East and West (Saurashtra and Kutch Districts) regions of Gujarat State on the operation of the Panchayati Raj systems in the administration of primary education.

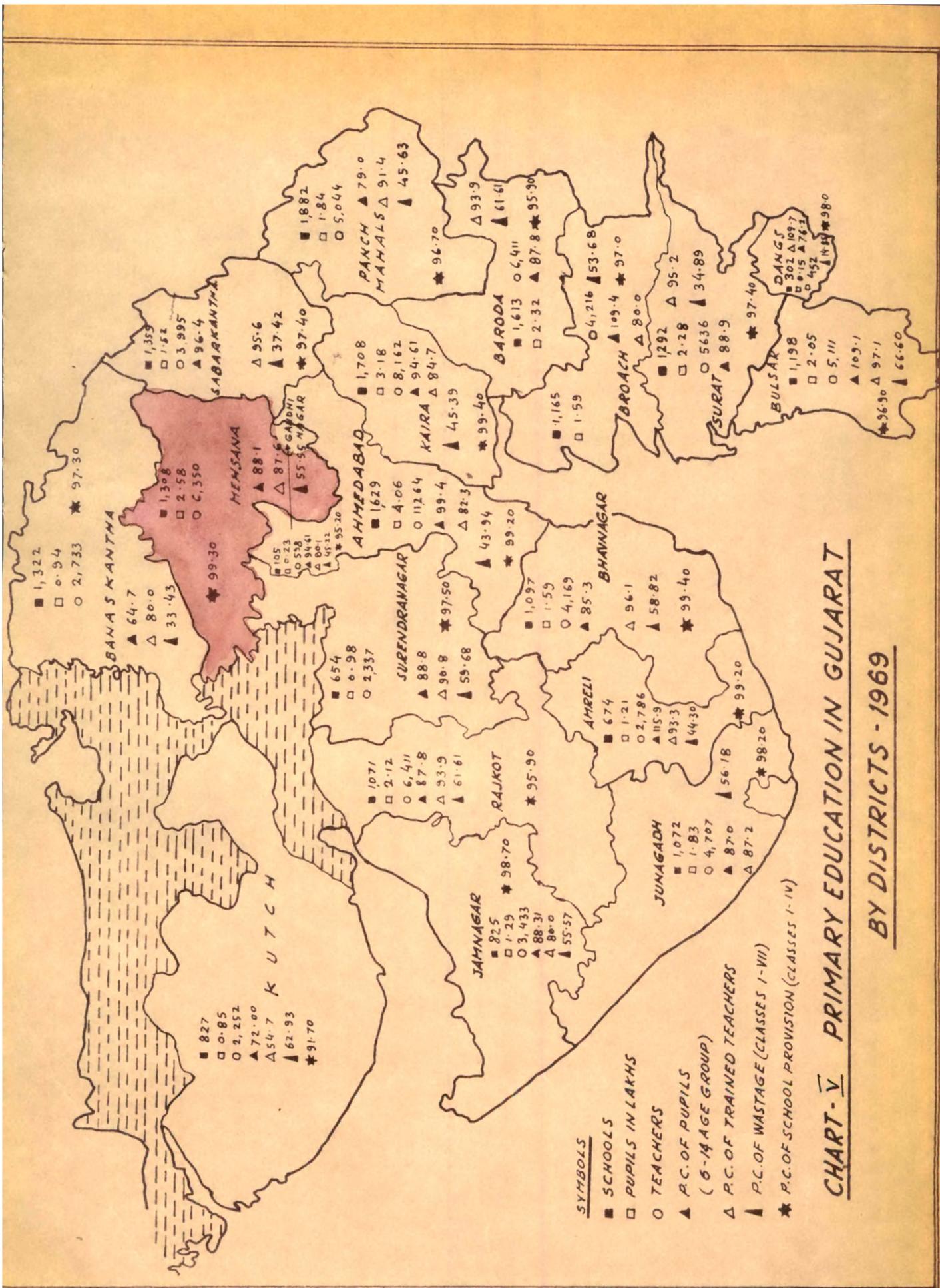
(a) Expansion

The State of Gujarat came into existence in 1960. At the time of the formation of the State²⁵ the percentage of enrolment in lower primary schools to the total population of school-going children was only 62.6. There was a total of 17,527 primary schools in the State. Average area served by a primary school was 4.1 sq. miles, and the average population served by the school was 928 heads of population. There were 1,549 school-less villages forming 8.2 percent of the total villages.

In December 1963, the report of the Education Survey in Gujarat State as a part of the Second All India Educational

Survey was published. The findings of this Educational Survey were extremely encouraging in respect of a breakthrough effected in the expansion of primary education. It was found from the Survey that 97.7 percent of inhabitations in Gujarat State have primary school facilities for children of the age-group 6-11 either in their own habitations or within one mile walking distance from the residence of every school-going child in the State. This was the position in Gujarat in 1965. By 1973, school facilities have been created in almost all villages. The news reported from time to time in the local Gujarati Press support the contention that in Gujarat State, almost the entire population has primary school facilities either locally or within one mile walking distance from the residence of a child of the age-group 6-11. In 1971, nearly 91 percent of children of the age-group 6-10 were reported to have enrolled themselves in primary schools. A recent claim made by the official agency of the State Government²⁶ is that the goal of universal primary education in the age group of 6-10 has been almost achieved in the State. However, one cannot conclude that this achievement was either due to the introduction of the Panchayati Raj System or due to official efforts under the Scheme of Five-Year Plans.

