CASE STUDIES
IN
PANCHAYATI RAJ

PT99

COMMITTEE ON CASE STUDIES
THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
INDRAPRASTHA ESTATE, RING ROAD, NEW DELHI

CASE STUDIES IN PANCHAYATI RAJ

COMMITTEE ON CASE STUDIES

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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Fictitious names have been given for persons and places in all the case studies.

FOREWORD

The significance of a Case Study Programme in Public Administration is obvious. A case study in Public Administration is an objective narrative, showing how one or more public officials or elected leaders arrived at a policy decision or implemented such a policy or a programme or dealt with a particular administrative situation. Such a narrative usually tries to show the environmental context in which an administrative decision or action is taken. The various factors and influences leading to the decision or action, the attitudes of the individuals involved, the different alternatives available for the decision and the various considerations which led to the final choice and the after effects of the decision or action—all these are portrayed.

Sometimes, a case study may reveal a clash of personalities. In some cases the conflict may be between the Central Government and a State Government or between two State Governments. Such conflicts sometimes lead to a wrong decision or to a stalemate, hindering progress. Usually these conflicts help identify the forces which operate in the conduct of public affairs. Quite often, prejudices and undesirable pressures or personal obsessions play a major role in the decision-making process. Some studies may highlight the sense of devotion to a cause, the sense of 'commitment' on the part of an elected leader or an official in the discharge of his duties. A deep involvement in the 'drama' of achievement of some objective, essentially good for the public, the community or the nation as a whole, makes the official evolve ways and means of overcoming obstacles and getting over cumbersome or obstructive rules. Such "stories" may well serve as a beacon of light to other administrators.

Naturally, these accounts are of great value to young administrators, since they will be more or less in the nature of guidelines of what they should do or avoid doing under similar

circumstances. They are also useful as a valuable instrument for teaching students undergoing a course of Public Administration or as material for in-service training.

The Indian Institute of Public Administration initiated the Case Study Programme in March, 1961. A Committee on Case Studies was constituted, with Shri S. S. Khera, Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Steel, Mines & Fuel, as its Chairman. The main objects as outlined by the Committee are—"(1) to promote a deeper and wider understanding of the functioning of Indian Administration in its environmental and institutional framework ; and (2) to build up a body of systematic knowledge about the administrative process in India; this may be of use in (a) the teaching of public administration, and (b) also in indicating improvements in administrative practices and procedures."

During the early years, the Institute published 3 volumes, comprising seven case studies. Efforts were also made to commission more studies, elicit the support of the Government and to promote interest in the use of the cases for purposes of teaching.

In 1967, the Institute took up a comprehensive scheme of case studies under the Ford Foundation Grant No. III for assisting the Administrative Reforms Commission in its work. For the first time, the Institute had a full-time Director for the Case Programme, Shri K. N. Butani, who has since become Director, Institute of Applied Manpower Research, New Delhi. Several case studies were commissioned during this period. Many of these have been utilised in the training courses and teaching sessions conducted at the Institute and elsewhere.

Of these, the eleven included in this volume constitute a cluster of studies, prepared as a result of an agreement entered into in 1967 between the Indian Institute of Public Administration and the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies. The focus of interest in all these cases is on *Panchayati Raj*

Institutions and the problems which arise in the administration of these bodies.

My thanks are due to the Ford Foundation for their liberal grants for this worthy purpose, and to the members of the Committee on Case Studies who have evinced a deep and abiding interest in the project.

I would like to take this opportunity of recording my deep sense of gratitude to my colleague, the late Prof. B. S. Narula, whose sad and untimely death in December last year has left a serious gap ; he had been shouldering the burden of the Case Study Unit as Member-Secretary of the Committee, ever since the inception of the Project, in addition to his normal duties.

Dr. Ram K. Vepa, who took over as Honorary Director of the Unit about a year back has been personally responsible for the consolidation of the work. He has achieved this, in spite of his multifarious and exacting duties in the Ministry of Industrial Development. I am deeply thankful to him for the great service rendered by him in the virgin field of case studies in Public Administration.

NEW DELHI
MAY 1, 1972

G. MUKHARJI
Director
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

INTRODUCING THE CASE STUDIES

The Case Study method has become familiar in recent years for teaching the problems of public administration to new entrants and those who are already involved in it. Difficulties are, however, being experienced by a number of institutions as to the availability of case studies which could be utilised in the training programmes for both the junior and middle cadre executives. Further, in recent years, new areas of decision-making have been opened up in which administrative expertise has not yet developed fully. The Indian Institute of Public Administration has, therefore, undertaken, with assistance from the Ford Foundation, a specific programme to build up case studies which could be utilised by the management training institutions in the country.

A Case Study is a narrative written by a person who has been actively involved in the subject of the study or whose vantage position has provided him with an ability to explore the process of decision-making. The Case Study may deal with the back-ground for a policy decision or with its implementation. It can also deal with a particular situation which has arisen and the way the situation has been tackled by the people involved in it. The study is, therefore, an attempt to portray the interplay of various factors which takes place when a decision is made or when it is implemented.

One of the important areas which has developed in recent years is *Panchayati Raj* which has become a familiar pattern of District and Sub-District Administration throughout the country. Although Local Self-Government institutions have been operating in the country for many decades, it is only since 1959 that a well-developed and a well-defined pattern of administration has been introduced (with minor variations) throughout the country which enables new political institutions at the village, block (or

Taluka) and district levels to take charge of development functions and in some cases even of the collection of land revenue. The important point about these new institutions is that wide powers have been entrusted to them in a variety of fields and officials of varying importance work in close co-operation with these bodies. In some States such as Maharashtra and Gujarat, senior officers of the level of a District Collector have been posted as Chief Executive Officers of the district level bodies. In most States, various Development Officers, both at the district and *Taluka* levels, are expected to function in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the *Panchayati Raj* institutions.

This close linking between officials and non-officials in the running of development programmes has naturally given rise to a variety of situations where conflicts have arisen as to the priorities and the manner of implementation. While it is true that in the vast majority of the institutions, the relationship between the officials and the non-officials has been generally smooth, there is no doubt that, in many instances, there have been signs of friction leading at times to difficult administrative situations. This has happened at a variety of levels and in a variety of ways. Nor is the conflict primarily one between the officials and the non-officials. There have been difficulties experienced between different tiers of the *Panchayati Raj* institutions themselves and the non-officials heading them. For instance, the President of a *Zilla Parishad* and the President of a *Panchayat Samiti* who belong to different political groups may become the focal points of a struggle between these two institutions. Similarly, in the case of the officials, there have been points of conflict between the District Level Officers and the Block Development Officers, both of whom, to some extent, have been entrusted with responsibility for the implementation of a particular programme. The administrative problems of the *Panchayati Raj* institutions are, therefore, diverse in nature and have given rise to a number of situations which in the previous pattern would not have arisen since administration was largely hierarchical.

The Indian Institute of Public Administration, has, therefore, felt that it would be a good idea if a cluster of case studies were built up in the field of *Panchayati Raj* administration. This work was undertaken in cooperation with the Centre for Developing Societies who had kindly agreed to study specific situations which had occurred in the *Panchayati Raj* institutions at various levels. The present volume which contains 11 studies is the result of this joint effort by IIPA and the Centre for Developing Societies. It is true that the bulk of the case studies included in this volume relate to one particular State, *i.e.*, Gujarat. But it is felt that these are somewhat typical of situations which have arisen in one form or the other in most of the other States.

Within this limitation, however, the case studies deal with a wide range of subjects. There are instances of conflicts between the officials as also between the *Zilla Parishad* and the *Taluka Panchayat*. Case studies have also been written as to the conflicts which have arisen between the officials and the non-officials in particular institutions. Nor is the picture always so bleak: some case studies indicate clearly, that where leadership has been displayed both at the official and at the non-official levels, the region and the community have stood to gain by such an effort.

It may perhaps be useful if a brief outline of the 11 case studies included in this volume is given. The case study on the *Allotment of P.W.D. Quarters* illustrates the clash of personalities at the official level between the District Collector and the District Development Officer. The matter had to be finally resolved at the level of the Minister who overruled the action of the District Collector and the Allotment Committee. In the case study *Where is the fun if we do not use power*, the story is one of intrigues of the various officials involved. A President of a District *Panchayat* had his own son appointed as Veterinary Officer, in charge of an Artificial Insemination Centre, and he had also persuaded a special allowance to be granted to him. The District Animal Husbandry Officer who had connived at this irregularity was later replaced by a new officer who questioned

it. The District Development Officer also became involved in the matter and was transferred by the President using political influence; nor was the blame entirely on the non-official. The story also deals with intrigues of one official against the other and each one trying to use what influence he could command with a view to running down the other. This is a case where *Panchayati Raj* had led to a complete distortion of the basic objectives and personalities played a great part in making a virtual mockery of such objectives.

In the case study *District Panchayat Asserts for Autonomy*, the clash is between the normal Government rules and procedures that the District *Panchayat* wanted to make in regard to purchase of stationery and the award of printing work. In such a situation, it is indeed a moot question as to who is right. Perhaps, one can only say that as the case study reads, it is difficult to judge since both had good points to advocate in justification of their own stand. The same was the difficulty in the case study *Distribution of Subsidy to the Adivasis* where the *Taluka Panchayat* President took a view contrary to that of the Government rules and came into open clash with the District *Panchayat* President. But as has been well narrated in the case study, the real clash was in the political sphere and this particular instance merely was used as a pretext for each one trying to gain an upper hand in the political set-up of the district. The dilemma which the officials faced in this regard has been well brought out in the case study and is a common feature of most *Panchayati Raj* institutions. Such case studies help to bring out clearly the difficulties in which officials are placed when they operate in the environment of *Panchayati Raj* institutions at the district and sub-district levels.

The case study *Asking Government to Pay for Water Supply Scheme* is one of frustration. It took the village eleven years to obtain a scheme sanctioned merely because the village lacked in political leverage. One should ponder as to how such villages (which are in plenty in the country) can hope to get much-needed facilities and whether even *Panchayati Raj* which is, basically,

a political power structure can help them. On the other hand, the case study of *Building Water Works in Two Villages* demonstrates that where the officials and the elected leaders co-operate fully, there is a sense of positive achievement and the facilities and money are provided without much difficulty.

The case study *District Panchayat Plans for Agricultural Development* illustrates the sense of commitment and devotion of an official (District Development Officer) who initiated the scheme for demonstrating the use of fertilizers and improved varieties of seeds with the co-operation and backing of the District *Parishad.* There are two case studies on the setting up of a Primary Health Centre which has been one of the frequent bones of contention in the working of *Panchayati Raj.* One case study on the *Setting up of a Primary Health Centre at Amarpur* is a story of achievement which is the result of co-operation between the officials and the elected leaders, particularly the *Sarpanch* who took the initiative in collecting the necessary money and obtaining voluntary services from the village people. On the other hand, the case study on the *Location of Primary Health Centre in Kekawada* is the usual story of rival claims of two villages backed by two groups in the *Panchayati Raj* which finally led to arbitration by the *Panchayat* President. The decision given by him was a fresh political one and could not be said to represent correctly the requirements of the district. This is indeed a typical case of how decision-making in *Panchayati Raj* gets distorted by political considerations and one of the important tasks of administrators is to see how far such distortion can be minimised and the elected leaders of the *Panchayat* educated to a sense of their own responsibility.

The case study on the *Utilisation of Small Irrigation Tanks in Sundershehar Taluka* is a relief showing how the *Taluka Panchayat* President was able to get the procedures and rules for the use of the water from the irrigation tanks modified so as to be of benefit to the cultivators. The usage of water from

the irrigation sources is a perennial source of conflict in villages and it is, therefore, an interesting case study of how a purposeful President could change the rules and regulations which have been in force for a long time so as to be of benefit to the people and also yield a larger revenue. Similarly, the case study on the *Reclamation of Khar Land* is an illustration of the initiative taken by the people in co-operation with officials to achieve positive results for the good of the community. It also illustrates how in such situations a natural leadership emerges from within the community which contributes in great measure to the success of the effort.

This cluster of case studies is, therefore, a varied lot; some present a bright picture and some a bleak one. If these studies portray the realities which obtain in this new pattern of administration, they would have served a good purpose in providing to its administrators the difficulties they are likely to face while working in the district and block levels. The IIPA is grateful to the Centre for Developing Societies for having undertaken this work and it hopes that the present volume will be of some benefit to institutions and agencies which are responsible for the training of our administrators and those concerned with the work of the *Panchayati Raj* institutions.

NEW DELHI
MAY 1, 1972

DR. RAM K. VEPA
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ALLOTMENT OF PWD QUARTERS TO PANCHA-YAT STAFF IN RAMPUR DISTRICT

HARSHAD R. TRIVEDI

The rights and privileges of the staff working in the *Panchayati Raj* Administration have been worked out in some of the States, while in others these are being evolved. In the State of Gujarat, where *Panchayati Raj* was introduced in 1963, a problem arose about housing facilities to be provided to the staff of *Panchayati Raj* institutions. In Rampur District of Gujarat, the District Development Officer (DDO) was appointed a member of the District Accommodation Allotment Committee[1] so that the interests of the *Panchayat* staff could be looked after in the allotment of houses to Government employees working in the District. But subsequent to his appointment, the Accommodation Allotment Committee took certain decisions without his knowledge. This led to a conflict between the Chairman of the District Accommodation Allotment Committee and the DDO. The story of this conflict is narrated in this case study.

Before *Panchayati Raj* was introduced in Gujarat State, the allocation of houses to the Government employees in the District Headquarters was decided by the District Accommodation Allotment Committee. Such a Committee existed in Rampur District also. The Committee consisted of three members, namely, the Collector, the Executive Engineer and the Superintendent of Police. The Collector was the Chairman of the Committee and the Executive Engineer was the Secretary. The District and Sessions Judge was later included as a member of the Committee.

After about two years of the introduction of *Panchayati Raj*, the DDOs were also made members of the Committee by

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[1]The District Accommodation Allotment Committee decided all the cases of allotment of quarters to the Government employees in the District.

an Office Order, dated October 16, 1965, signed by the Deputy Secretary, Public Works Department (PWD). A copy of the Office Order was also sent to the DDO and the Chairman of Accommodation Allotment Committee of Rampur District.

On January 1, 1966 the *Panchayat* Officer wrote a letter to the Executive Engineer, the Secretary of the Accommodation Allotment Committee, drawing his attention to the order of the PWD. He also requested him to send due intimation to the DDO of the meetings of the Committee in future. The Executive Engineer's Office replied that a meeting of the Committee was scheduled to be held on January 5, 1961 but was postponed. It was further stated that the DDO would be intimated when the next meeting of the Committee was fixed. The meeting was held on January 12, 1966 but the DDO did not get any intimation. One of the staff members of the *Panchayat* came to know about the meeting and informed the DDO. On January 17, 1966, the DDO wrote to the Executive Engineer, complaining about his not having got the information of the meeting held on January 12, 1966. In reply, the Executive Engineer wrote that his Deputy Engineer, whose office was located in a contiguous town, had written to the DDO on January 4, 1966, intimating him about the said meeting. No such intimation had been received by the DDO.

Another meeting of the Committee was fixed for February 8, and the DDO was not informed of this either. The meeting was held to consider the question of getting the office premises vacated by the Agriculture Department, which had already been transferred to the *Panchayat*. The Chairman of the Committee mentioned that the Agriculture Department could be housed in the *Panchayat* Office and it should vacate the premises it was presently using. The Chairman's views were supported by the Executive Engineer, and the Committee agreed.

The minutes of the meeting were circulated to all the four members of the Committee. The DDO did not accept the position and, with a dissenting note sent it back to the Secretary of the Committee on March 14, 1966. The DDO pointed out that the Agriculture Department could not move into the *Panchayat* House as the latter was still under construction.

On July 19, 1966, the Committee held another meeting. At this meeting, the issue of allotment of accommodation to *Panchayati Raj* organisations was raised by the DDO following the minutes of the previous meeting and was fully discussed. It was decided to seek clarification from the Circle Office of the PWD, regarding allotment of accommodation to the *Panchayat* from the PWD pool of buildings. Soon after the meeting, the Secretary circulated the minutes to the members and also sent a copy of the minutes to the Circle Office of the PWD, seeking clarification on the issue contained therein.

In July 1966, Shri Dave was posted as Collector and the former Collector was transferred. The new Collector was aged 36 years and had worked for about two years as DDO in another District. Commenting on his posting as a Collector, Shri Dave remarked that it was a welcome change for him. He further added that it was better to be a Collector than a DDO. In this connection, he referred to the case of Shri Amin, the new DDO who, he mentioned, had also tried for the Collector's post but did not succeed. He also remarked that he had to face a lot of difficulty even in getting a quarter for himself when he was a DDO.

His posting as Collector was, however, resented by some of the local leaders. Some of them mentioned that they did not look with favour on his posting in their District, as the Chief Minister of the State had done so against their wishes.

A month later in August 1966, the former DDO was transferred and Shri Amin was posted in his place. He was a PCS officer and was 37 years old. He had previously worked in Rampur District as the District Project Officer a few years back. Subsequently, he was transferred to a contiguous District where he worked for about a year as DDO. While working there he came into clash with the President of the *Panchayat* on some issues which he did not desire to reveal. Besides, he had developed an antagonism towards an Executive Engineer, posted there on special duty, on the issue of retaining a quarter allotted to him out of turn by the Accommodation Allotment Committee. This man happened to be no other than Shri Patel aged 35 years, who also arrived on the scene, on official transfer, towards the end of 1966.

After about a month of his posting in Rampur District, Shri Dave, the Collector convened a meeting of the Accommodation Allotment Committee on August 2, 1966. The old DDO had moved out; the new one, Shri Amin had not arrived. So the *Panchayat* body was not represented. The Committee again discussed the issue, pertaining to the allotment of quarters to the *Panchayat* staff from the pool of PWD buildings. The meeting ended without any specific decision on the issue as no clarification had been received from the State PWD to whom a reference had been made earlier.

In the meantime, the Director of Education wrote to the Collector asking him to provide some additional accommodation to the District Education Department. The Collector replied that he could give them the accommodation used by the Agriculture Department after it was vacated. Meanwhile, he suggested that it could be inspected.

The Director of Education visited the District, and inspected the place on September 21, 1966. He found the premises suitable. After the Director approved the premises, the Collector wrote to the DDO on January 20, 1967 to vacate the premises used by the Agriculture Department of the *Panchayat* as the same was to be given to the Education Department.

Shri Amin (DDO) in his letter of February 3, 1967 answered that only the Accommodation Allotment Committee could take the decision for having the premises vacated and he was not aware that any such decision had been taken by the Committee. If, however, any such resolution had been passed by the Committee, a copy of the same may be sent to him. He added that it was not possible, even in the near future, to shift the office of the Agriculture Department elsewhere as there was no alternative accommodation available at all.

There was no reply from the Collector for about three months.

The DDO wrote a letter to the Executive Engineer on May 26, 1967, drawing his attention to the fact that no meeting of the Accommodation Allotment Committee had been convened during

the past nine months. He added that there was no use in having such a Committee, if it did not meet for such a long time. He also requested the Executive Engineer to convene a meeting as early as possible and also to furnish information on the following points, which he desired to be discussed at the meeting, whenever it was held :

(1) Allotment of vacant houses, after August 2, 1966.

(2) Basis on which houses have been allotted, if any, after the meeting of the Accommodation Allotment Committee held on August 2, 1966.

(3) Names of government servants and their departments, who have been allotted houses, if any, after the meeting of August 2, 1966.

(4) Basis on which the houses situated near the Post Office were allotted without the consent of the Committee.

(5) Powers of the Allotment Committee along with a copy of the rules under which such allotment was made and a list of houses available under the pool.

He sent a copy of this letter to all the members of the Committee and also to the Chief Engineer of the Circle and the Secretary of the Public Works Department at State Headquarters. As he did not get any reply, he again wrote to the members of the Committee asking for their support for convening an early meeting of the Committee. He urged the members to see that the meeting was held as early as possible and also to see that the information was supplied to him on the points raised in his letter.

The Secretary of the Committee fixed the meeting for July 6, 1967 at 9.00 a.m. and sent the intimation to all the members on June 13, 1967 along with the agenda. On receiving the agenda, the DDO discovered that the items suggested by him had not been included therein. On the other hand, there was an item on the agenda which adversely affected the interests of the *Panchayat* staff. This item was : "The staff of the *Panchayat* may not be considered for allotment of houses as long as the PWD did not clarify the policy, about which a reference had been made to them in July 1966." He also felt that the time of the meeting was inconvenient.

He wrote to the Chairman of the Allotment Committee, pointing out that the time of the meeting was not suitable to him, as it was not during the office hours; he requested that in future, the meetings might be kept during office hours. He also drew the Chairman's attention to the letter he had written to the Secretary of the Allotment Committee on May 26, 1966, seeking information on the points mentioned therein. He regretted that the information had not been furnished even after 9 months and added that no useful discussion in the Committee was possible, if its members were not given information required by them in time.

The DDO also wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Allotment Committee, inviting reference to his earlier letter, asking for information on the points mentioned therein.

The Chairman sent a reply on July 3, 1967 in which he said that the time for the meeting fixed at 9.00 a.m. was suitable to all the other members of the Committee. Moreover, any time after 11.00 a.m. was not suitable to the District and Sessions Judge because it clashed with the time of the court. He added that the question of giving information on fresh allotments did not arise, as the Committee had not met after August 2, 1966. He also pointed out that the house near the Post Office was not a Government building; therefore, the question of its allotment was out of the purview of the Committee. With regard to the functions of the Committee and the list of houses in the pool, the Executive Engineer would give him the information.

The Secretary also sent a reply to the DDO on July 4, 1967, along with the agenda of the meeting, and a statement of the number of houses, lying vacant. He stated that after August 2, 1966, only one house had been allotted to the Head Clerk of the Collector's Office, under the orders of the Chairman. This house, he added, was from the accommodation pool, reserved for the revenue staff; while the house near the Post Office did not belong to the Government. It was further stated that a reference had already been made to the Chief Executive Engineer for clarifying the powers of the Committee.

The DDO had kept the President of the District *Panchayat* informed of the attitude of the Accommodation Allotment

Committee regarding the allotment of accommodation to the *Panchayat* institutions. He requested him to exert his influence and get the matter clarified so that *Panchayat* institutions got the accommodation due to them.

The President, therefore, wrote a D.O. letter to the Collector on July 4, 1967 reproduced here.

"The agenda of the meeting of the Accommodation Allotment Committee to be held on July 6, 1967 sent to the DDO who is a member of the Committee has come to our notice. Item one of the agenda mentions that the *Panchayat* staff may not be given accommodation from the pool of the Government buildings. I consider inclusion of such an item in the agenda of the Accommodation Allotment Committee a matter of concern. I am sure you will also not like to have such an attitude towards the *Panchayat* staff. You are aware that the district has departmental pools of houses for the Police, the Judiciary and Revenue, while there is no such facility for the *Panchayat* staff. In view of this, it looks to me that it is improper to keep the item on the agenda. The item does not deserve consideration. In my opinion, the Committee does not have any right of making such a decision. If such a decision is taken by the Committee, it will not merely be unjust but also irregular. The inclusion of DDO as a member of this Committee is by itself self-explanatory. I hope that when the meeting of the Committee is held, you will do the needful to see that no untoward decision is taken and will kindly keep me informed of the results."

The meeting of the Accommodation Allotment Committee was held on July 6, 1967 at 9.00 a.m. as scheduled. All the members except the DDO attended. The correspondence between the DDO, the Collector and Executive Engineer was presented at the meeting for the information of other members. The suggestion made by the DDO in regard to the change in the timing of the meeting was considered by the members of the Committee. It was felt that if the meeting time was fixed during the office hours as suggested by the DDO, it would not be convenient, particularly to the District and Sessions Judge. It was,

therefore, resolved that the timing of the meeting should not be changed.

The Committee also discussed the issue relating to the allotment of the quarters to the *Panchayat* staff from the pool of Government buildings. The attention of the members was drawn to the reference made to the State PWD on the issue on May 2, 1967. The file containing the correspondence between the Chairman of the Committee and the State PWD was presented to the members of the Committee. The State PWD had not given any reply. The members of the Committee unanimously passed a resolution that the allotment of accommodation to the *Panchayat* staff may not be provided from the pool, unless the decision of the State PWD was received to that effect. The Committee also specified that only the staff of the Government departments should be given accommodation on the basis of the priority list.

The minutes of the meeting were circulated to all the members. When the DDO received a copy, he sent it to the President of the District *Panchayat*. The President was upset; the Collector had paid no attention to his letter. He asked the DDO to draft a resolution on the issue for consideration by the *Panchayat*. The draft which was prepared in consultation with the President read as under :

> "It is regrettable that the Chairman, Accommodation Alllotment Committee did not give any reply to the letter written by the President of the District *Panchayat* on July 4, 1967 regarding the allotment of accommodation to *Panchayat* institutions from the pool of Government buildings. Moreover, the Accommodation Allotment Committee had gone beyond its powers to deprive the *Panchayat* staff of their fundamental rights. It has been brought to our notice that the Collector has allotted some of the houses out of turn to his staff. It is also learnt that the Collector has taken such decisions in his personal capacity, without referring them to the Committee. It may be pointed out that most of the staff of the *Panchayat* have come on deputation and they should have the rights and privileges granted to other Government servants, posted in the District.

In view of the above, it is resolved that the decisions taken by the Accommodation Allotment Committee in its meeting held on July 6, 1967 should be cancelled. It is further resolved that, with regard to allotment of houses, the position which existed before July 6, 1967 should be restored and any allotment made thereafter may be considered invalid. And allotment may be made as per priority list including the staff of the District *Panchayat*."

The District *Panchayat* in its General Body meeting held on July 28, 1967 discussed the draft resolution. The members were very agitated. Strong views were expressed against what the members characterised as the high-handedness of the Collector. Amongst the suggestions for action were :

(1) *Panchayat* Officers of the District and *Taluka* should abstain from attending meetings of all Committees on which they were appointed by the State Government.

(2) They should tender their resignations from such Committees.

(3) The District *Panchayat* should file a writ petition in the High Court and obtain stay orders on the resolution of the Accommodation Allotment Committee held on July 6, 1967.

After a prolonged discussion, the District *Panchayat* passed two resolutions. These resolutions demanded that "the decision of the Accommodation Allotment Committee taken on July 6, 1967 should be repealed forthwith and all the *Panchayat* staff be given accommodation on the basis of priority list and all the houses which have been given by the Chairman without the knowledge of the Committee, should be got vacated by their occupants and the same reallotted as per priority list". The meeting also decided that the President along with a few members of the District *Panchayat* should lead a delegation to represent the case to the Chief Minister.

The President wrote a letter to the Chief Minister on July 29, 1967, asking for an appointment. The Personal Secretary of the Chief Minister conveyed the date and time of the appointment to the President. The President and a few other members

of the District *Panchayat* met the Chief Minister. They submitted a written petition to him and also explained their grievances against the Accommodation Allotment Committee. The President also sent the copies of the petition to the Secretary, State *Panchayat Parishad*[2] and also to the Ministry of Health and *Panchayati Raj*.

According to the President, the Chief Minister was sympathetic and assured the delegation that he would discuss the matter with the Minister concerned.

After the deputation met the Chief Minister on August 14, 1967, the State *Panchayat Parishad* discussed the issue at its meeting held on September 4, 1967. The officials of the PWD were also invited to attend this meeting. The *Parishad* decided that the officers, who had been Government servants before April 1, 1963 and were transferred to the *Panchayats*, must be considered for allotment of houses by the Accommodation Allotment Committee in all the Districts.

Following the recommendation of the State *Panchayat Parishad,* the Deputy Secretary of PWD wrote to the Collector of Rampur District on September 4, 1967 stating that the case regarding allotment of accommodation to the staff of the *Panchayat* had been duly considered, and added, "The decision of the Accommodation Allotment Committee taken on July 6, 1967 and the new procedures adopted by it for the allotment of accommodation, be considered null and void and the houses lying vacant then and thereafter be allotted according to the rules laid down below :

"(1) The Government servants on deputation or by transfer to the *Panchayat* should be considered on a par with the servants of Government Departments for allocation of housing accommodation. Such *Panchayat* Officers

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[2]State *Panchayat Parishad* is an advisory body, consisting of all the Presidents of the District *Panchayats*. The Chairman of the *Parishad* is the Minister of Health and *Panchayati Raj*, while the Deputy Minister is the Vice-Chairman. Besides this, there are four members elected from the legislature and a few others nominated by the Government (these include Secretaries of the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Health and *Panchayati Raj* and Development Commissioner, etc).

are, therefore, entitled for allotment of PWD houses. The allotment should thus be made on the basis of priority list.

(2) According to the decision taken by the Committee on July 6, 1967, six houses out of seven have been allotted to the Government servants only. This is rejected hereby and as indicated in point (1) they will have to be re-allotted according to priority list. In view of this, if any body has to vacate a house, action will have to be taken accordingly."

Shri Dave made cryptic remarks on the whole episode and said that the Government should have envisaged difficulties of this kind and evolved uniform policies applicable to all districts. In those districts, where the *Panchayats* were able to have their own staff quarters, the problem of allocating houses from the PWD pool did not arise. Besides, he commented on the discussion at the general body of the *Panchayat* and said that it was really unbecoming on the part of the *Panchayat* members to take such a hostile posture. Shri Dave regretted that some members wanted to take the case to a court of law and were unmindful of the substantial expenditure that would have been incurred for the purpose. According to him, the rigid attitude of Shri Amin was responsible for the tension. He also felt that the hostility of Shri Amin may have had its roots in his failure to get the position of the Collector in this District, for which he had tried hard. Shri Dave added that he was fully aware of the mischief that a DDO could create for the Collector. He had himself had considerable experience of work as DDO.

WHERE IS THE FUN IF WE DON'T USE POWER

HARSHAD R. TRIVEDI

While democratic decentralization has brought political authority closer to the people and has effected people's participation in Government decision-making through their elected representatives, it has posed some serious challenges to the sanctity of legal-rational norms in the functioning of a local bureaucracy. This challenge comes both from the elected leaders who tend to undermine autonomy of administration rather than strengthen political representation, as well as from administrators who fail to recognize the role of representative politics in administrative decision-making. As Lucian Pye observes, "...Administrative structures which were built up during the colonial period when governments were expected to rule rather than respond to political forces, have not been officially transformed into agents of popular, representative politics. In many of the new countries, administration would be far more effective, if administrators were to adopt more aggressive measures and seek to be more political and less legalistic". Pye further remarks that the leaders of nationalist movement who are elected leaders to government offices, "have now settled on the easy alternative of preserving their power by crowding in on the administrative structure rather than striving to build up permanent and autonomous bases of power...(they) have tried to achieve their destiny by politicising, and hence corrupting the upper reaches of the administrative structures..."[1]

This case study describes what happens in a local administration when the legal-rational norms of a bureaucracy are undermined both by elected leaders and administrators. The case shows how an elected leader prompted by considerations of personal power and primordial ties and an administrator motivated by a sense of personal injury enter into a long drawn conflict that undermines legal-rational consideration of decision-making.

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[1]Lucian W. Pye, *Aspects of Political Development*, Little Brown, 1966.

Every district in the State of Gujarat had a few veterinary hospitals and service centres for veterinary services. In 1952, the Director of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry started an intensive programme called the Key Village Scheme as a non-plan scheme in a few selected districts in the State. The scheme envisaged care and treatment of cattle and improvement of the breed in selected districts where cattle-breeding was pursued as an occupation by a substantial section of the population. The scheme also provided for Artificial Insemination Centres wherever possible. The centres were to be organised by qualified Veterinary Officers with special training and the Key Village Blocks were to be managed by trained Veterinary Assistants, called stockmen.