The Second Gujarat Education Survey had also shown that in 1965, 91.7 percent of the population had upper primary



SYMBOLS

- SCHOOLS
- PUPILS IN LAKHS
- TEACHERS
- ▲ P.C. OF PUPILS (6-14 AGE GROUP)
- △ P.C. OF TRAINED TEACHERS
- ▴ P.C. OF WASTAGE (CLASSES I-VII)
- ★ P.C. OF SCHOOL PROVISION (CLASSES I-IV)

CHART-V PRIMARY EDUCATION IN GUJARAT

BY DISTRICTS - 1969

school facilities either in their own habitations or within three miles' walking distance from the residence of every child of the age-group 11-13 was 36.7 percent. This proportion increased to 45 percent in 1971, with a range from 67.0 percent to 14.1 percent.^{26A}

Thus considerable expansion of primary education facilities and enrolment has taken place in the period after the introduction of the Panchayati Raj. In 1970-71 the enrolment in the age-group 6-10 was 84.4 percent of the total population of the school-going children in that age-group. But, as stated by the authors of "Perspective Plan of Gujarat 1974-1984", by 1980-81, the enrolment of 31.60 lakhs in classes I to V will have to be increased to 48.18 lakhs, i.e. 100 percent of the population in the age-group.²⁷ They further observed that "in the decade 1961-71, the average increase in the enrolment in classes I to V was 1.13 lakhs. This will have to be increased in the decade 1971-81, to an average increase of 1.5 lakhs. The total effort for expansion of primary education at this stage, therefore, will have to be stepped up by about 50 percent"²⁸. Thus, the task before the Panchayati Raj is difficult and challenging. It also implies that the Panchayati Raj bodies have met with only partial success in respect of the fulfilment of the constitutional directive on universal compulsory primary education at the lower primary school stage.

As regards the enrolment of the age-group 11-13, much could not be achieved under the Panchayati Raj administration, though a good deal of expansion did take place at this stage. The figures given in the "Perspective Plan Gujarat State: 1974-1984" give some idea of the impact of the administration by the Panchayati Raj on the expansion of primary education, though it cannot be definitely said that the expansion was solely due to the efforts of the Panchayati Raj popular bodies at Gram and Taluka levels. In 1970-71, the enrolment in classes V to VII was 8.99 lakhs or 45 percent of the total population in the age-group 11-13 years. It is necessary to raise this enrolment figures to 25.78 lakhs by 1980-81 if universal primary education is to be achieved in Gujarat State by 1980-81.²⁹ The special efforts need to be made in the Panchayati Raj system, and it is presumed that it can be done better under that system, to increase substantially and speedily the enrolment of school-going children in the weaker sections of the society namely, the girls, the Harijans, the Untouchables and the aboriginal tribes. The Planners have observed :

"The main factor for low enrolment in several districts has been due to lower enrolment of girls and also lower enrolment of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and lower enrolment from economically backward classes and nomadic and migrating population. The second factor has been the degree of wastage and stagnation at different levels of primary education. The third factor is the lack of extending physical facilities, providing teachers, etc. owing to special

backwardness of the areas. For example, in very small villages, a school exists between a groupm of villages and such schools are mostly one-teacher schools. This position is responsible for low enrolment as well as wastage and stagnation on account of absence of the teacher or lack of attention by him. The next factor is the absence of residential quarters for the teachers. The need for residential quarters for teachers is particularly greater in backward or remote villages where normally other residential facilities are not available. For want of residential accommodation, teachers are not prepared to go to such schools or at least good teachers are unwilling to go. This also results in low enrolment and wastage and stagnation".30

This is an excerpt from an official document of the Gujarat Government. It reveals what has not been done satisfactorily in primary education in the Panchayati Raj set-up. Insufficient efforts to step up enrolment of girls, of children of the Harijans and of other socially and economically backward classes, provided an evidence to the fact that the Panchayati Raj popular institutions of Gram/ Nagar Panchayats have not been able to do what they should have done. The high rate of wastage and stagnation in primary schools of Gujarat State also shows that the Panchayati Raj bodies have not been able to do enough to raise the quality of instruction, motivate teachers and school children sufficiently. Had these been done, the results would have been more encouraging. The wastage in Gujarat in lower primary schools is about 60 percent; in the entire seven year stage of primary education covering classes I to

VII, it is 78 percent³¹. This is a sad reflection on the effectiveness of popular democratic bodies at Gram/Nagar and Taluka levels. It casts serious doubts about the effectiveness of the system.

It was stipulated that the Gram/Nagar Panchayats would be able to provide residential accommodation for local primary school teachers, especially to those who belong to the Harijan Class and to women. The achievement has been, as could be seen from the excerpt cited from the "Gujarat State Perspective Plan 1974-1984" low and disheartening.