This scheme was launched in three talukas of Mindhola district. It provided an A.I. centre with two sub-centres in the Key Village Blocks. In 1959, an Expert Committee inspected these centres with a view to assessing the progress of the scheme. The committee found that the scheme was not a success anywhere and recommended that these centres be closed. The State Government therefore decided in 1960 to close down all the three centres in the district. The Key Village Blocks managed by the stockmen were, however, allowed to be continued in this district.

The person elected as President of the District *Panchayat* in 1963 was said to be an energetic and shrewd man in his late fifties. He had been a freedom fighter since his boyhood. He belonged to a caste which dominated the administration in the State. He had contacts with some of the high officials in the State.

He was keenly interested in the development of Animal Husbandry in the district and initiated efforts to restart the Artificial Insemination Centres which had been closed down in 1960. He asked the District Development Officer (DDO) to move in the matter and write to the State Government. The DDO wrote to the Director of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry on May 26, 1963 urging him to grant permission to restart the A.I. Centre and the sub-centres and to appoint Shri Patel to be in charge of the centre. Shri Patel was working as an officer in charge of

a veterinary hospital in Bhinmal *taluka* of Mindhola District. It was also suggested by the DDO that the Veterinary Officer so appointed may be sent for special training in Artificial Insemination work as required under the rules[2] laid down by the Government. The Veterinary Officer under reference was no other than the son of the President of the District *Panchayat*.

The Director of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry turned down the proposal and the DDO accordingly informed the President. The President decided to adopt another course. He asked the District Production Committee to take up the matter. The committee passed a resolution at its meeting held on July 19, 1963 for starting A.I. Centres. It further resolved that Shri Patel be transferred to the A.I. Centre from Bhinmal *taluka* to take charge of the proposed A.I. Centre at the District Headquarters. On the basis of the resolution of the District Production Committee, the DDO issued orders transferring Shri Patel to take charge of the A.I. Centre at the District Headquarters; a copy of the orders was sent to the District Animal Husbandry office with instructions to arrange for the training of Shri Patel in artificial insemination.

After the transfer was made, the District Animal Husbandry Officer (DAHO) wrote to the State Government to arrange for special training of Shri Patel in Artificial Insemination work. He was advised in September, 1963 that there was no immediate need to give training to Shri Patel; that his name would be considered when a three-months' course was organized by government. But the DAHO again sent a reminder in October 1963, insisting that Shri Patel be given special training soon. Consequently, the Animal Husbandry Department arranged to send him for one month's training course at the circle headquarters during December 1963.

In March 1964, two months after Shri Patel came back from the training course, the DDO recommended his case for a special compensatory allowance of Rs. 50 per month. The

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[2]The veterinary officers were required to undergo specialised training in Artificial Insemination work before they were posted at the A.I. Centres. This training was given in a training Centre in the State.

Director of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry had issued instructions in 1962, specifying the conditions under which a Veterinary Officer and the assisting stockmen were eligible for special compensatory allowances. In August 1964, the Director issued a circular letter to the officers in charge of Artificial Insemination Centres in several districts, and a copy was also sent to the DAHO in Mindhola district. According to this circular, the minimum standard for getting the allowances was to have at least 70 per cent to 80 per cent cows or buffaloes served either by artificial insemination or with the help of approved bulls. It also contained a warning that if the targets were not fulfilled, the Director would be constrained to withhold the payment of the allowances to the officers concerned.

Shri Patel was given a special allowance of Rs. 50 as recommended by the DAHO who had approved his progress reports. According to him, Shri Patel had achieved the required targets.

After some time, the DAHO went on long leave, preparatory to retirement. When he was away on leave, the DDO, on the advice of the President, asked one of the Veterinary Officers to officiate for the DAHO. It was reported that the President was interested in placing the Veterinary Officer in this position to protect Shri Patel's interest who operated directly under the DAHO.

Shri Shah took over as the new DAHO in May 1964. He was a young officer aged about thirty-seven. He was reported to be a sociable person interested in the fine arts. It was generally known that his work had received commendation from his superiors, wherever he had worked in the past.

By then, Shri Patel had held charge of the A.I. Centre for for about 9 months. Within the first three months of Shri Shah's posting, a conflict developed between him and Shri Patel on the issue of residential quarters. There were two residential quarters in the premises of the hospital. One of these quarters was occupied by the Veterinary Officer-in-Charge of the Veterinary hospital (the person who was officiating as DAHO before Shri Shah came). The other quarter was in the possession of

Shri Patel, although he was reported to be staying with his father, the President. Shri Shah asked Shri Patel to vacate the quarter, as he wanted to use it temporarily for his stay till he got regular residential quarters. This was resented by Shri Patel and disliked by the President. The quarter was not given to Shri Shah.

Shri Shah then decided to exert his authority, as he said, "by cutting the President's son to his size". He quickly got all the facts about Shri Patel's transfer and about the special allowance he had been given. He was on the look out for some flaws in these past administrative decisions. He devoted his full attention to building up a case against Shri Patel. He was looking for an instance of misconduct on the part of Shri Patel and got this opportunity, when once Shri Patel disobeyed his order to attend to a dying camel in one of the villages of the district. Immediately he wrote to the Director of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry, questioning the propriety of Shri Patel's transfer and the allowance he was given. He pointed out that there were a number of veterinary hospitals in the talukas where it had not been possible to provide the services of a Veterinary Officer; on the other hand, there were two qualified Veterinary Officers at the district headquarters, one for the hospital and the other for the A.I. Centre. He suggested that one of them, the one in charge of the A.I. Centre (Shri Patel) should be posted in one of the *talukas*. Secondly, he pointed out that it was wrong to give a special allowance of Rs. 50 per month to Shri Patel when there was not any facility in his centre for the laboratory and storage required for testing and preserving vaccine. He also alleged that Shri Patel and the Veterinary Officer-in-charge of the hospital were carrying on private practice and charging fees for their services.

Simultaneously with this formal move, Shri Shah looked for allies, amongst the members of the District *Panchayat*. He found one in the Chairman of the District Production Committee. This person had earlier helped the *Panchayat* President in passing the resolution for establishing the A.I. Centre at the district headquarters and having Shri Patel transferred as its head. Later, however, he had turned against the President as a result of a power struggle for district leadership between the two. The result was that the District Production

Committee, at its meeting on April 3, 1965, passed a resolution that in view of bad conditions of a particular *taluka* hospital, a trained Veterinary Officer should be posted there, and there being two trained Veterinary Officers at the district headquarters, one of them should be transferred to the *Taluka* Hospital. The resolution, however, was not implemented until about a year later, early in 1966, when Shri Patel was posted to the *taluka* hospital.

There was in course of time a heated and protracted exchange of correspondence between Shri Shah and Shri Patel over minor issues. In one of the letters in May 1966, Shri Shah reprimanded Shri Patel for entering into direct correspondence with the Officer-in-charge of the Training Centre of the Circle. In another letter, he criticised Shri Patel for making out a case for the payment of compensatory allowance to the stockmen working under him. He also raised objection to the special allowance of Rs. 50 per month, which Shri Patel was drawing.

Shri Patel ignored these warnings and went on writing reminders emphasising the validity for the demand of special compensatory allowance to be paid to all the stockmen in the district. He argued that such incentives were absolutely essential for satisfactory results.

The moment of action came for Shri Shah when the Examiner of Local Funds Audit visited his office. The auditor discovered that there was no mention of the use of two litres of petrol in the account of his department. Shri Shah apologised for the mistake and stated that it could either be corrected or that he might make the payment from his own pocket. He, however, told the auditor that there were more serious irregularities which had escaped his attention. He volunteered to give details and relevant facts about the special allowance which was given to Shri Patel. The Examiner of Audit investigated this case and concluded that the allowance paid to Shri Patel was irregular. So, in his report on June 14, 1966, he recommended the recovery of the allowance paid to Shri Patel.

The President observed that his son was being unnecessarily harassed and this was entirely due to the attitude of the higher

authorities in the Department of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry. He was strongly of the view that the grant of special allowance and the transfer of his son were not irregular. He remarked that the department had merely used his son's case to take revenge for what he had done to expose the inactivity of the Department in earlier stages when the activities of the Department were transferred to the *Panchayat*. It so happened that the State Revenue Minister came to the District to inaugurate a Conference of the State *Panchayat Parishad*. While the Minister was going round the town, he got an idea to have the proposed sub-station of All-India Radio located on the site, reserved for the *Panchayat* Office. The Minister promised the President that he would get him another site in exchange. Whereupon the President suggested that a portion of the site used by the Cattle Breeding Farm on the outskirts of the town could be used for the *Panchayat* Office. The Minister agreed and promised to get the land released from the Department of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry.

The Minister brought political pressure on the Director of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry to part with an area of the Farm. The President's move in this matter was reported to be motivated by a desire to take revenge on the Director who had once been uncooperative in starting the A. I. Centre, thereby preventing the transfer of the President's son to the district headquarters. The President went ahead with getting the foundation-stone for the *Panchayat* Office building laid by the then Chief Minister, on the site in the Farm.

Another development had already taken place before the Conference was held in the district. The DDO, a friend of the President was transferred and a new DDO, Shri Lal joined in the month of July 1965. He was a young PCS Officer in his thirties. In the beginning, he was said to have developed friendly relations with the President; subsequently, the relations between them got strained.

Commenting on the behaviour of the President, Shri Lal observed that the President was in the habit of asking his subordinates over his head to make moves in certain matters without

his knowledge. In order to check such interference, the DDO introduced a system whereby everyone had to put down on paper the suggestions made by the elected leaders before they were implemented. He issued an office order to this effect. He felt that this was an adequate warning to the President.

The kind of cooperation the President used to get from the earlier DDO, in tackling even other officers, was no longer available. He and other elected leaders were upset; but so were some officers in the *Panchayat* administration.

When Shri Lal's relations with the President were good, he did not particularly seek the support of his staff; later, when they got strained, he could not depend on their trust and confidence. One of the staff members remarked: 'Shri Lal ignored and bullied us when he had good relations with the President'. Another one reported that Shri Lal did not trust his colleagues and subordinates. Thus they felt they had no other alternative but to approach the President, over the head of the DDO, and apprise him of all that went on in the *Panchayat* Office.

The President assigned the work of organisation of the conference of the State *Panchayat Parishad* to the senior Executive Engineer[3] and not to Shri Lal. The Senior Executive Engineer observed that this was deliberately done to undermine Shri Lal's position.

The Senior Executive Engineer was holding an equivalent position in the administrative hierarchy, but functionally, it was the DDO's responsibility to look after the organisation of the Conference. The DDO felt snubbed but could not do anything on the issue as it was within the President's powers to delegate such responsibility. Instead, Shri Lal picked up for quarrel other issues with the Engineering Department, which department, he thought, was 'favoured' by the President. The main issue he raised was about the funds spent on the Conference by

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[3]There were in all three Engineers in the District. Two of them were in the *Panchayat* Engineering Department and the third one was posted on special duty for the border areas. Of the two who worked in the *Panchayat*, one of them was a Senior Engineer holding Class I position, equivalent to that of the DDO.

the Senior Executive Engineer without his concurrence. But the Senior Executive Engineer claimed that it was in accordance with the resolution of the Engineering Committee based on the Government's Circular of June, 1963, delegating powers to the Senior Executive Engineer for drawing a prescribed amount of money from a personal ledger account of the DDO. The matter did not end there. Shri Lal shot off an Office Order in August, 1966, that with a view to economising and streamlining administration during the emergency[4] it was essential that the disbursing functions of the Executive Engineer, be put under the supervision of the Accounts Department of the *Panchayat*.

The Senior Executive Engineer conceded that the powers of the DDO were supreme *vis-a-vis* those of the heads of specialist departments in the *Panchayat*. But he remarked that although these powers were initially centralized, it was desirable that they be decentralized, in consonance with the philosophy of *Panchayati Raj*. In this conflict between Shri Lal and the Senior Executive Engineer, the President and a few other leaders supported the Executive Engineer.

It seems that Shri Lal also wrote an unfavourable confidential report on the work of the Junior Executive Engineer, who was under his control and supervision. He played an unhelpful role in the case of the other Junior Executive Engineer who came to the district on special duty for the border areas; he brought about a situation under which this Engineer was compelled to vacate a quarter given to him temporarily by the Accommodation Allotment Committee.

Besides, the District Health Officer also reported that his confidential report was spoiled by Shri Lal because he was anxious to exercise freedom of action within his department and was friendly to the Engineers.

The DAHO watched with interest the conflict between the DDO and the President. He took the opportunity to settle scores with the latter. He incited the DDO to effect the recovery from Shri Patel, which had been pending for a long time. The

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[4]The State of emergency, declared in the country after the Chinese aggression in 1962, had continued till 1967-68.

DDO seemed quite excited about the recovery case and informally asked the DAHO to put up the file to him.

The DDO himself narrated that as soon as the file was put up to him, he took action to see that the recovery was quickly effected. He also informed the Development Commissioner that Shri Patel was holding office of the President of the District *Panchayat* while his son was also an employee there. A *Panchayat* law required that a President in a *Panchayat* body was disqualified from holding the elective office, if his close relations were employed in the organisation. The Development Commissioner's office did not agree with the contention of the DDO for two reasons and conveyed them to the DDO. Firstly, Shri Patel was already in the service of the Veterinary Department of the State before the *Panchayat Raj* came into existence in 1963. Secondly, like many other officers, deputed from various State Departments such as Revenue, Agriculture etc., he was transferred to the *Panchayat* administration on a Government decision. About his own position, the President of the District *Panchayat* observed that it was unassailable. All his four sons had published a memorandum in a local newspaper in January, 1965, declaring that they were legally separated from their father. He also remarked that such objections, disqualifying an elected leader in *Panchayat* bodies, should be the concern of the electors. If they had elected him, that was enough; it was of no concern to the officials employed by *Panchayat*, such as the DDO to question it.

The tension between the President and Shri Lal became pronounced. The President stopped going to the *Panchayat* Office. At one time, Shri Lal had given an appointment to the President on phone. But when the President went to see him, he was not in his office. Shri Lal seemed to have left instructions with his peon not to allow the President to enter his office in his absence. A time came when the President decided not to go to the *Panchayat* office for two months. Some of the leaders, reflecting on the incidents remarked that the President should not have gone out of his way to make amends with Shri Lal by asking for an appointment. The Development Commissioner was kept informed of these developments. He decided to save the situation by transferring Shri Lal to another District with his own consent, in July, 1966.

Shri Lal's place was taken by Shri Singh, a young IAS officer, on his first posting after training. Shri Patel submitted a petition to the new DDO. With this was attached a statement indicating the targets he had achieved from time to time. Shri Patel averred that the stoppage of compensatory allowance to him and the recovery order on the basis of the report of the Examiner of Audit were unwarranted.

Shri Patel emphasised that it was not his fault if the authorities had not made clear the terms and conditions for availing of the compensatory allowance. He was sending quarterly reports to the Director of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry with copies to the DAHO about the progress of his work; no complaint had ever been made about the non-achievement of targets. In a Conference of the Animal Husbandry Officers at the circle headquarters in March, 1965, it had been mentioned that generally there were only 50 per cent fertile cattle in an area, and so if the rule of coverage of 70 per cent to 80 per cent was applied, it meant that 35 per cent to 40 per cent of the available cattle should have been served. And, he claimed he had achieved this target.

He alleged that the full facts of the case including the progress reports supplied by him were not placed before the Examiner of Audit. He also indicated that the payment of the allowance given to him had not been objected to in the earlier audit reports.

The DDO studied the file of Shri Patel and submitted the case to the Development Commissioner recommending that the recovery orders of the compensatory allowance paid to Shri Patel be set aside. He mentioned that the copies of progress reports submitted by Shri Patel along with the petition indicated that the required targets had been achieved by him. He further clarified that although the Artificial Insemination Centre was not fully equipped at the District Headquarters, Shri Patel had provided natural services to the cattle with the help of approved bulls. With his communication to the Development Commissioner, Shri Singh sent a copy of the progress report attached by Shri Patel to his petition, and a copy of the report containing the audit objections. As of October, 1967, the decision of the Development Commissioner was awaited.