One more point needs to be noted. In the matter of improving teacher morale and creating among the community of primary school teachers, a sense of security and a feeling of comfort and satisfaction, the Panchayati Raj bodies seemed to have failed badly. The evidence to support this observation is available in the current Gujarati Press, where instances of harassment done to primary school teachers by members of Panchayati Bodies are frequently reported. Effecting inconvenient transfer of primary teachers is also a frequently resorted weapon of harassment and persecution of primary school teachers in the Panchayat bodies. The resentment of the community of primary school teachers at some of the acts of Panchayati Raj reached such a pitch of intensity in 1973, that the Gujarat State Primary School Teachers Association came out with a strong statement that

the statutory powers given to Panchayati Raj bodies in respect of primary education under the Gujarat Panchayats Act, 1961 should be withdrawn³² and a new administrative set-up for it should be created.

The following passage that appeared in an article by an ex-member of a District Panchayati Raj Education Committee is equally revealing and shocking :

"I was a member of one District Panchayat Education Committee for full five years. As I belonged to the education field, I was very enthusiastic about doing some concrete work in education through the district through the Education Committee. I felt that if I get an opportunity to voice and use my experiences in education in the Education Committee, I would be able to contribute to the improvement of standards in rural primary schools. But I say with utmost shock and sorrow that the Chairman of the Education Committee cared not even a bit for primary education and for people. He was both a farmer and a businessman. His ambition was to enter the State legislature, but as he could not be given a party ticket to fight the election to the State Vidhan Sabha, when the Panchayati Raj came to be introduced, he was accommodated in the District Education Committee. I often suggested to him to convene Education Committee's meetings to deliberate upon issues and needs of primary education in the district, but he will not include in the Committee's agenda educational matters. Whenever I went to his place to confer with him on educational matters, I found him to be surrounded by many members of his regular "Darbar". A lot of talk used to take place at these informal "home meetings", but they were not about education but about transfer of primary school teachers. He never convened meetings of the Education Committee in time and regularly. Officially the Committee was called "Education Committee" but it talked about things non-educational!"³³

Such accounts of the functioning of Education Committees in the Panchayati Raj appear quite often in the public press. It is often alleged that in the Panchayati Raj bodies, there is often dominance of rich and reactionary leaders; dirty politics have vitiated the organizational climate, With the infiltration of unhealthy politics have also entered communalism, casteism, and factions; nepotism and corruption are rampant; bribery has become the order of the day; there is a dearth of conscientious, selfless and skilled workers; bureaucracy marks the official attitude, approach and policy; the higher cadre of government officers does not visit rural areas frequently and there is much paper work than actual developmental work.³⁴

These are some of the evidences available on the working of the Panchayati Raj systems in the field of primary education. Not that nothing has been achieved through the experiment of democratic decentralisation. But not enough has been achieved to show that the high hopes and expectations that were entertained when this great experiment was launched in Gujarat in 1963 have been satisfactorily realised.

Dr. H.R. Joshi's³⁵ observation based on his research findings, of functioning of the Panchayat bodies in education throws some light on the success or otherwise of this great experiment in democratic decentralised administra-

tion of community services.

- (a) It becomes very difficult for democratic decentralised pattern of administration to function when there is such a large scale illiteracy among the people. The literacy percentages in the districts of Gujarat^{at} range from 7.74 percent in the Dang to 48.75 percent in the Ahmedabad District, the all Gujarat literacy figures being 35.70 percent.
- (b) Members on the Panchayati Raj bodies are elected not on their merits and past records of selfless public service, but on the basis of caste and community and on the basis of their political affiliations.
- (c) The procedures of election of leaders leave much to be desired. Caste is at work with a greater force in the election of Gram Panchayat members and their leaders.
- (d) The Education Committees do not function systematically, regularly, vigorously and effectively.
- (e) There are the evil effects of the participation of the National and State level political parties in Panchayati elections. It is they which deteriorate the standards and tone of election.

- (f) Decentralisation of executive authority is not implemented effectively.
- (g) At the Gram/Nagar level, not much association of the local community with the local primary school has been effected. The result is little initiative, little local interest and enthusiasm on the part of the local rural community for introducing universal and compulsory primary education of their children of the age group 6-14 years.
- (h) The Shikshan Samiti at the Taluka level, which was intended to be a basic tier, had to be discontinued after 1968, simply because that it did not function with honesty, Sincerity, self-lessly imbued with public service spirit. The abuse of the power to transfer primary teachers by the members of the Taluka Shikshan Samiti sealed its future and brought about its abolition.
- (i) The school buildings of primary schools in the matter of adequacy and quality leave much to be desired.
- (j) For the uplift of the qualitative face of primary education in Gujarat, about half the number of present number of schools need a fresh and current look and a more vigorous improvement programme.

Dr. Joshi's overall conclusion that the Panchayati Raj in education in the South Gujarat region is a mixed success gives food for thought. It means that a lot needs to be done yet.

"The findings of the research are that the weaker sections of the society even when more executive powers and resources are delegated to them, will continue to remain passive and ineffective about what transpires in the Panchayati Raj bodies because the leadership of Panchayat has failed to activate them- they have failed to win their confidence and good will. The Panchayati Raj, as a tool, medium and process to stir local identification and participation in developmental tasks has to a large extent remained a wishful thinking".³⁶.