DISTRICT PANCHAYAT ASSERTS FOR AUTONOMY

H. R. CHATURVEDI

Ever since the *Panchayati Raj* was introduced in Gujarat in 1961, the leaders of Iderpur District *Panchayat* were concerned about improving the administration at different levels of the *Panchayat* hierarchy. They wanted to change some of the rules and procedures which they thought "were not geared to developmental goals and were not in consonance with the spirit of decentralisation of power". As the President of the District *Panchayat* expressed, "Though the *Panchayat* bodies have been set up, the patterns of rules and procedures that govern these bodies continue to be those of the British colonial administration. If *Panchayats* were to be made real decision-making and the problem-solving bodies, greater administrative and financial autonomy need to be given to them."

It was with this point in view that Iderpur District *Panchayat* appointed a committee to work out in detail, the rules and procedures whereby maximum powers could be delegated to Village and *Taluka Panchayats* of the District. The committee (consisting of officials and elected leaders), made several recommendations. These were adopted by the Executive Committee and subsequently by the General Body of the District *Panchayat*. Implementation of these recommendations, however, implied amendment of some prevailing rules and procedures prescribed by the Government; so the approval of the Government had to be obtained. But the State Government was not agreeable. This started a long drawn out controversy between the District *Panchayat* and the State Government. The *Panchayat* leaders insisted that certain rules and procedures must be changed as indicated in the District *Panchayat* resolution and that the Government should approve these resolutions as they were in keeping with the objectives of *Panchayati Raj*. The State Government, on the other hand, repeatedly expressed its inability to permit implementation of resolutions which were in contravention of existing rules and regulations. Though the controversy was not resolved

as of January 1968, the exchanges between the State Government and the Iderpur District *Panchayat* stimulated widespread discussion about the powers and autonomy of the *Panchayat* bodies in the State of Gujarat. A few Congress leaders in Iderpur District *Panchayat* believe that this was in some way a precursor to the changes which were being then introduced in the *Panchayati Raj* Act of Gujarat.[1] Of course, as the President of the District *Panchayat* admitted, similar controversies had arisen in other districts of Gujarat also.

The present case study picks up one such resolution of Iderpur District *Panchayat*, relating to changes in the rules about procurement of stationery and getting printing work done. The proposal was contrary to the existing rules on the subject. The State Government insisted that the resolution be revised and threatened that, if that was not done, it would quash the resolution under Section 294 of Gujarat *Panchayat* Act, 1961. The District *Panchayat* insisted on upholding the resolution on the ground that its implementation would bring a stop to corrupt practices, relating to the handling of stationery and printing work and would also result in more economical purchases. The issue remained unresolved as of January 1968.

Concerned with the question of making its administration efficient, the Iderpur District *Panchayat* at the General Body meeting held on June 30, 1966 resolved to appoint a committee to go into this question. The resolution proposed by Shri Desai and supported by Shri Shah (both members of the Executive Committee) was unanimously adopted by the District *Panchayat*.

The resolution read as follows :

"The object of *Panchayati Raj* is to understand the problems of the people and, accordingly, create an efficient administration which can solve them. For this purpose, every level of *Panchayat* should be given scope according to its powers and resources. Similarly, the District *Panchayat* should give power to the

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[1]Gujarat Government had appointed a committee to look into the working of *Panchayat* Administration. The Committee had submitted its report and since then it has been discussed in the Parliament. But the Act was not amended until January, 1968.

Village and *Taluka Panchayats* for making them active and responsible. In order to consider all such issues, the District *Panchayat* at the General Body meeting appointed a committee of nine persons (seven non-officials and two officials—DDO and Deputy DDO, *Panchayat*) which should consider the following issues and submit its recommendations to the Executive Committee of the District *Panchayat* by August 30, 1966 :

(1) To consider the sharing of powers given to the District *Panchayats* under the Act, with the Village and *Taluka Panchayats*.

(2) To consider the allotment of the staff to the *Taluka. Panchayat* out of the District *Panchayat* staff with their responsibility and accountability to it.

(3) To consider the question of giving more powers to District and *Taluka* Education and other Committees to make them more active.

(4) To consider the problems arising out of the implementation of the recommendations of the committee of the State Government.

(5) To consider the accounting procedures between Village, *Taluka* and District *Panchayats*.

(6) To consider the staff requirements for the District and *Taluka Panchayats*.

(7) To consider what other powers and authority for the collection of revenue and purchases, the District, *Taluka* and Village *Panchayats* should have from the State Government.

(8) To consider all other problems relating to the policy and administrative matters."

The Committee had its first meeting on July 11, 1966 to discuss and finalise the procedure and method of their working. This meeting was attended by six members (five non-officials and one official). Shri Gokulbhai Amin, the Chairman of the

District Production Committee, one of the members of the Committee, had in consultation with the Deputy DDO, prepared a proposal, suggesting the procedure the Committee should follow. The Committee considered his proposal and decided as under :

(1) Shri Amin and the Deputy DDO should prepare a questionnaire, covering all the aspects mentioned earlier and send the same to all the District *Panchayat* Officials, *Taluka* Development Officers, *Taluka* Extension Officers and non-officials.

(2) The information furnished in replies to the questionnaire should be carefully scrutinised and discussed in detail by the Committee.

(3) The Committee members should also interview some of the District Officials and non-Officials, *Taluka* Officials and non-Officials, Village Officials and non-Officials.

(4) After all these facts are collected together, the Committee should review them.

(5) Finally based on this study and observations, it should make recommendations to improve the administration of the *Panchayat* at all the levels.

As decided at the meeting, the Deputy DDO and Shri Amin finalised the questionnaire by July 25, 1966 and sent it to all the persons concerned with the request that they should be returned back to them by August 20, 1966 duly completed. The Deputy DDO stated that 90 per cent of the questionnaires were returned in time. These were scrutinised by the members of the Committee. After this scrutiny, the Committee members went to four *Talukas* and to about fifteen Villages to hold personal interviews. Shri Amin said that these interviews revealed very useful information. People were, by and large, very free and frank and expressed their difficulties and problems without reservation. According to him, the Committee would have missed vital information, if these personal meetings were not held with the members "as our people could open their hearts only in personal conversations".

The Committee worked with great enthusiasm, according to the Chairman. He further observed that all the members did their best to make the working of the Committee a success as they had a feeling that the success of *Panchayati Raj* depended on removing the administrative bottlenecks, which they could not do unless they located them. In this connection, he particularly admired the role of the Deputy DDO and said that he worked with the Committee like a devoted social worker and not like a bureaucrat. He devoted a lot of his time to this work without even caring for personal convenience. He also praised the work of Shri Amin, who had given very useful suggestions and taken great pains to see that the Committee did its work in time.

Though the DDO was a member of the Committee, he did not take part in its meetings. The DDO's observations about the Committee's work were : "I was never convinced about the utility of such a Committee. The appointment of this Committee was politically motivated and I did not want to be dragged into it. The President, who was the Chairman of the Committee was an unreasonable fellow and it was very hard to work with him. He considered himself to be an authority on administration, as he had been in Government service for a few years. He thought all Government officials were corrupt and dishonest. How could any self-respecting person have worked in such a Committee ? Moreover, I was not even sure of the support of my colleague (the Deputy DDO) who although a Government officer, did not behave like one. He was more a political leader than a Government servant. I could not rely on him. Moreover, I was sure that the recommendations they would make would not be acceptable to the Government. Keeping all this in view, I thought it was wise to be out of all this botheration."

But the President had a different story to tell regarding the withdrawal of the DDO from the Committee. He observed in retrospect : "The DDO was an old timer and he was not in favour of bringing about changes. He wanted us to follow the rules and regulations of the Government, even if they presented problems in our working. He was on the verge of retirement and did not want to run any risk by launching on any new experiment. It is really difficult to run *Panchayat* administration with

such officials who are rigid and incapable of undertaking new experiments. We want dynamic officers, who are able to shed their officialdom and who try to reach people, to understand their problems and work for their solutions. The rules and procedures are only instruments for efficiency and there is nothing sacred and holy about them. With new experiments, we should find new rules which enable us to effectively carry them out. We want officials who can help us in that direction and not create obstacles in our ways. The DDO knew that he won't fit in with us, because we did not care for anybody's officialdom. He, therefore, did not take part in the work of the Committee."

Some of the recommendations of the Committee were considered at the General Body meeting of the District *Panchayat* held on March 31, 1967. The District *Panchayat* decided to implement one of the recommendations of the Committee; that, concerning the procedure of procurement of stationery and giving orders for printing work of the District *Panchayat*. A resolution was passed to the effect that all the stationery, required for the District *Panchayat* and other offices under it, should be purchased from Public and Cooperative Institutions. A list of five such institutions was also approved. It was further resolved that all the printing work of the District *Panchayat* and its related offices should be given to the District Cooperative Printing Press.

Commenting on the above resolution, the President mentioned that the District *Panchayat* was keen to root out corruption and that could not be done, unless new procedures and practices were evolved. Thus the procedures suggested in the resolution would enable the District *Panchayat* : (1) to encourage the welfare and cooperative institutions; (2) to ensure purchase of quality goods at reasonable rates; (3) to avoid delay in getting their stationery material or printing work done; and (4) to eliminate corruption.

The DDO did not agree with this recommendation and opposed the resolution on the ground that it was not in keeping with the existing rules on the subject. The existing rules on the subject, as prescribed by the Government, were to invite open tenders and award the work ordinarily, to the lowest tenderer; a

price preference was given to tenders received from cooperative societies in the sense that if the rates quoted by them were no higher than 10 per cent of the lowest price quoted by private parties, the work was to be allotted to them.

The resolution was, however, passed by a majority vote. The DDO did not like it. He felt that the State Government would interpret the passing of this resolution to mean that he did not know the existing rules on the subject and had not properly advised the District *Panchayat*, which was his main responsibility. Moreover, the DDO was firmly of the view that such changes in the rules and procedures did not provide any guarantee that corruption would be eliminated or that efficiency in the administration would result. He was not opposed to any encouragement being extended to welfare and cooperative agencies; but he was certainly opposed to giving them monopoly. He remarked : "If cooperatives could do a good job, let them compete with the private dealers".

As a matter of routine procedure, the proceedings of the meetings of the District *Panchayat* are sent to the Development Commissioner. His office scrutinises them and if there are legal and administrative flaws, the District *Panchayat* concerned are informed and asked to modify or amend such resolutions. If, however, a District *Panchayat* does not follow this advice, the Act empowers the State Government to quash such a resolution.

The proceedings of Iderpur District *Panchayat* were also sent to the Development Commissioner. He took objection to the resolution relating to the printing, etc., and wrote to the President of the District *Panchayat* on July 15, 1967 : "The printing work could be given to a cooperative printing press, provided its rates did not exceed 10 per cent of the lowest rates quoted by a private press. The work could be assigned only after ascertaining the competitive rates and quotations had to be invited for the purpose." He also quoted the existing rules on the subject.

In reply to the above letter, the President wrote a long DO letter to the Commissioner on July 31, 1967, providing him with the background and rationale for adopting the resolution. The

Assistant Development Commissioner replied to the President on September 25, 1967 stating, "Your letter to the Commissioner has been carefully examined. This resolution of the District *Panchayat* is not acceptable to the Government as the same is not in keeping with the directive on the subject, outlined therein. You are, therefore, requested to modify the resolution; otherwise, the same would be cancelled."

Commenting on the attitude of the Government, the President observed : "The District *Panchayat* has to spend Rs. 60-70 thousand for stationery and printing. The Government pay 33 per cent of the expenditure on this item and the remaining has to be spent by the District *Panchayat*. Would not the District *Panchayat* be careful and responsible in spending its money ? If the State Government thinks that it would not be, then there is no need to give powers to *Panchayats* which are not worthy of it. I appreciate that there should be uniform rules but they must not be rigid. There must be scope to accommodate local differences. Moreover, the rules must not be eternal and good for all times. It should be possible to modify and change them in the light of new experience. *Panchayati Raj* would have no meaning, if the State Government did not modify its rules, procedures, plans and policies on the basis of the experience of the *Panchayats*. Our administration would be effective only, if the higher level Government tried to make use of the experience of those who worked in the *Panchayat*.

The State Government must grant us latitude to modify the standard rules to suit local conditions. For instance, I know for certain that a lot of corrupt practices go on in the purchase of stationery and printing of the District *Panchayat*, because we follow a particular procedure of inviting tenders, etc. Should not the District *Panchayat* be free to change these rules ? I am sure, if we give the work to a cooperative printing press, it would eliminate all such problems and the work done would definitely be superior. It is really here that we can kill two birds with one stone. We can eliminate corruption and promote cooperatives. The difficulty seems to be that the Government officials, more often than not, are for the *status quo* and they are charged with the responsibility of bringing about change. I think this is expecting too much. The right thing would be to associate

only dynamic people, in administration connected with the *Panchayat*, who can understand the strains that arise in the working of the new system.

We cannot just yield to the pressure of the Government. We have to assert our autonomy and I am trying to do that. But if I do not succeed with the officials, I shall have to put it before the *Panchayat Parishad*.[2] If necessary the *Panchayat* Act of Gujarat might have to be amended."

Explaining the contention of the Government, the Assistant Development Commissioner observed : "The rules and procedures in vogue in the Government have not been framed overnight. A lot of experience of those who have been in the administration for several years has gone into the making of them. I am afraid we cannot just think of changing them because one District *Panchayat* does not find them suitable. We have to be firm and I am sure they will come round."

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[2]Highest level advisory body of the State with the Minister of *Panchayat* as Chairman and Presidents of the all District *Panchayats* as members.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF SUBSIDY TO THE ADIVASIS

ANIL BHATT

This case study deals with the controversy between a *Taluka Panchayat* President and the Project-cum-Block Officer on the one hand and between the *Taluka Panchayat* and the *Zilla Panchayat*, on the other. The controversy centred round the criteria for the distribution of subsidy to the *adivasis* for agricultural purposes. The Government had laid down some principles for this. But the President of the Sant *Taluka Panchayat*, in contravention of the Government Resolution, decided to adopt the extent of land holding and annual income, as the criteria for giving subsidy to the *adivasis*. This adversely affected some *adivasis* who made complaints to the *Zilla Panchayat* President. The *Zilla Panchayat* President, a political rival of the *Taluka Panchayat* President supported the cause of the complainants and wanted the *Taluka Panchayat* to change its decision. The *Taluka Panchayat* President did not want to change his decision; instead, he pressed the Block-cum-Project Officer to dispose of the subsidy cases according to the resolution of the *Taluka Panchayat*. The Project-cum-Block Officer was on the horns of a dilemma, and did not know whether to abide by the government resolution and obey his administrative superior, the District Development Officer or comply with the resolution of *Taluka Panchayat* as was expected by its President. This resulted in tension between the *Taluka Panchayat* President and the Project Officer and his staff, delayed the distribution of subsidy grants, affected other developmental programmes in the *taluka*, and worsened the relationship between the *Taluka Panchayat* and the *Zilla Panchayat*.

After the introduction of *Panchayati Raj* in Gujarat, the administration of the Community Development Block was also entrusted to the *Taluka Panchayats*. In *adivasi* areas, in order to make a substantial impact on their development, more funds and personnel were allocated. Also, the rules for

giving government grants for various developmental activities were comparatively more liberal for *adivasi* Blocks. One such rule pertained to the subsidy to be given to farmers for different agricultural purposes. Ordinarily, the rate of subsidy for agricultural purposes was 25 per cent of the expenditure incurred by the farmer on minor irrigation, soil conservation, improved implements, etc. But in *adivasi* areas, the Government of Gujarat decided to give subsidy at the rate of 50 per cent. The *Panchayats* and Health Department of the Government of Gujarat passed a formal resolution to this effect on July 31, 1963.[1]

Sant *taluka* is a predominantly *adivasi* area and therefore it was given two C. D. Blocks—Sant-1 and Sant-2—both being under the administrative jurisdiction of Sant *Taluka Panchayat*; a special grant for subsidy to *adivasis* was made available in accordance with the said G. R. of the *Panchayat* and Health Department.

The Agricultural Extension Officer invited applications for subsidy from the *adivasi* farmers of the *taluka* who had incurred expenditure on various items of agricultural development. When some applications were received, the Extension Officer put them up before the Agriculture Production Sub-Committee of the *Taluka Panchayat* for sanction. The President of the *Taluka Panchayat,* who regularly attended the meetings of the Production Committee, even though he was not a member of that Committee[2] disagreed with the criteria and wanted to evolve different criteria for his *taluka.* According to him the intention of the Government in giving subsidy to *adivasis*, at the rate of 50 per cent, was to help the really backward and poor *adivasis.* Therefore, such criteria should be evolved as would benefit only the really poor and backward *adivasis.* It was not necessary to apply the same general Government standard to his *taluka* in which there were several well-to-do *adivasi* families. The members of the Production Committee did not like to go against the G. R. But the President was a very domineering and

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[1]Hereafter referred to as G. R.

[2]Although the President has a right to attend meetings of any of the Committees of *Taluka Panchayat,* ordinarily very few Presidents excercise this right.

politically powerful person; so they yielded to his wishes and passed a resolution, evolving new standards for giving different types of agricultural subsidy. The following conditions were laid down in the *Taluka Panchayat* Resolution :

1.	For irrigation, Oil Engines and Pumping set.	50 per cent to those *adivasis* who hold land below 16 acres and whose annual income is below Rs. 15,00. 25 per cent to those, holding land above 16 acres and/or having income of more than Rs. 1500.
2.	For new wells and repairs.	—do—
3.	For improved seeds and Chemical fertilisers.	No subsidy to those *adivasis* who hold land above 5 acres. 50 per cent or Rs. 20, whichever is less, to those who hold land below 5 acres.
4.	For improved methods of agriculture.	50 per cent or Rs. 50, whichever is less, to farmers holding less than 5 acres. No subsidy to those who have more than 5 acres.
5.	For land improvement.	Rs. 75 but not to those *adivasis* who hold land above 2 1/2 acres.

This resolution was in contravention of the G. R. since, according to the latter, 50 per cent subsidy was to be given to all *adivasi* farmers, irrespective of their land holdings or income and without any limit on the maximum amount of the subsidy.

When this resolution was introduced, the Agricultural Extension Officer who acts as the Secretary of the Production Committee advised that it was not proper to introduce different standards for this *taluka*. In all other *adivasi talukas* of the district, subsidy was given according to the standards laid down by the G. R. He further advised that if changes were introduced only in Sant *taluka*, there would be dissatisfaction among the *adivasi* farmers, and the agricultural development of the *taluka* would suffer badly. But his objection was overruled.

The *Taluka Panchayat* President then brought this matter before the Executive Committee and then in the *Adivasi* Advisory Committee and got the resolution of the Production Committee endorsed by both these committees. When the matter was before the Executive Committee, the Block Development Officer, who acts as its Secretary, also advised the President not to make amendments in the provisions, laid down by Government. But his advice was not heeded.

According to the President, the reasons which prompted him to introduce the limit of landholding and income, for giving subsidy were purely egalitarian. He explained that all *adivasis* did not belong to the same economic and social stratum. There were some who were rich, educated and more advanced. In fact, some of them were much better off than many people of the higher castes. There was no reason why they should be given special benefits just because they were *adivasis*. If subsidy was given at the same rate to all *adivasis* without making any difference between the rich and poor, the richer *adivasis*, who were also advanced in agriculture would come up first for all types of subsidies and would take away most of the amount allocated to this *taluka*. The poorer *adivasis*, who were also backward in agriculture, needed to be encouraged to use improved implements and adopt improved agricultural methods. But by the time these people were made aware of the benefits and were persuaded to adopt innovations, most of the allocated amount would have been spent on the richer *adivasi* farmers. The really needy *adivasis* would, therefore, not get the benefit of the subsidy scheme. Thus the amendment that he introduced in his *taluka* modifying the G. R. was, to quote his words : "in accordance with the socialistic pattern of society, the main principle of the government".

But the Agricultural Extension Officer and two rivals of the President who had objected to his innovation had another version to give. According to them, the decision of the *Taluka Panchayat* President was prompted by political considerations.

The President of the *Taluka Panchayat* was a very prominent and powerful Congress leader of the *taluka*. He had been a Congress MLA from 1952 to 1962. It was reported that he was

very hardworking, was constantly in touch with the people and always helped the people of the *taluka* in their dealings with the administration such as procuring *taccavi* loans, subsidy permits, etc. As the President of the *Taluka Panchayat*, he used to attend office regularly and all the meetings of all the sub-committees of the *Taluka Panchayat*. He took personal interest in the development of the *taluka* and would accompany his office staff on tours. Nothing that happened in his office was beyond his knowledge. He knew the problems of the *taluka* well and personally knew two or three prominent people in every village of his *taluka*. The *taluka* is a forest area and the President was very active in starting forest cooperatives in various villages of his *taluka*. During his ten years as Congress MLA he had emerged as the most dominant *adivasi* leader of the *taluka* by creating and controlling a network of voluntary organisations—mainly the forest cooperatives. He was in a position to extend patronage and favours to a number of village leaders, who in turn provided him with the necessary political support. The District Congress Committee (DCC) President who claimed to have led a life of constructive work among the *adivasis* viewed this rise of the *Taluka Panchayat* President as posing a serious challenge to his well-established position in the district politics.

In the 1962 general elections, the *Taluka Panchayat* President asked for a Congress ticket for the Assembly but it was denied to him under the famous "10 year rule".[3] The real reason, according to him, was that the President of the *Zilla Panchayat* who was then the President of the District Congress Committee was against him. In the District Congress party, these two were rivals. The DCC President wanted to support his own man in the *taluka*.

When *Panchayati Raj* elections were to take place, the President of the *Taluka Panchayat* who was not given the Assembly ticket asked his party for a ticket for the Presidentship of the *Taluka Panchayat*. But his rival, the President of the

[3]The "10 year rule" was adopted by the Congress Party of Gujarat in the 1962 General elections, according to which no person who had remained MLA for 10 years was to be given a ticket for the Assembly.

DCC wanted to place his own man as President of the *Taluka Panchayat*. However, because of his strong influence in the *taluka*, the present President of the *Taluka Panchayat*, was able to get his own men elected as *Sarpanches* in majority of the villages during the village *panchayat* elections. These *Sarpanches* became *ex-officio* members of the Sant *Taluka Panchayat*. At the time of the election of the President of the *Taluka Panchayat*, the DCC President managed to get the Congress ticket for his own man, Shri Karsanbhai Patel. When the present *Taluka Panchayat* President saw that he was in a strong position to win the election, he contested against the official Congress candidate, and won with a good majority. As he had contested against the official Congress candidate, he was expelled from the party.

In the formation of various sub-committees of the *Taluka Panchayat* he included only his supporters; and therefore, he was able to manage the affairs of the *taluka* in his own way. His supporters were, in turn, politically dependent on him and were, therefore, obliged to do his bidding.

It was thus that the subsidy resolution was passed, even though his supporters did not like the conditions introduced by him.

If the *Taluka Panchayat* President was a very powerful leader of Sant *Taluka*, the *Zilla Panchayat* President was a powerful leader of the Anandpur district. In fact, he had been able to get his men elected as Presidents in all *Taluka Panchayats* except Sant *taluka*. The rivalry between the two—the *Zilla Panchayat* President and the *Taluka Panchayat* President—took such a form that at every opportunity, each tried to create obstacles for the other. Whenever he attended the *Zilla Panchayat* meeting, the *Taluka Panchayat* President would vehemently oppose the *Zilla Panchayat* President on every issue. The *Zilla Panchayat* President, it was reported, gave step-motherly treatment to Sant *taluka* in allocation of resources.

Shri Karsanbhai Patel who had contested against the *Taluka Panchayat* President and a few of his supporters had bought oil engines for irrigation purposes. When they applied for subsidy for the oil engines, their request for 50 per cent subsidy

was not sanctioned by the *Taluka Panchayat* President on the ground that they had either more than 15 acres of land or more than Rs. 1,500 of annual income. This was against the provisions of the G. R. on the subject but in accordance with the terms of *Taluka Panchayat* Resolution.

Shri Karsanbhai Patel felt that it was to harass him and his supporters that the *Taluka Panchayat* President had introduced the limit of landholding and income in the grant of subsidies, etc. According to the Agricultural Extension Officer several applicants who were the supporters of the President's rivals were not given subsidy at the rate of 50 per cent, but were given at the rate of 25 per cent, even when their income was less than Rs. 1,500. Who was to testify about the income of the applicants for the subsidy but the *Taluka Panchayat* President himself ? In such cases, the President asked the Extension Officer to give them subsidy at the rate of 25 per cent only, saying that he knew what their income really was. On the other hand, many applicants who were the supporters of the *Taluka Panchayat* President were reported to have been given subsidy at the rate of 50 per cent even though their income exceeded Rs. 1,500.

Shri Karsanbhai Patel along with five others filed a complaint with the *Zilla Panchayat* that, even though according to the G. R. they were entitled to subsidy at the rate of 50 per cent, they were given only 25 per cent. The *Zilla Panchayat* President was quick to take action on these complaints. He immediately asked the DDO to "look into the matter and act promptly".

The DDO, seeing that the *Zilla Panchayat* President was concerned, asked immediately for the TDO's explanation, why subsidy was not given at 50 per cent rate in accordance with the G. R.

The TDO was faced with a difficult situation. Should he act according to the instructions of his administrative superior, the DDO and disregard the wishes of the *Taluka Panchayat* President ? If he disregarded the wishes of the *Taluka Panchayat* President and the resolution adopted by the *Taluka Panchayat* Executive Committee, his relations with the *Taluka*

Panchayat President would be strained. If he disregarded the orders of the DDO, the latter would perhaps take action against him.

The strategy that the TDO adopted in this situation for solving the subsidy problem was 'not to solve it' at all. He adopted 'go slow' tactics in processing the subsidy applications. He neither acted in accordance with the instructions of the President nor according to the orders of the DDO. He kept all the matters relating to subsidy grants pending.

Meanwhile, the two *adivasi* blocks—Sant-1 and Sant-2—of Sant *Taluka* were amalgamated and the TDO was replaced by a senior Class-I Officer, namely the Project-cum-Taluka Development Officer (PO).

The six complainants who had earlier referred their cases to the *Zilla Panchayat*, seeing no action being taken on their representation, went again to the *Zilla Panchayat* President and complained that their cases had still not been cleared; as a result, the DDO again wrote to the newly appointed PO that the application of the six complainants should be disposed of soon.

The new PO was, by this time, thoroughly briefed by his subordinate, the Extension Officer, about the background of the subsidy problem and also of the political situation in the *taluka*. The PO was an honest and hardworking person; he was loathe to do anything, not strictly permitted by rules and regulations. When he saw that the *Taluka Panchayat* President wanted him to do quite the opposite of what the DDO had indicated, he wrote to the DDO "While the G. R. says one thing, the *Taluka Panchayat* policy says quite the opposite thing and under these circumstances, we do not know what to do and whose instructions to follow".

To this the DDO wrote, "Why was proper guidance not given to the *Taluka Panchayat* when they passed the resolution ? The PO should give subsidy according to G. R. and not according to the policy, laid down by the *Taluka Panchayat*."

When this letter was placed before the *Taluka Panchayat* President, he instructed the PO to ignore the instructions of the

Zilla Panchayat and give subsidy according to the *Taluka Panchayat* resolution. The PO said he could not ignore the instructions of the *Zilla Panchayat*.

Later, the Extension Officer advised the PO that he should not do anything against the wishes of the *Taluka Panchayat* President either, as the President had made a prestige issue of the whole matter. If he acted against the President's instructions, the latter might create trouble for him. It would be better, if he sent all the cases of subsidy to the *Zilla Panchayat* and let them decide. The PO acted accordingly and sent all the six cases of the complainants to the *Zilla Panchayat* with the following note :

> "The six applicants, whose applications are enclosed are *adivasis* and are entitled to 50 per cent subsidy according to the G. R. But according to the resolution of the Executive Committee of the *Taluka Panchayat*, which is also enclosed, they can be given only 25 per cent subsidy as they have either more than 15 acres of land or more than Rs. 1,500 income. They are sent for the disposal by the *Zilla Panchayat* and for giving subsidy from the *Zilla Panchayat* fund."

When the *Taluka Panchayat* President came to know about this, he was furious with the PO for sending them to the *Zilla Panchayat* and not disposing of them himself at the *taluka* level, according to the *Taluka Panchayat* policy. He told the PO that he was acting as an agent of the *Zilla Panchayat* and was not cooperating.

The Agricultural Extension staff was not happy with the new policy of subsidy that the *Taluka Panchayat* had adopted. They were already facing the problem of making the *adivasis* accept new methods and implements for agriculture. Most of them were so poor that they could not buy oil engines, even if they were given 50 per cent subsidy. "According to the new policy of the *Taluka Panchayat*", said the Agricultural Extension Officer, "those who were in a position to adopt new practices were ruled out, because they got only 25 per cent subsidy, while those who were eligible for 50 per cent subsidy neither had the willingness nor the resources to meet the cost of another 50 per cent on

their own". The Extension Officer was, therefore, worried that he would not be able to spend the funds allocated for the subsidy; and that would reflect badly on his work record. This was his main objection to the policy of the *Taluka Panchayat* on subsidy. So he showed his concern to the *Taluka Panchayat* President from time to time and told him that he would not be able to spend the subsidy funds. The President said he would rather return the funds to the government than give 50 per cent subsidy to rich *adivasis* who did not deserve it.

Since the President had such strong feelings on the issue, the Extension staff preferred to remain silent until such time as favourable conditions arose to alter the resolution of the *Taluka Panchayat*.

Such an opportunity came, once, when the President of the *Taluka Panchayat* was not present at the meeting of the Production Committee held on January 27, 1966. The Agricultural Extension Officer, finding the President absent, introduced a resolution about giving 50 per cent subsidy to all *adivasis* irrespective of their income or the extent of land held by them. The members of the *Taluka Panchayat* themselves were not at all in favour of the conditions imposed by the President. They felt that when government was prepared to give more money, there was no need for them to place unnecessary restrictions and create dissatisfaction. It was only under the President's pressure that they had agreed to pass the earlier resolution. After all, they were politically dependent on the President. Now when the President was away, and the initiative was taken by the Extension Officer, the members did not mind giving their consent to the new resolution.

When this resolution of the Production Committee was brought up before the Executive Committee at the meeting held on February 17, 1966, the President was there and the resolution[4] of the Production Committee failed to get the endorsement and the earlier resolution was upheld.

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[4]All resolutions of Sub-committees had to be approved by the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee met again on March 30, 1966, when the President happened to be absent. The Extension Officer again introduced the resolution for giving 50 per cent subsidy to all *adivasis* without any qualification taking advantage of the President's absence, and the Executive Committee passed the resolution this time. But this was not the end.

In Sant *taluka*, the President had introduced a system of never allowing the proceedings of the meetings to be written, there and then. He would first ask the BDO to prepare a draft, which was called the Office Copy (OC), of all the resolutions passed by any committee of the *Taluka Panchayat*. Next day, he would go through all such OCs and make such changes in them, as he thought fit. Sometimes, it was reported, he even cancelled the resolutions of the *Taluka Panchayat* which he did not like, or introduced such resolutions as were never put before the concerned committee.

Next day, when the President saw the OC of this new resolution, passed by the Executive Committee in his absence, he crossed it out and did not allow it to be entered into the proceedings book. He took a very serious view of the matter and blamed the PO for inciting mischief behind his back. The President also called the Extension Officer and told him that it was he, who was at the root of the mischief and was instigating the whole office staff against him. The President threatened, "I will teach you a lesson".