1.5 REFORMS EFFECTED IN THE PANCHAYATI RAJ MACHINERY DURING 1963-1973

The Panchayati Raj machinery was set up in the State in 1963. In the course of a decade, its machinery had to be reorganised twice, first in 1968 and then in 1973, because it could not function effectively and fruitfully. It is important to note briefly the reforms effected in the Panchayati Raj machinery, because they were intended to make the working of the Panchayats at the Gram/Nagar, Taluka and District levels more effective and productive in terms of rural development in all the vital spheres. The reforms effected in the machinery that have implications for better administration of primary education have been as under :

- (a) District as well as Taluka Panchayats have been given authority over such area outside the area for which they are constituted for such purposes as the State Government decides.
- (b) A Nagar Panchayat is now constituted for such local area which has population range of 10,000 to 20,000 instead of the former population range of 10,000 to 30,000. Government has also now power to declare a gram as a Nagar having regard to its urban development.
- (c) Formerly, the Sarpanch of the Gram Panchayat was elected by its members from among themselves. Now he is elected by ballot by the qualified voters of the Gram Sabha from amongst themselves. This is intended to minimise the pressure of the members of the Gram Panchayat on the Sarpanch who depends for his position on their votes. He can now function much more independently than before and more in the interest of the community without being unduly pressurised by the Panchayat members.
- (d) The composition of the Panchayati Raj bodies has significantly changed during these ten years. Women have got more reserved seats on Gram Panchayat, Nagar Panchayat, Taluka Panchayat and District Panchayat. Scheduled castes and tribes are also now more firmly represented than before.

The reorganised set-up of the constitutions of the Panchayati Raj Bodies at all the three levels is likely to be helpful to the cause of education as also in other developmental tasks. It is among the women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes that the expansion of universal, compulsory, and free primary education in Gujarat State is comparatively low and slow. To speed up the drive for enrolment among these weaker sections of the local community, it is necessary that these sections are adequately represented on the popular bodies. It is the elected representatives of these sections of the society which will take live interest, special care and display sustained enthusiasm in motivating the parents to enrol their sons and daughters of the compulsory school age in schools and to send their non-attending wards to schools regularly and retain them till at least they acquire permanent literacy. Thus, the greater representation given to women on the Panchayat Boards is likely to step up the rate of expansion of girls. Same is true about Harijan and tribal children.

Formerly, a direct system of election prevailed at all the three tiers of the Panchayat, and leaderships at lower tier automatically became the ex-officio members of the immediately higher Panchayat bodies. This was good in some respects. But the system of indirect election did not operate in the best interest of local communities, their development and their needs. The Sarpanchas of Gram Panchayats automa-

tically became members of the Taluka Panchayat. But they became a source of power as they had votes to elect Taluka Panchayat Presidents. Again, four categories of members viz., ex-officio, elected, co-opted and associate members used to sit on the Taluka Panchayat in the past. For instance all the Sarpanchas of all the Gram Panchayats and Chairmen of all the Nagar Panchayats within a Taluka used to be the ex-officio members of a Taluka Panchayat. This had given rise to some evils. And this set-up is now changed. Now, a Taluka Panchayat consists of only two types of members, elected and associate. The elected members range from 15 to 31 depending upon the size of the population of the Taluka. The ex-officio memberships of the heads of the Gram Panchayats and the Nagar Panchayats used to provide an organic link between the Gram Panchayats and the Taluka but they also tended to constitute pressure groups for the election of the President and Vice-President of the Taluka Panchayat which did affect adversely in the past the quality and efficiency of the functioning of the Panchayat. Now the Taluka Panchayat has been freed from this pressure group. It now consists of the majority of the elected members. It is stipulated to work more democratically and effectively. From the District Panchayats also, the ex-officio memberships of all the Presidents of the Taluka in the district as well as of co-opted membership are abolished.

The Zeenabhai Darji High Power Committee³⁷ on Panchayati Raj (1973) has strongly upheld such a reform from the point of effectiveness of their functioning. It felt that such a measure would tend to develop an attitude which is more oriented to the welfare of the entire village, the whole taluka or the whole district as the case may be. The adoption of this method of election would create a genuine atmosphere of election, and the entire problems of the Village, Taluka and District would acquire a focus.

A number of witnesses before the Democratic Decentralisation (Naik Committee) (1969) of the Maharashtra State also favoured direct election to Panchayati Raj bodies. It put forward a thought-provoking argument in its Report :

"Another argument against indirect elections brought before us is that it affords scope for people with means and position to influence the course of elections by dubious methods bordering on mal-practices, and that the smaller electorates provide greater opportunities for the conservative elements to succeed in the elections."³⁸

The former Chief Secretary of the Gujarat State, Shri V.L. Gidwani, had also cautioned the Rasikbhai Parikh Democratic Decentralisation Committee against recommending the Sarpanchas of the Gram Panchayats to be ex-officio members of the Taluka Panchayats, and the Presidents of the Taluka Panchayats becoming ex-officio members of the District Panchayats. In his note submitted to the Decentralisation

Committee, Shri Gidwani had observed :