With this, the relations between the President and the administrative staff of the *Taluka Panchayat* took a serious turn. The President put a ceiling on the travelling allowance of the Extension staff. The PO was not given a jeep when he went on tour and had to travel by the State transport bus. Great tension prevailed in the office. "As soon as the President entered the *Taluka Panchayat* office," said the Extension Officer, "the whole atmosphere became tense and uncongenial". After a while, it no longer remained only a subsidy issue but grew into a kind of cold war between the President and the administrative staff of the *Taluka Panchayat*, which affected all developmental work in the *taluka*.

The six applicants led by Shri Karasanbhai Patel kept on complaining to the Agricultural Extension Officer and the *Zilla Panchayat* about the injustice done to them. These applicants were politically quite significant people, and were well connected with the *Zilla Panchayat* President. They were pressing the *Zilla Panchayat* President for decision and the *Zilla Panchayat* President in turn urged the DDO for quick disposal of the cases.

These applicants also approached the Development Commissioner at Ahmedabad with their complaint. The Development Commissioner wrote to the DDO and asked for a report. He then sent the Deputy Development Commissioner to visit the Sant *taluka*. In his discussion with the *Taluka Panchayat* President, the Deputy Development Commissioner told him that, when in all other *talukas* of the district, there was a common rule for giving subsidy, he could not change it in his *taluka*. But the President said that the policy of his *taluka* for giving subsidy was so framed that only poor *adivasis* could benefit. The rich *adivasis* could afford to pay 75 per cent of the price of the equipment they bought. And after all the *Taluka Panchayat* had a right to decide its own policy.

The *Taluka Panchayat* President also tried to get the PO transferred from his *taluka*. He met one of the Ministers and the Development Commissioner and pressed them to transfer the PO of Sant *taluka*.

Meanwhile, the cases which were referred to the *Zilla Panchayat* were sent back by the DDO on November 17, 1966 with the remark, "It is not proper to send these cases here for disposal. The *taluka* has enough funds and the subsidies should be given from the *taluka* funds. The necessary changes should be made in the resolution of the Executive Committee or we will be compelled to cancel the resolution."

The PO placed the DDO's letter before the President. The President observed : "The *Taluka Panchayat* policy has been decided after giving much thought to the G. R. Eighty per cent of the people in the *taluka* are *adivasis*, most of whom are very poor. The policy is decided in such a way that only the very poor will get the benefit of the subsidy scheme. This policy, is thus in accordance with the Government's policy

of 'socialistic pattern of society'. Therefore, there is no point in the pressure from the *Zilla Panchayat* on us to change our policy."

The PO sent back the cases along with the President's remark to the District Development Officer and in his forwarding letter said : "We have written to you often to give your final and decisive guidance about this. The opinion and policy of the *Taluka Panchayat* is very clear on this point, whereas your instructions are contrary to the resolution of the Executive Committee of the *Taluka Panchayat*. In this situation, you must decide quickly and let us know what exactly we are supposed to do."

Meanwhile the *Zilla Panchayat* President was pressing the DDO to pass an order cancelling the resolutions of the *Taluka Panchayat* . But the DDO was reluctant to pass such an order in his name. He knew that the *Taluka Panchayat* President was a very strong and influential person in the whole State. He did not want to get into trouble. Moreover, there were standing instructions of Government to all the DDOs of the State that, as far as possible, they should not cancel the resolutions of the elected bodies.

The DDO, therefore, wanted to play it safe. Instead of cancelling the resolution, he threatened, that he would do so, if the *Taluka Panchayat* failed to amend it; at the same time he asked the PO to dispose of the subsidy applications. But he would not pass specific orders as to how the subsidy should be given.

At the *taluka* level, the President did not allow the PO to dispose of the cases as instructed by the DDO; instead, he pressed him to quickly dispose of the cases in accordance with the *Taluka Panchayat* resolution. The PO showed his inability to do so, unless he received clear orders from the DDO to that effect. At the same time, the PO kept on writing to the DDO that "the DDO should himself take the decision and should either give us the orders to give subsidy according to the *Taluka Panchayat* policy or should cancel the resolutions of the *Taluka Panchayat*". "Now", wrote the exasperated PO, "a decision from the *Zilla*

Panchayat is absolutely necessary. I have to request you, therefore, to take a definite decision immediately."

Meanwhile, the tension between the staff and the President kept on mounting. The PO kept on refusing to act on the subsidy cases, as desired by the President. The President continued his efforts to get the PO transferred. The work of the *Taluka Panchayat* almost came to a standstill.

Ultimately, the DDO wrote to the Development Commissioner, seeking his advice in the matter. The *Zilla Panchayat* President also met the Development Commissioner, and asked him to take steps to cancel the resolution of the *Taluka Panchayat*.

The Development Commissioner wrote to the DDO, "The implementation of the subsidy resolution should be done according to the rules, laid down by the government. It is not advisable to introduce unnecessary conditions and qualifications at the local level."

On the basis of this letter, the DDO gave an order to the *Taluka Panchayat* on December 23, 1966, that, "under the powers given to me by the government, I cancel the resolution of the Production Committee and the Executive Committee. As these resolutions are not in accordance with the government policy and are in contravention of the rules laid down by the government and are also not in accordance with the standards of giving subsidy, prevailing in the whole of the district, I hereby order that the resolutions of the Executive Committee and the Production Committee of the Sant *Taluka Panchayat* be cancelled and subsidy be given to *adivasis* according to the rules laid down in the resolution of the government."

It came as a surprise to all that the President of Sant *Taluka Panchayat* was not at all upset by the DDO's action of cancelling the *Taluka Panchayat* resolution. He had other things to think about. With the fourth general election of February, 1967 approaching, the President had lost his interest in the *Taluka Panchayat*. His energy and attention were all concentrated on getting a Congress ticket for the Assembly. In 1967, the competition between the Congress and Swatantra parties in Gujarat was very keen. It was almost a neck to neck race

between the two parties. So the Congress party was not prepared to risk losing even a single seat. The Congress leaders knew that, if not given a ticket, the *Taluka Panchayat* President would contest against the Congress nominee and probably defeat him. Despite the protests of the *Zilla Panchayat*, the *Taluka Panchayat* President was given the Congress ticket. His interest thus shifted from the *Taluka* to State level; he did not bother himself about the DDO's order, cancelling his resolution.

As soon as he received clear orders, the PO instructed his Agricultural Extension Officer to reopen the cases of the applicants, who had filed complaints against the award of lower subsidy. But, by that time, the funds of the *Taluka Panchayat* for subsidy had been exhausted and fresh grants had not been received. The Extension Officer, who was in charge of this work had been sent for training. So nobody looked into the matter. The persons who had filed complaints for getting subsidy at 50 per cent rate did not get the remaining amount for two years after the cancellation of the *Taluka Panchayat* resolution.

When the Extension Officer returned from training in January 1968, he decided to give the remaining amount of subsidy only to those persons who had filed complaints. He said that he was not going to reopen the cases of those who did not file complaints, as this would have increased his work. So the *adivasis* who did not agitate against the *Taluka Panchayat* decision did not get the remaining amount of subsidy. The Extension Officer said, "In *Panchayati Raj*, those who make a hue and cry get the benefit and those who remain silent don't".

Soon after, the order of the DDO cancelling the *Taluka Panchayat* resolution was issued, the PO was transferred. The *Zilla Panchayat's* President told him that he would request the Commissioner to issue a stay order on the transfer. But the PO, sick of the bitterness that had prevailed in the *taluka* administration, preferred to go away and leave the *taluka*. This episode left him with such disgust that while leaving the *taluka* he said, "It is better to be born a '*chamar*' (untouchable) than serve n *Panchayati Raj*".

ASKING GOVERNMENT TO PAY FOR WATER SUPPLY SCHEME

H. R. CHATURVEDI

This case describes what happened for seven years to a water supply scheme of Kabirpur village in Nal District of Gujarat. The village people wanted to have water without paying the required contribution towards the cost of the scheme, since they were too poor. The officials and higher level leaders accepted this premise and made efforts to get the scheme implemented with the expenditure being borne fully by Government. .The efforts began in June 1961; even till January 1968, the scheme had not been implemented and the village was without water.

Kabirpur is a small village, situated in the interior of Nal District, about three miles from the Chandnagar—Mojpur road with which it is connected by a very rough road. The average rain-fall in Nal District is 750.7 mms. but the rain-fall in 1960 and 1961 was only 452.3 and 671.9 mms. respectively. Some areas of Nal District were declared scarcity areas and relief works were carried out. The difficult water situation was stated to be mainly due to the hard soil; with the failure of monsoons, the water level in the wells declined considerably. The people of Kabirpur had to go two to three miles to fetch water for themselves and their cattle.

Kabirpur was a *Girasdari*[1] village in pre-independent India. Of the family of the *Girasdar*, an old patriarch lived in the village and the younger members lived in cities. As reported by several village people, the *Girasdar* never cared for the village and was interested only in collecting the revenue. Water scarcity in the village did not pose any problem for him, as he

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[1]*Girasdari* village was one owned by a *Girasdar* who had the right to collect revenue.

had made special arrangements for water supply for his personal use.

After the *Zamindari* Abolition Act, a large amount of land had been given to the cultivators who were earlier landless and had worked as servants on the land of the *Girasdar*. After the passing of the Act, there were as many as eighty-five families who had acquired ownership of the land from the *Girasdar*. The *Girasdar* kept himself completely aloof from the socio-political life of the village. According to the *Sarpanch* of the Village *Panchayat*, the relationship between him and the village people was one of subdued hostility.

The economic life of the village, however, changed substantially after Independence. A large number of the families made good, since they got the ownership of agricultural land. According to a middle aged man of the village, there had been very few '*pucca*' houses in Kabirpur some twenty years back but now about 75 per cent of the houses were '*pucca*'. During the last three years (1964-67), some thirteen households had got hand-pumps installed, each costing Rs. 1,000. The village as a whole had spent about twenty thousand rupees for a school building, a *Panchayat-ghar* and a *Chora*—a community centre. Politically, the village was not so influential. There was no village leader who had any influence, either at the *Taluka* or at the District level.

Kabirpur which had always experienced water shortage, was severely affected by the drought in 1961. The Block Development Officer (BDO) requested the Collector to initiate some scheme of water supply for the village. The Collector sent a letter on June 7, 1961 to the President of District Local Board, requesting him to take the necessary steps in the matter. He had sent a similar letter to the Project Officer of the District. The District Project Officer of Nal in turn asked the BDO to prepare a scheme for water supply to Kabirpur, under the local development works programme. Under this programme, the beneficiaries were required to pay 50 per cent of the total expenditure, as their contribution.

The BDO prepared a scheme for supply of water to Kabirpur at an estimated cost of Rs. 20,000 and sent it on July 1, 1961 to

the Project Officer with the following remarks : "Kabirpur is a *girasdari* village. The population consists mostly of *Kolis* and other extremely backward and poor castes. The village is surrounded by rocky hills. Hence the chances of getting potable water within the vicinity of the village are limited. It is therefore imperative on the part of Government to take immediate steps in order to relieve the people and dumb animals from such acute scarcity of water."

The BDO had suggested the following schemes :

(1) A temporary scheme for supply of water by tankers.

(2) A permanent scheme for supply of water by a pipe-line from some good water supply source around the village.

He also sent the following resolution of the Village *Panchayat* adopted at its meeting held on June 30, 1961 supporting the recommendation of the BDO. "The village is very poor and it is not possible for the people to contribute money for meeting the cost of the water supply scheme. Therefore, the entire cost of water supply scheme should be borne by the District Local Board."

The Project Officer endorsed the suggestions made by the BDO and forwarded it to the Collector on July 5, 1961 with the following remarks : "There is a great scarcity of drinking water in Kabirpur village. Immediate steps must be taken to solve this problem. The BDO has suggested a temporary solution *i.e.*, supply of water by tankers, which must be taken up immediately. As regards the scheme for supply of water by a pipeline from a neighbouring village having a good source of water, it is not possible to raise public contribution to the tune of Rs. 10,000 required to implement the scheme, costing Rs. 20,000 as suggested by the BDO. The funds of the *Panchayat* are also limited. In view of this, it is suggested that the District Local Board should carefully examine the proposal and find out a permanent solution to the problem."

The Collector forwarded the proposal to the District Local Board on August 8, 1961 for its consideration. In his forwarding letter, he suggested that the Deputy Engineer should investigate the problem and suggest some permanent solution.

Meanwhile, an MLA visited Kabirpur amongst other villages of the area, affected by water scarcity.[2] The leaders of Kabirpur explained to her the difficulties of water supply which they had been experiencing for several years. They also told her of the proposal submitted by the BDO to Government. They requested her to look into the matter and help them in expediting the implementation of the proposal.

Following her visit to Kabirpur, the MLA sent a letter to the Under Secretary, Department of Health and *Panchayat*, Government of Gujarat on December 7, 1961. Amongst other things, she stated, "The people of the village have been making efforts to solve the problem of water supply which they had been facing for the last many years. Even if the soil was dug to 100 feet, water level was not reached. Digging a well in the village is therefore of no use. Therefore, it is necessary to supply water to the village by laying a pipeline from some nearby village. Kabirpur is a poor village and it is unfair to expect the people to make any contribution towards the water supply scheme. Therefore, the work may be taken up at Government cost."

The Under Secretary forwarded this letter to the Collector on February 1, 1962 asking him to report directly to the MLA the progress of the proposed water supply scheme for the village.

The Collector gathered information from the District Project Officer and the BDO and informed her on February 20, 1962, "The question of water supply to Kabirpur is under the consideration of the District Local Board. The Executive Engineer of Rural Development is investigating the whole question and further action will be taken up after his report is received."

The District Local Board returned the proposal on March 11, 1962 with the remarks that the scheme may be taken up under the Rural Water Supply Scheme and should be submitted to the Executive Engineer, Public Health Division in Chandnagar.

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[2]There was a general water scarcity in the area which was caused due to the failure of rains during 1961.

Accordingly, the Collector sent the proposal to the Executive Engineer, and requested him to prepare plans and estimates for supply of water to Kabirpur.

The village faced acute shortage of water in March 1962. Commenting on the water scarcity, the *Sarpanch* observed: "We have always had water shortage in the village, particularly in the months of April, May and June. The position generally used to improve after the rains. We used somehow to manage by getting water from *Vadi* (farm) wells. In 1962, unfortunately we had to face the problem much early, as the monsoons had failed that year. Water could not be had from the *Vadi* wells as their level was pretty low, owing to the failure of the monsoon. We had to approach the BDO and urge him to take steps to provide water. We told him that otherwise we might have to leave the village."

The BDO in turn wrote to the Collector on March 23, 1962 that there was acute shortage of water in the village and people were experiencing great difficulty in getting water for their day-to-day requirements. He requested that immediate steps might be taken to provide water to the village, failing which the people were likely to evacuate the village.

The Collector passed an order on April 11, 1962, stating that water should be supplied to Kabirpur through a bullock cart tanker at Rs. 50 per day, from a village about seven miles away. A sum of Rs. 4,000 was sanctioned and the *Mamlatdar* (revenue officer) was asked to supervise the operation and make the payment. A copy of this order was sent to the BDO as well as to the *Mamlatdar*.

While temporary arrangements were made, efforts for a permanent solution of the water supply problem continued. The Executive Engineer submitted the report of his investigations on June 16, 1962 to the Superintending Engineer. In his report, after dealing with the geography of the village, its size, and population, he stated : "There are two wells which are presently used for providing water to the village people. They go dry in summer, causing great difficulty to the people. The people have to go one and a half to two miles to fetch water from the *Vadi*

wells. The water level in *Vadi* wells also goes down considerably during the years of drought. Therefore, it is essential to find a permanent solution to the problem. This can be done by digging a special well in the *Vadi* area at a distance of about two miles, and laying pipelines from the well to the village. The estimated cost of this scheme will be Rs. 70,000 which includes Rs. 4,500 for carrying out recuperation test[3] to find out if the water level is adequate in the proposed well."