"The composition of Taluka Panchayats as suggested, with the Sarpanchas of all the Village Panchayats as ex-officio members and similarly the inclusion of the Presidents of all Taluka Panchayats as ex-officio members of District Panchayats will, I think, adversely affect the independence and effectiveness of these higher level bodies in their dealings with lower level panchayats. I feel that it is very important that all the members of the Taluka and District Panchayats should be chosen by direct election from the popular electorate, and multiple membership of the same member in panchayats at different levels should be avoided. This will increase the stature and effectiveness of Taluka and District Panchayats by attracting to them members with wider and more independent outlook, so that higher level Panchayats may be able to provide valuable guidance to and exercise proper supervision over the Panchayats below them".³⁹

Under the original Panchayats Act, the Education Committees at the Taluka level constituted by their respective Taluka Panchayats were constituted and these Committees were assigned some important functions and duties in the sphere of primary education. But, as remarked earlier, these Committees did not work well. Instead, they became a source of many undesirable practices. Exploitation of and harassment to primary teachers resulted. The Taluka level Education Committee, therefore, came to be scrapped under the Amendment Act, 1968.

Even after the Amendment Act, 1968, the Administration of primary education in the Panchayati Raj system could not inspire confidence amongst educationists in general and amongst the community of primary school teachers in particular in the State. While the official propaganda continued to extol the spectacular results under the Panchayati system, teachers and educationists continued to be dissatisfied with the role of the Panchayati Raj in primary education.

The Zeenabhai Darji High Power Committee had also conceded the fact that in the field of primary education every year the problems and issues continued to be many and difficult and educationists and teachers had represented to it that the root of all these problems and issues was the administration of primary education piloted by the Panchayati Raj bodies. Two sets of suggestions were placed before this Committee by witnesses who gave oral or written evidences before it. The first set of suggestions centred round creating a separate and autonomous school board, as was the case before, prior to the introduction of the Panchayati Raj system; the second set of suggestions favoured the constitution of the Existing Education Committee at the District Level, but its constitution should be drastically over-hauled. In this respect, the suggestion of the Gujarat State Primary Teachers Association was as under :

"The Education Committee should be separated from the District Panchayat. At the best, one or two members of the Panchayat, who have good educational qualifications, should be represented on this Committee. Its other memberships should be constituted like this - 2 representatives of primary school teachers, 2 of secondary school teachers, 1 of Basic schools, and 1 of university teachers who are Senate members. As the rights of labourers in industries have been recognised to have their representation on the bodies that govern them, so the primary school teachers should have also representation on District Education Committee. This Committee may be named as 'The Jilla Sikshan Board'.⁴¹

The Zeenabhai Darji High Power Committee made the following recommendations regarding the reorganisation of administration of primary education under the Panchayati Raj System, on which the Amendment Act 1973 was mainly based⁴²:

- (1) The Education Committee should continue to function, as before, as an integral part of the District Panchayat.
- (2) The functions delegated to Taluka Panchayats in the sphere of primary education should continue. However, it, too, did not feel the necessity of setting up an Education Committee of a Taluka Panchayat. The functions delegated at the tier of a Taluka should continue, but they be performed by the Taluka Executive Committee.
- (3) A District Education Committee should have 9 to 11 members depending whether the District Panchayat has 39 members or more.

- (4) All the members of the Education Committee should be selected by the elected members of the District Panchayat from among themselves.
- (5) The Committee recommended the following composition of the District Education Committee.

TABLE - 1.1 : SUGGESTED COMPOSITION OF DISTRICT PANCHAYAT EDUCATION COMMITTEE

S. No.	Type of Membership:	Size of Membership Where it is	
		11	9
A. <u>Qualified Voters of the District -</u>			
(a)	Educationists who are university graduates and have at least five years teaching experience in a school or college.	3	2
(b)	University graduates in any discipline, but without teaching experience.	1	1
(c)	Persons having at least 10 years of experience in education field.	1	1
(d)	<u>Reserved Seats</u>		
(1)	Women	1	1
(2)	Scheduled Caste	1	1
(3)	Scheduled tribe	1	1
(e)	<u>Elected Members of the Panchayat</u>		
(1)	Districts where reserved seats are provided for scheduled tribes or	3 or 2 or	
(2)	In other districts	4	3
Total:		11	9

These recommendations were incorporated in the Amendment Act 1973 with some modifications. For instance, the

Section 131(3) (iii) provides for 10 to 12 membership for the District Education Committee. It provides three categories of members, viz. (1) selected by the Panchayat from amongst the qualified voters in the district, (2) elected by the Panchayat from amongst its members and (3) associate members. Women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have each been given the representation of one membership. It is also provided in the Act that where the population of the scheduled tribes in the district exceeds five percent of the total population of the Scheduled Tribes in the district, one person belonging to the scheduled tribe should invariably sit on the Education Committee as a member.

As regards the functions to be discharged at the level of Gram/Nagar Panchayat, not a single change has been affected during the decade 1963-1973. The functions remain practically the same. The same observation holds true about the delegated functions at the Taluka level as well as at the District level.