The Superintending Engineer forwarded the report to the Collector on June 26, 1962. The Collector sent it to the Under Secretary, Department of Rural Health and Industries on July 2, 1962 with his remarks : "The people of Kabirpur suffer from acute scarcity of water and Government is already spending Rs. 4,000 per year for making arrangements for supplying water through bullock carts. The village is poor and it is not possible for the people to make any contribution towards the cost of the water supply scheme. It is, therefore, suggested that the village be exempted from popular contribution and the project implemented at Government cost."

The Under Secretary wrote back to the Collector on November 9, 1962 that it was not possible to include the proposed scheme in the current financial year for want of funds and suggested that the village should raise its own resources.

In April 1963, *Panchayati Raj* was set up in Gujarat and all development projects were handed over to the District *Panchayats*. The transfer of schemes to Nal District *Panchayat* with files and relevant papers took nearly five months. After the papers were received by the District *Panchayat*, the District Development Officer wrote to the Under Secretary, Rural Health Department on September 30, 1963, emphasising the poverty of the village and requesting him to give administrative approval to the proposed scheme of water supply to Kabirpur. He further suggested that the scheme might be executed at Government cost.

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[4]A technical test carried out to ascertain adequacy of water in the sub-soil.

The Under Secretary wrote back on December 13, 1963 that Government could not incur the entire cost for the execution of the proposed scheme. The project could, however, be taken up under the Rural Water Supply Scheme, provided the District *Panchayat* undertook to meet 25 per cent of the cost of the project and also undertook to bear all the expenditure for repair and maintenance, after the proposed work was completed.

The DDO discussed this suggestion with the President of the District *Panchayat* in January 1964. The President remarked that the District *Panchayat* was not in a position to make the entire contribution of 25 per cent of the total cost of construction and this should be borne by the *Taluka* and Village *Panchayats* also. Moreover, the question of water supply to Kabirpur should be taken up only when the village people came forward with a request and showed their willingness to pay their contribution.

Meanwhile, the Executive Engineer of the Public Health Works Division, Chandnagar wrote to the *Taluka* Development Officer on May 17, 1965 asking him to deposit a sum of Rs. 4,500 for carrying out the recuperation test near Kabirpur, without which the water supply scheme could not be implemented.

The TDO wrote back to him on May 20, 1965 that the *Taluka Panchayat* did not have funds to pay this sum. He also added that the village was very poor and it was not possible for them to pay it either. He suggested that Government or the District *Panchayat* might be asked to pay this amount. In response to the TDO's letter, the Executive Engineer wrote on June 2, 1965, "No further work can be taken up regarding the water supply to Kabirpur unless the *Taluka Panchayat* pay a sum of Rs. 4,500 for the recuperation test. It is essential to carry out this test and make sure that there is adequate water at the site proposed for the construction of the new well."

In the meantime the Minister for *Panchayats* visited the *Taluka* Headquarters on July, 26, 1965. The MLA of the area was also present and she discussed the water problem of Kabirpur with him in detail. Commenting on the visit of the Minister, the President of the *Taluka Panchayat* observed : "The MLA told the Minister that she had written to him in past in this

connection. She also impressed on him, how poor the village was. She emphasised the fact that it was not possible for the people to make any contribution and the entire scheme should be taken up by Government. The President of the District *Panchayat* who was also present expressed the inability of the District *Panchayat* to pay any contribution to the scheme as it did not have adequate funds. The Minister promised to look into the matter. After his visit, the Minister passed a note to the concerned officer to look into the matter and take necessary action."

The Under Secretary, *Panchayat* and Health Department wrote a letter to the President of the District *Panchayat* on August 14, 1965 and sent with it one Government Resolution (GR) which outlined the details of the scheme for water supply to villages. Some of the conditions stated in the GR in respect of individual village water supply schemes were as follows:

(*i*) "*Capital Cost*

> Popular contribution should be paid by the Village *Panchayat* at the rate of 25 per cent of the total cost of the scheme or Rs. 10 *per capita* of people served by the scheme (on the basis of 1961 census) whichever is less.....

(*ii*) *Repairs and Maintenance Charges*

> The entire cost of maintenance and repairs including depreciation should be borne by the Village *Panchayat* concerned. Where the District *Panchayat* maintains the water supply scheme which is of the nature of individual water supply scheme, the District *Panchayat* will be entitled to collect maintenance and depreciation charges from the Village *Panchayat* concerned."

For regional water supply schemes, similar responsibilities devolved on the District *Panchayat*.

The President placed the letter of the Under Secretary for the consideration of the Executive Committee of the District *Panchayat* at the meeting held on November 12, 1965. The Executive Committee decided to request the Government to

bear the entire expenditure on the proposed water supply scheme of Kabirpur, as the Village, *Taluka* and District *Panchayats* were not in a position to contribute any thing. The resolution passed by the Executive Committee was endorsed by the General Body of the District *Panchayat* at the meeting held on March 29, 1966.

The DDO sent a copy of the resolution to the Under Secretary, *Panchayat* and Health Department, with the request that the scheme of water supply to Kabirpur may be taken up by the Government.

The Under Secretary, *Panchayat* and Health Department wrote to the DDO conveying the decision of the State Government that the proposed water supply scheme for Kabirpur could not be taken up unless the District *Panchayat* accepted the terms and conditions specified in the GR.

In the meantime, the DDO was transferred and the new officer who took over studied the case carefully. To quote his own words, "I was a little surprised that the District, *Taluka* and Village *Panchayats* were not prepared to pay Rs. 8,860.[4] I felt it was not a large sum, if shared by all the three bodies. It appeared to me that the village people must be somehow managing to get water and perhaps that was the reason why it had taken so long to have the scheme implemented. The village leaders must be avoiding to pay their contribution in the hope of getting things done by the Government in due course. I had found in my experience, while working in Community Development that village people usually tried to avoid paying any contribution. They were keen to have benefits without paying for them. It is really a hard job to make them realise that Community Development and *Panchayati Raj* attempt to mobilise and build community resources for improving the standard of living of all people of the community. Perhaps the officials and leaders have also failed in interpreting these objectives to village people. Instead, they have taken the easier course of providing benefits to the people at the cost of Government. I examined the file and discussed it with the President of the

[4]On the basis of Rs. 10 *per capita*.

District *Panchayat*. The President repeated his old argument : 'Let the village people approach us and then we will see.' I told him that this would reflect on the District *Panchayat* as they have not been able to provide water to a village which has been suffering from acute scarcity for the last so many years. Ultimately, the President agreed to place the proposal before the meeting of the Executive Committee of the District *Panchayat* to be held on May 13, 1966.

At the meeting, the DDO presented the letter of the Under Secretary and a brief note, giving the history of the Kabirpur water supply scheme. He mentioned that as per the requirements of the GR, they were required to pay only Rs. 8,860 at the rate of Rs. 10 *per capita* for a population of 886 according to the 1961 census, and not 25 per cent of the estimated cost of Rs. 70,000 which was much higher. He further suggested that the contribution of Rs. 8,860 might be divided as under :

Village *Panchayat*	:	Rs. 2,500
Taluka *Panchayat*	:	Rs. 3,180
District *Panchayat*	:	Rs. 3,180
		Rs. 8,860

The DDO described the discussion at the meeting thus: "Ordinarily in all such cases the amount of popular contribution was equally shared among Village, *Taluka* and District *Panchayats*. One member, therefore, raised objection to my suggestion and stressed that the amount of Rs. 8,860 should be equally divided among Village, *Taluka* and District *Panchayats*. The President of the District *Panchayat*, who had already discussed the case with me, intervened and explained that the village was poor and the Village *Panchayat* did not have sufficient funds and this was the reason for making this exception in the case of Kabirpur. Ultimately, the Executive Committee agreed unanimously to my proposal."

After the District *Panchayat* passed the resolution, the DDO asked the TDO to get similar resolutions passed by the *Taluka* and Village *Panchayats*. The TDO commenting on his efforts to get these resolutions passed by the Village and the *Taluka*

Panchayats said : "In accordance with the resolution of the District *Panchayat*, the *Taluka* and Village *Panchayats* had to pay Rs. 3,180 and Rs. 2,500 respectively. This was an enormous amount, if not for the Taluka *Panchayat*, definitely for the Village *Panchayat*. But I am sure even the Village *Panchayat* could pay this sum, if the leaders wanted. They have been spending a lot of money, individually and collectively. But the problem was that important individuals in the village had already found some solution to the problem of water supply for themselves. They had got hand-pumps. They did not view the problem as that of the whole village. The real sufferers were the majority of dumb and poor villagers. Between the years 1964 and 1967, thirteen handpumps had been installed. Moreover, one of the main items of expenditure of the Village *Panchayat* was repair, cleaning and deepening the village well. The Village *Panchayat* was spending Rs. 2,500 every year on that account since 1964-65. The village people perhaps lacked a sense of community living. They did not realise that they could have had more benefits at less expense.

"I went to the village and met the prominent persons there and explained the scheme to them. I discovered in my discussion with them that they were under the impression that if they postponed paying their contribution, Government would some day implement the scheme at its own cost. I clarified that they would never get water, if they did not pay their contribution and undertake the responsibility for repairs and maintenance of the water works, after it was completed. I also explained that the contribution of Rs. 2,500 was the lowest and the *Taluka* and District *Panchayats* had undertaken to pay Rs. 3,180 each. This was deliberately done in view of the economic condition of the village. I told them that they should consider themselves fortunate in getting the special concession of contributing less than the *Taluka* and District *Panchayats*. The *Sarpanch* and other village leaders ultimately agreed to pay their share and also to bear the repair and maintenance cost of the water works. They promised to hold a meeting at an early date to pass a resolution to this effect."

When the TDO succeeded in mobilising the village leaders to pay their contribution, he mooted the matter with the

Taluka Panchayat leaders. He first discussed the proposal with the President of the *Taluka Panchayat*. He informed him that the District *Panchayat* had already passed a resolution and fixed the contribution of the Village and *Taluka Panchayats*. He also told him of his discussion with the village leaders and their having agreed to pay their share of the contribution. Ultimately, the President of the *Taluka Panchayat* agreed to pay its share and get a similar resolution passed at the next meeting of the *Taluka Panchayat*.

The Village *Panchayat* at the meeting, held on April 25, 1966 resolved to pay its contribution of Rs. 2,500 and to bear the cost of repair and maintenance of the water works. The *Taluka Panchayat* had passed a resolution at the Executive Meeting, held on April 14, 1966. The TDO sent these resolutions to the DDO. The DDO forwarded the proposal to the State Government on April 28, 1966 along with the resolution of the District *Panchayat*.

Several months elapsed but there was no reply from the State Government. In the meantime, the DDO sent a number of reminders. Finally, the Under Secretary gave the administrative approval on January 2, 1967. The approval, however, was only provisional. It was given subject to the condition that "the Superintending Engineer of Public Health at Ahmedabad, should obtain a resolution from the District *Panchayat*, agreeing to give contribution as per principles laid down in GR, Health and Industries Department, No. VWS-5464/6837 dated February 25, 1965, *viz.*, at the rate of 25 per cent of the total cost of the scheme or Rs. 10 *per capita* of the people served by the scheme on the basis of the 1961 census, whichever is less and to bear annual M & R (maintenance and repair) charges on completion of the scheme. The scheme should not be taken on hand, till the resolution of the District *Panchayat*, Nal is received." The Superintending Engineer accordingly wrote to the DDO and also sent a copy of the letter to the Executive Engineer (PH) at Chandnagar.

The DDO again sent a copy of the resolution passed by the District *Panchayat* to the Superintending Engineer. After that, the Executive Engineer of Public Health Works Division,

at Chandnagar wrote to the DDO on April 7, 1967 to send him a copy of the resolution of the District *Panchayat* showing their agreement to the GR quoted earlier. The DDO sent him a copy of the resolution of the District *Panchayat* dated May 3, 1967. The DDO also wrote to the Superintending Engineer on May 29, 1967, asking for advice regarding the deposit of popular contribution of Rs. 8,860 which had been collected in connection with the Kabirpur water supply scheme.

The implementation of the scheme, however, had not begun until January 1968. The DDO observed, "The correspondence is going on for the last one year to get the final sanction from the State Government. The State Government has not found the District *Panchayat* resolution, adequate enough to grant the sanction. They keep on asking for a clear resolution in according with the GR, whereas we have been sending the copies of the District *Panchayat* resolution, passed on May 13, 1966, agreeing to contribute its share of Rs. 8,860 to the proposed scheme." When asked why he thought Government was not giving the clearance, the DDO remarked: "We have been asked to submit a clear resolution. I do not know what they mean by 'a clear resolution'. I have done all that is necessary at my end. I got the resolution passed by the District, *Taluka* and Village *Panchayats*, as required. The resolution of the District *Panchayat* agreeing to contribute the requisite amount has been sent to the concerned authorities. I wonder what more is to be done."

Commenting on the delay in giving administrative approval to various proposals of water supply, the Executive Engineer remarked, "Generally it takes one to two years because the procedure is rather long. The proposal is processed at different levels in the State Government and after that by the Central Government.[5] I do not understand why the Central Government

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[5]Rural Water Supply Scheme was initiated by Ministry of Health, Government of India under the National Water Supply and Sanitation Programme. Initially, the State Governments were empowered to give administrative and technical sanction to the proposals under this scheme, within the budget allotted to them and forward the fair copies of the sanctioned project to the Central Goverument for approval.

(*Contd.*)

has to examine such a proposal. After all, the State Government employs qualified engineers and once they have approved a scheme, there is no need to send it to the Central Government. Furthermore if some points are raised by the Central Government Engineers, the proposal is reviewed at State and District levels. After meeting the points raised by the Central Government, the proposal has to go back again to the Central Government. All this takes a lot of time." When asked about the specific reasons as to why the sanction for the water supply scheme of Kabirpur was taking so long, the Executive Engineer said, "Well, here the problem is different. There is a technical defect in the resolution of the District *Panchayat*. The contents of the resolution do not meet all the requirements stated in the relevant GR. The DDO and the District *Panchayat* have already been asked to send a clear resolution in accordance with the GR. I do not understand why they are not amending the resolution to bring it in accordance with the GR and, instead, keep on sending the copies of the resolution passed earlier." He, however, did not mention what the ambiguity was in the said resolution.

When asked about the same problem, the District *Panchayat* President made the point clear—rather reluctantly. "Government requires us to commit ourselves clearly about the responsibility of maintenance and repairs of the water supply project, after its completion. As required in the specific terms of the G.R. the Kabirpur Village *Panchayat* has passed a resolution, stating that it is willing to undertake such responsibility and we have forwarded the same to the State Government. But, the State Government refuses to recognise the Village *Panchayat's*

Subsequently this was changed and all the proposals under the scheme were required to the sanctioned by the Central Government before they were executed. The Government again delegated the powers to the State Government to scrutinise and approve any individual or composite water supply scheme, the estimated cost of which did not exceed Rs. 5 lakhs and *per capita* cost reckoned on the 1961 census population, did not exceed Rs. 50. In Gujarat, however, *per capita* cost of various rural water supply schemes was in the range of Rs. 128—215. Since this amount was more than Rs. 50, the schemes had to be sent to Central Government for its sanction.

commitment. Instead, they want us to take the responsibility—though we can have an understanding with the Village *Panchayat* about its carrying out the maintenance and repairs of the water works. In my opinion, it is most appropriate that the Village *Panchayat* takes the responsibility of maintenance and repair. I see no reason why Government should insist on the District *Panchayat* shouldering such a responsibility. We, however, do not want to commit ourselves on this. Hence, the resolution is found inadequate."

The DDO preferred to remain silent on the question of why the final sanction was not coming from Government. Instead, he said, "Let us wait and watch. It has to be seen how soon we can actually implement the scheme. There is many a slip between the cup and the lip."