1.6 ASPECTS OF THE PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM IN EDUCATION WHICH NEEDS TO BE INVESTIGATED

As observed earlier, a full decade has elapsed since the Panchayati Raj system was first introduced in Gujarat State in 1963. It is necessary to find out to what extent the new system has succeeded in its two major objectives of democratisation and development in the important sector of

primary education. Dr. H.R. Joshi's attempt to study the impact of the system on the administration of primary education in the South Gujarat region is the only known research effort done in this respect. It is necessary to undertake similar studies in other parts of the State also. It is particularly necessary to investigate the following issues and problems :

- (1) The role of leadership at the Gram/Nagar, Taluka and District level in relation to its equipment, task-expectations and accomplishments in the sphere of universal, compulsory and free primary education.
- (2) Evaluation of the proceedings and agenda of the Panchayati Raj popular bodies of all the three levels on the criterion of task expectation or delegated functions at each of the three levels, viz. Gram, Taluka and the District.
- (3) Evaluation of the actual achievements of the Panchayats at Gram, Taluka and District levels in performing their delegated functions fruitfully and effectively.
- (4) Evaluation of the achievements of actual gains that have accrued from democratic decentralisation adopted in the administration of primary education within a district set-up.
- (5) Opinion survey of primary school teachers and of local community leaders at the village and Taluka levels whether there should be a Shikshan Samiti

constituted from the parent body of the Gram Panchayat or the Taluka Panchayat as the case may be to administer primary education.

- (6) Study of the effectiveness of the enforcement of the State Law on Compulsory Primary Education.
- (7) Study of the extent of prevailing wastage or dropouts and stagnation in rural primary schools and their causes.
- (8) Evaluation of over-all role of the Panchayati Raj system in making the administration of primary education efficient and effective.

These are the specific areas which needed to be investigated. In terms of task expectations the aspects of the Panchayati Raj system which need to be investigated in a study like this can be set forth as under :

It is crucial to know how far the following task expectations have been realised in the Panchayati Raj system.

- (1) In the terms of contribution in the sphere of primary education of the Panchayati Raj System, it was expected that the introduction of democratic decentralisation will generate popular enthusiasm and initiative for the expansion of primary schools so that a lower primary school will be provided within one mile distance from the residence of every child of the age-group 6-11 and within at least three miles distance from the residence

of every child in the age group 11-14 studying in a upper primary school or a middle school.

- (2) It is necessary that primary schools are provided with improved school buildings and their maintenance and repair services are better taken care of ; and residential quarters especially for women teachers and Harijan teachers are provided. It is necessary to investigate to what extent this objective is realised.
- (3) It was also stipulated that local village communities will come to be associated with local primary schools more closely and they will feel interested and motivated to meet all their minor or locally satisfiable needs. For instance, the local community will come forward to provide residential quarters for primary teachers, especially women teachers and Harijan teachers.
- (4) The members of the Gram Panchayats were expected to take initiative and personal interest in persuading those rural parents who either do not enrol their children of the age-group 6-14, or after enrolment, withdraw him/her before passing Std. VII.
- (5) It was also stipulated that the local communities will collect funds through their own efforts to provide free-mid-day meals, school uniforms as well as reading and writing material to poor and needy local children;

- (6) It was envisaged that the local communities will harness their resources and services to spread literacy, to improve and enrich school curricular and co-curricular programmes.
- (7) It was felt that in a Panchayati Raj set-up, the local communities will take active interest to minimise the burning problem of wastage and stagnation;
- (8) Equality of opportunities in education of the children of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as well as of girls will be increased;
- (9) The local primary schools will become community centred as a result of which the government, the community and the school will come nearer to each other;
- (10) The student welfare services, the health services, and the facilities for the first aid of the school will be more extensive and effective;
- (11) The school inspection will be more vigorous, efficient and fruitful;
- (12) For promoting the literary taste of the local community the libraries and reading rooms will be established and maintained in every village having the primary school.

When these local democratic bodies were created, there were certain expectations about their possible role and contributions to development in various spheres of activities in the district. For instance, it was felt that through the Panchayat bodies the foundation on which our Constitution stands will be strengthened, the involvement of the local community and individuals in the successful and effective execution and completion of all development projects and tasks including primary education, will take place, self-help, self-reliance and the largest possible extension of the principle of community service and co-operation and spending of a portion of vast unutilised time and energy in the rural areas for the benefit of the community will result, more knowledgeable, interested, motivated and public service-minded people will sit on the Panchayat bodies to decide the future course of development of their areas, and there will be less wastage and more fruitful utilisation of local resources of men and material. All these need to be investigated in the Panchayati Raj system in respect of all developmental projects and programmes including primary education.

1.7 CONCLUSION

The experiment in the Panchayati Raj as a form of democratic decentralisation in the administration of development programmes in rural areas was introduced in Gujarat State with great hopes and expectations in 1963. It was felt

at that time that the experiment had bright chances of success, because, as the country had a long tradition of Village Panchayats deeply rooted in our very cultural heritage, it had become a vital part of our national self. The village self-governing institutions of the past rested on bright democratic traditions and self-less, honest and dynamic community leadership. The popular institutions served as powerful and well knit organizations of strengthening the society and consolidating it. With this bright cultural background, the great experiment was introduced. But the experiment, as it has been launched and implemented, is not an unmixed success. The ideology of democratic decentralisation could not be properly implemented. There is, no doubt some social awakening and change, a fervent desire and sporadic efforts for local development have been generated, and some noteworthy successes have been achieved in many vital sectors of rural community life in the country. The face of rural India has definitely changed. But yet many crucial things have not happened as were expected to happen. The leadership at the village level has not shown desired maturity, productivity and character in public service and social work. The people have begun to think about their needs, but they have not cultivated ability to tackle their problems through their initiative, interest and efforts; they have not learnt to harness their corporate and co-opera-

tive efforts to raise the necessary resources to fulfil their needs; they do not come forward readily and easily to formulate programmes of development geared to their own social, economic and cultural needs; they have not been able to create an intellectual climate in their habitations and muster rational efforts and determination to bring about the rural community development and social change.

A rural community should have emotional attachment, but rational identification with its local primary school. The school should be developed into a community school which can be a centre of fulfilment of the community's intellectual, recreational, health, training and reorienting needs. The community should feel responsible to house the school in better school buildings, to provide all the necessary equipment and instructional material as well as aids, find out money to provide mid-day meals to all school children and, free school uniform and free supply of reading and writing materials to poor children and to provide qualitative instruction so that their intellectual fibre is strengthened. It is presumed that well educated village community has a better understanding of its needs and problems and can stimulate community's corporate efforts to meet the needs and solve the problems. There is an imperative need to improve the quality, character and acts of the leadership

in rural communities. Social and political maturity has to be developed among rural communities to elect a right type of local leadership. The infiltration of party politics, the inter-play of forces of caste, community and creed, the factors of economic subordination and exploitation, the inertia and passive-unresisting attitude and ready submission to controlling and violent forces have sapped the rural communities of their vitality to select the right type of village level leadership. The Panchayati Raj was expected to achieve this goal. But that has not happened fully. In the efforts to strengthen the Panchayati Raj, education-expanded and qualitative education - should be used as a major tool. Economic development is, no doubt, crucially important. But education should be regarded as a sound investment and a valuable input to develop rural communities economically and socially. It is through the widening horizon of their education that the communities in the U.S.A. and other Western countries could rise quite high socially, economically, politically and culturally. In this respect, the Panchayati Raj system, if properly planned and administered, has rich possibilities to resurrect Rural India. And India is a country of Villages.

The present study is an exploratory study to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the Panchayati Raj administration in one of the major districts of North Gujarat, viz. the Mehsana District. It is envisaged that the results of the study would reveal useful directions and dimensions to strengthen the Panchayati Raj system as a whole in the sphere of primary education in rural Gujarat.

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Notes and References

1. It is a Constitutional Directive, In Section 45 of the Constitution of India, the State is enjoined to make endeavours to make primary educational compulsory and free for all children till they complete the age of 14, irrespective of any difference of caste, colour, creed or sex. The Constitution of India was brought into force in 1950. According to the Constitutional directive, primary education ought to have been made universal, compulsory and free by 1960. But because of complex and unsurmountable physical, social, cultural and economic factors operating as serious hurdles, the progress towards universal primary education in the country has been appreciably slow. According to the national Draft Fifth Plan (1974-79) in Education, 100 percent children in the age-group of 6-11 and 76 percent of children in the age-group of 11-14 (about 80 percent in the total age-group 6-14) will be enrolled in school by 1979 (page 21). The Draft Fifth Plan in Education of the Gujarat State prescribes a target of universal primary education for children of 6-11 age-group by 1978-79 and of 100 percent in 11-14 age-group by 1980-81 (Page 247).

2. This is one of the findings of some Case studies which are edited by Professor M.S. Gore and published under the title of "Problems of Rural Change" University of Delhi, Delhi School of Social Work, 1963.
3. This conclusion was reached by S.V. Samant in his doctoral study entitled "Village Self-Government in Bombay State" done at Bombay University in 1954.
4. Vide - "Recommendations" in Report of the Team for the Study of Community Project and National Extension Services." (Chairman : Balwantrai Mehta), Vol. I, New Delhi, Committee on Plan Project, Planning Commission, 1957.
5. Gujarat State : Report of the Democratic Decentralisation Committee (English Translation) Ahmedabad, Rural Development Department, December, 1960, p. VII.
6. Ibid, p.23
- 6A. These Statistics are given by Gujarat Government in the booklet, published in 1973, entitled Panchayati Raj in Gujarat, p. 4. The details regarding district-wise Gram, Nagar and Taluka Panchayats are given in the booklet in Appendix I.
7. This has been the argument frequently put forward by Government, politicians and even educationists who see in the realization of the goal of universal primary education of

7 to 8 years a creation of better potential and climate for democratisation as well as community development in several respects.

7A. Planning Commission : Second Five Year Plan, New Delhi, 1954, p.73.

8. Mahatma Gandhiji : "Organically Linked Panchayats", Harijan, Ahmedabad, September, 1946.

9. Government of India : India: A Reference Annual 1973, New Delhi, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1974, p.14.

10. Gujarat Panchayats Act, 1961, (As amended upto November 1973), Schedule I (Vide Section 88), Sub-section 3.

11. The Community Development Programme was launched on 2nd October 1952 in 55 selected projects, each project covering an area of about 1,300 sq. km. with about 300 villages and a population of about three lakhs. The pattern was revised from 1 April, 1958. The concept of C.D. Block clarified here in terms of average area and population is according to this revised pattern. The total number of C.D. Blocks in April, 1971 in the country was 4,893 including 492 Tribal Development Blocks.

12. The Gujarat Democratic Decentralisation Committee(1960) preferred Taluka to Block as intermediate tier in the Panchayati System for following reasons : (a) From the point of view of average population, the Taluka or Mahal is not larger than the Block; (b) In Gujarat State, the area of most of the Talukas and of the Blocks is the same; (c) All the schemes and work of the Development Block can be entrusted to the popular institution set up between the village and district levels; and (d) Apart from the Block Development works, the other duties and responsibilities entrusted to the popular body were already organized taluka and district-wise.

13. Report of the Gujarat Democratic Decentralisation Committee, 1960, para 2.24

14. Jadavji Mody (Chairman): Gujarat Panchayat Adhiniyam Sudhara Samitino Aheval, (Report of the Gujarat Panchayat Act Amendment Committee), 1965, p.

15. This letter was addressed by Shri Somabhai G. Patel, Secretary, Gujarat Rajya Prathmik Shiksha Sangh (Gujarat State Primary Teacher Association) to the Chairman of Panchayati Raj Reform Committee, 1973.

16. The Gujarat Panchayats Act, 1961, (as modified upto 30th November, 1973), Schedule II, (Vide Section 117) Part I, Sub-section 3.

- 16A. Vide - Panchayati Raj in Gujarat, op.cit, p.4.
17. The Gujarat Panchayats Act, op.cit. Schedule III(Vide-Section 137,)Part I, Sub-section 3.
18. Vide - Report of the Team for Study of Community Project and National Extension Services, op.cit.,., p.97
19. M.V. Mathur and Iqbal Narain (eds.) Panchayati Raj, Planning and Democracy, Asia Publishing House, 1969, p.11
20. Report of the Gujarat Democratic Decentralisation Committee: op.cit, para 2.28 p. 29
21. Ibid. para 7.1, p. 79
22. Ministry of Education : Some Mimeographed Papers on Primary Education, 1962.
23. Ibid.
- 23A. The Achievements and failures of the Panchayati Raj in education have also been discussed by K.L. Bordia in reference to Rajasthan State. This paper of Shri Bordia is published in Panchayati Raj Planning and Democracy, op.cit, Part III, pp. 368-372.
24. Dr. H.R. Joshi's Ph.D. thesis to the M.S. University of Baroda (1973) presents discussion on some important dimensions of the Panchayati Raj System and the role of the popular institutions in the sphere of education. The thesis is

entitled "A Critical Study of Problems of Administration and Finance in Primary Education in the Gujarat State with Special reference to the present working and the role of Panchayat Raj Bodies in Southern Gujarat, Part III, Chapter V, VI, and VII are devoted to the Panchayati Raj Administration.

25. These statistics are from Education in Gujarat which is the annual Administration Report for the year 1959-60, published in 1967 by Education and Labour Department of Gujarat Government. The report is quite comprehensive and contains some meaningful data. It is unfortunate that this practice of compiling comprehensive statistics in education has been abandoned subsequently by the Gujarat Department of Education.

26. A press report of the speech of Education Minister, Smt. Ayasha Begum appeared in Lok Satta (Baroda) 9 September 1973.

26A. District-wise position of pupils in Classes V-VII and its percentage to the population in the corresponding age-group 10-13 is given in Appendix P of Perspective Plan of Gujarat 1974-1984, Vol. III published by Government of Gujarat in February, 1972.

27. Vide - Perspective Plan of Gujarat : 1974-1984
Para 4.8, and para 4.10.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid. Appendices Q and R.
30. Ibid., para 4.11 (ii)
31. Ibid., Appendix T. p.95.
32. The Secretary of the Gujarat State Primary Teachers Association had pleaded in his reply to the Questionnaire issued by the Zeenabhai Darji High Power Committee on Panchayati Raj that the Jilla Shikshan Samiti should be separated from the Jilla Panchayat and in its place a Jilla School Education Board should be constituted. This stand was taken by the Association on the ground of excessive political pressures and exploitation of the community of primary school teachers done by the Chairman and members of the Jilla Shikshan Samiti.
33. Gujarat Pradesh Panchayat Parishad : Panchayati Raj (Gujarat monthly), July, 1973, p. 17.
34. Ibid. pp. 30-31.
35. H.R. Joshi, op.cit., pages 433,435,475.
36. Ibid., p. 508
37. Report of the Zeenabhai Darji High Power Committee on Panchayati Raj, op.cit., p.21.

38. Report of the Maharashtra Democratic Decentralisation Committee (Naik Committee) Bombay, 1960, para 7.11
39. Report of the Gujarat Committee on Democratic Decentralisation, op.cit. p,.172.
40. Report of the Zeenabhai Darji Committee, op.cit. p.88
41. Vide - Letter of the Secretary, Gujarat State Primary Teachers Association to Chairman, Gujarat Panchayat Reform (Committee, 1973) quoted earlier also. Viz. Reference 32.)
42. Report of the Zeenabhai Darji Committee, op.cit. P. 92

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