BUILDING WATER WORKS IN TWO VILLAGES OF CHANDNAGAR DISTRICT

H. R. CHATURVEDI

One of the objectives of *Panchayati Raj* is to evolve an administration at the local level which is responsive to the needs of the local community. This is sought to be done by closely associating the elected representatives of the people at District, *Taluka* and Village levels with government officials, in the process of decision-making and implementation.

This case unfolds the administrative process by which the District *Panchayat* of Chandnagar in Gujarat decided to provide water for two villages with the help of the local administration.

In Chandnagar district, several villages suffer from acute shortage of water for at least four to five months (from late February to the end of June) in a year. Sometimes, people have to go as far as two to three miles to fetch water.

There are several villages on the coast where it is hard to find potable water within reasonable reach of the people. Being at the sea level, several rivulets and *nallas* traverse the region but these are constantly over-run by tidal water of the sea, turning the entire area into *Khar* land. The sub-soil water of the area is brackish, due to the proximity of the sea; this makes it difficult to tap potable water, either from open wells or from bore wells. In some villages, people dig open *kutcha* pits in the dry beds of rivulets which yield a very small amount of water and people have to keep waiting for long before a potful of water gets collected. Such small pits, known as '*virdas*' could yield water only for a short period and the people have to keep on digging new pits. This involves enormous effort and expenditure of money, both on the part of the people and the Government.

The problem of water supply became particularly acute, during the last few years due to the continued drought. In

Chandnagar, the average annual rainfall is 620.1 mms.; but in 1960 and 1961, it was 432.1 mms. and 463.2 mms. respectively.

Commenting on the water scarcity in the area, the District Development Officer of Chandnagar District, who was formerly the Collector, remarked that there has always been scarcity of water because of the hard soil and the sea coast. But since 1960, the number of villages suffering from water scarcity had increased considerably. He attributed this to the following reasons :

(1) There had been no discharge of water in the sub-soil, due to the failure of rains successively for last few years.

(2) The sub-soil water level was affected by various irrigation schemes, taken up in the area since Independence.

He further remarked that in order to overcome this problem, Government used to make special arrangements to supply water to the affected villages by tankers. Such a temporary arrangement hardly met the needs of the area; a permanent solution had to be worked out.

In 1957, the question of water supply on a permanent basis to some of the villages of Chandnagar District was taken up for the first time under the Community Development Programme. Accordingly, a scheme covering four villages of Chandnagar District was submitted by the Collector to the Union Government (through the State Government) in May, 1957.

It took almost a decade for the scheme to fructify. In 1966, only two villages out of the four, succeeded in constructing the water works thereby solving their water supply problem. The present case reports the story of delayed success of these two villages and the failure of the other two, in meeting their primary community need of drinking water.

The four villages are Pyasa, Niru, Tatia and Mana of Chandnagar District. They are all located within a radius of one and a half miles and are at a distance of three to four miles

from Chandnagar town. All these villages were within the domain of the erstwhile princely State of Chandnagar.

Pyasa is situated at a distance of three miles from Chandnagar on the main road between Chandnagar and Khimja—another town. The people of this village used to dig *kutcha* pits, yielding a small quantity of water, but these went dry completely in summer. Sometimes in order to get water for their requirements all round the year, they had to dig two or three such pits in a year. The people of Pyasa had to dig nine to ten such wells during the period of nine years (1957—1966).

Tatia and Mana villages are in the interior, at a distance of about one and a half miles, from the main road. The two villages are divided by a small rivulet and they used to get their water from a common well dug in the dry bed of the rivulet, almost at the middle point of the two villages. In summer, the water level of the well would go down considerably, causing great difficulty to the people. The village women (whose job it was to fetch water) had to go two or three miles to fetch water, in order to meet the water requirements for a population of 3000 human beings and 2400 cattle. In the monsoon, they had to cross half a mile on the muddy road in order to reach the well and several times the women would slip on the muddy road and sustain serious injuries. The water shortage in the area was so acute that *per capita* consumption of water was hardly two to five gallons per day as against the standard of ten to fifteen gallons per head per day prescribed by the Public Health Department.

Niru is about a mile and a half in the interior from Mana. People of this village got their water supply from a *Vadi* (farm) well, which was at a distance of one mile. But in recent years, with the construction of a canal, in the area, people began drawing their water supply from its leakage and seepage.

The people and the leaders of all these villages had made several representations to various Government officials and elected leaders on different occasions. The present District *Panchayat* President observed: "Village leaders had approached me when I was holding a high office in State Government and also when I was an MLA of the Gujarat State Assembly. I was sympathetic to their problem but I could not help them." The

present *Sarpanches* of these villages mentioned that they never missed any opportunity to express their need before officials and leaders, who visited their villages, but nothing concrete happened until 1956-57.

In June 1957, the Block Development Officer (BDO) of Chandnagar prepared a scheme for supply of drinking water to these four villages and submitted it to the Collector for his approval. The BDO, in his letter, suggested that this proposal may be considered under the scheme of Rural Water Supply, initiated by the Union Government. Under this scheme, the Union Government paid 75 per cent of the cost and the remaining amount was shared by the State Government or by the local community and the State Government jointly. In special cases, however, the entire cost was met by the Union Government.

The Collector forwarded the proposal of the BDO to the Executive Engineer on August 9, 1957, with his comments as follows : "The villages in question are poor and have been facing acute water shortage for past several years. I, therefore, suggest that early steps may be taken to provide them with water." He also requested him to prepare the plans and estimates at an early date.

The Executive Engineer surveyed these villages and prepared plans and estimates, totalling Rs. 2,41,900 for providing water to all the four villages. He prepared a note, containing all the factual information about the geography of the villages, their need for water supply, possible sources of water supply and the estimated cost of providing water. He sent the same to the Superintending Engineer (Public Health Engineering Department) and to the Collector on December 6, 1957.

The Collector wrote to the Superintending Engineer on January 15, 1958, seeking his approval of the plans and estimates, submitted to him by the Executive Engineer. In his letter, the Collector again stressed the urgent need of the people for drinking water in these words. "The village people suffer great hardship for four to five months of summer every year. They do not even get adequate water for drinking, let alone bathing and washing. Government spends four to five thousand rupees just on an *ad hoc* arrangement for supplying water by

tankers during summer. In view of this, urgent attention must be given to this problem."

The Superintending Engineer did not respond until April 1961—in spite of several reminders from the Collector. Instead, in March 1959, he wrote to the Deputy Engineer, Public Health, "The scheme in question is not a committed scheme of the Second Five Year Plan and may be considered in the Third Five Year Plan, provided Government included it in its next plan. If the people are keen on undertaking the scheme, they should raise all the funds required."

The Deputy Engineer, Public Health, in turn wrote to the Collector and to the Development Commissioner on April 10, 1961 : "No Government funds are available for taking up the proposed scheme. It should, therefore, be explored whether the villages concerned can raise necessary funds to have the scheme, implemented at their own cost. It should also be ascertained whether the Village *Panchayats* are financially sound enough to bear the full cost of repairs and maintenance after the water works are built."

The Development Commissioner, in turn wrote to the BDO to find out, if the villages were in a position to raise the funds required for the purpose.

The BDO, replying on October 25, 1961, stated, "The villages are extremely poor and it is not possible for the people of these villages to raise the funds required for the purpose and therefore, Government should be persuaded to bear the entire expenditure." He suggested that the proposal for water supply to the four villages may be taken up under the Rural Water Supply Scheme of the Union Government, with the Union Government bearing the full cost.

There was, however, no record to show if the BDO had either consulted the village leaders or persuaded them to raise the funds required to take up the proposed scheme of water supply. The village leaders mentioned that they did not even know what was happening to the proposed scheme. The *Sarpanch* of Pyasa Village remarked that he did enquire about

the proposed water supply scheme from the Village Level Worker but the VLW had no information about it. All that he knew was that it was under the consideration of the Government. The *Sarpanch* commenting on this later said : "Money was not so much a problem in my village. We were already spending a lot of money every year on digging the wells and this amount was raised through public contributions. The people were having such a great difficulty of getting water that they would have willingly paid their contribution. But, unfortunately, we did not know what the difficulty was and why Government was taking so long to decide about the scheme."

On the basis of the BDO's reply, the Commissioner wrote a letter to the Superintending Engineer in February 1962 in which he mentioned that the villagers were poor and it was not possible for them to raise the funds required for the purpose. He further stressed that the proposal could be considered under the Rural Water Supply Scheme of the Union Government. The matter remained pending with the Superintending Engineer for a year and no decision was taken.

In April 1963, *Panchayati Raj* was set up in the State of Gujarat. After this, all the proposals pending with different Government Departments were transferred to the District *Panchayat* for further implementation. The proposed scheme of water works for the four villages was one of them. The Executive Engineer (*Panchayat*) scrutinised all the pending proposals and discussed them with the President and the District Development Officer in a joint meeting.

When the Executive Engineer presented the proposed scheme of water supply for the four villages in question, the President of the District *Panchayat* recalled that the people of these villages had approached him in the past to get his help in solving the problem of water supply when he had held a responsible position in State Government and also at the time when he was an MLA in the Gujarat Legislative Assembly. He mentioned that, he had written a letter to the Collector and the BDO at that time, asking them to expedite the matter. He observed : "I am surprised that the water problem continues in these villages even after the lapse of so many years. I am sorry I could not do

much to help them. Things move slowly as they generally do in Government. Earlier, I could not exert much pressure on Government officials. At best, I could only request them. But now in the *Panchayati Raj*, I have the authority to move the administration and I would like to see that quick action is taken to meet the needs of the people. After all, *Panchayati Raj* is the *Raj* of the people and if their needs are not satisfied, it is of no use."

The President discussed the proposal of water supply with the Executive Engineer and asked him to prepare the plans and estimates.

The Executive Engineer (*Panchayat*) prepared the plans and estimates in a week's time. He proposed to provide water to Pyasa from a well near by and to other three villages from Kamalanaga well, which was about one mile from Chandnagar. This was a big well with adequate water resources. The estimated cost of the two schemes was Rs. 43,700 and Rs. 1,50,800 respectively. The TDO submitted this proposal to the Executive Engineer, Public Health on May 12, 1963. The Public Health Engineer wrote back to the TDO on May 14, 1963, asking him to ascertain if the villages concerned were in a position to raise all the funds required to undertake the proposed schemes. He also stated that, in case they were unable to raise the funds and the schemes were desired to be taken up by Government, a full picture of the financial position of the villages should be furnished. The DDO remarked that in effect, it meant that he had to make a case for getting the proposed water supply scheme implemented at Government cost.

The DDO wrote to the Executive Engineer on October 14, 1963, as follows : "The villages in question are very poor and are not at all in a position to raise the funds required for the purpose. In view of this, the proposed works may be taken up by Government."

His letter was accompanied by the statement (p. 69) of income and expenditure of the Village *Panchayats* of Pyasa, Niru, Tatia and Mana.

Village	1960-61		1961-62		1962-63	
	Income	Expend.	Income	Expend.	Income	Expend.
Pyasa	7,619	5,091	5,071	4,435	17,781	15,133
Niru	3,115	2,875	2,954	2,463	3,429	2,517
Tatia	3,875	4,241	955	1,528	5,225	1,702
Mana	5,419	4,262	3,594	1,976	4,754	3,910

The Executive Engineer (Public Health), returned the proposal to the DDO in March 1964, stating that there were no funds under the scheme and it was not possible for Government to take up the proposed scheme entirely at its own cost. However, Government assistance was available to the extent of 75 per cent, for village water supply, under another scheme. Under this scheme, Village, *Taluka* and District *Panchayats* would be required to contribute the remaining 25 per cent.

The Executive Engineer got the details of the scheme and discussed them with the DDO. Afterwards, both of them discussed the letter of the Executive Engineer (PH) and also the new scheme suggested by him, with the President of the District *Panchayat*. The President agreed to the new scheme, suggested by the Executive Engineer (PH) and took the view that, even though the villages were poor, they must pay for the amenities they wanted for themselves. In retrospect he had this to say : "After all, in *Panchayati Raj* people were Government and if they did not pay for their services, who else would pay for them? We have a tendency to ask every thing from the Government. I think the time has come when we have to educate people to learn to do things by themselves, rather than depend on the Government. I, therefore, decided to have a meeting with all the *Sarpanches* and place my view before them. I was confident that I would be able to persuade them to pay their contribution for the proposed water supply scheme. I was equally firm that they would go without water, if they did not agree to pay."

A meeting with all the *Sarpanches* was fixed for May 25, 1964. At this meeting, the President expressed his concern

about the hardship, the people of the villages had experienced during the past many years. He also mentioned that he had tried to help them but he could not do much. He told that in *Panchayati Raj* he had the authority and he would like to help them in every way. About the water supply scheme, he said that it could be taken up only if the *Sarpanches* agreed to contribute their share. He also explained the details of the scheme wherein Government contribution was available up to 75 per cent of the estimated cost, the remaining 25 per cent being shared between the District, *Taluka* and Village *Panchayats*.

As a result of the discussion, the *Sarpanch* of Pyasa readily agreed to contribute his share. The *Sarpanches* of the other three villages would not agree. The President tried to persuade them and highlighted the fact that they had to pay only a small sum for the benefit they were to have. He also told them that the *Taluka* and District *Panchayats* were also contributing to the scheme, whereas the benefits would go exclusively to the villages. Finally, he succeeded in persuading the *Sarpanch* of Tatia village.

The *Sarpanches* of Niru and Mana villages, however, refused to accept the scheme. They explained their inability to pay due to the lack of resources with their *Panchayats*. They urged that the project be implemented at the cost of Government and the District *Panchayats*.

The *Sarpanch* of Niru village remarked : "My Village *Panchayat* is not able to spend so much money for the water. We expect Government and the District *Panchayat* to make the entire contribution. If that is not done, there is no need to undertake the scheme. We won't be put to any difficulty, even if the scheme is not implemented. In any case, the problem of water supply has somewhat eased for the last two years, since the canal has been constructed. We are getting water from the leakage and seepage of the canal."

The *Sarpanch* of Mana village observed : "If Tatia village gets the water works, our difficulty is solved automatically, as there would be less pressure on the well, which we share in common. The well would be available for our exclusive use and in that case, we will have no problem."

The President announced at the meeting that the scheme would be implemented in Pyasa and Tatia villages. It was finally decided to have a revised proposal for only two villages *i.e.*, Pyasa and Tatia. The meeting also took the following decisions :

(1) The Executive Engineer should prepare plans and estimates for supply of water to the two villages, whose *Sarpanches* had agreed to pay the contribution.

(2) The Village *Panchayats* should pass a resolution, agreeing to the proposal and pay their share of the expenditure on the proposed scheme.

After the meeting, the President told the Executive Engineer (P) to prepare the plans and estimates as early as possible and also to see to it that the cost was kept at a minimum.

The Executive Engineer prepared revised plans and estimates amounting to Rs. 26,662 for Tatia and Rs. 65,370 for Pyasa.

According to the President, it was possible to prepare the plans and estimates in two weeks because the Executive Engineer worked with the *Panchayat*. He was sure it would have taken years, if he had to get it done through the Executive Engineer (PH) of the Government Department.

The President discussed the plans and estimates with the Executive Engineer (P) and told him to present them at the meeting of the Executive Committee of the District *Panchayat*, scheduled for July 10, 1964. The District *Panchayat* accepted the scheme and passed the resolution to pay its share of the cost. In the meantime, the Village *Panchayats* of Pyasa and Tatia also passed similar resolutions and sent them to the District *Panchayat*.

After completing all the formalities, the District *Panchayat* sent the proposal to the State Government on August 14, 1964 for its approval. Government sent its approval on February 15, 1965 for Tatia village and on March 30, 1965 for Pyasa. The Executive Engineer observed that it was unusual to have Government approval in such a short time. It was due to the

personal efforts of the President of the District *Panchayat* that the proposal was expedited at the level of State Government. It was cleared by the State Government in two weeks. Most of the time was taken in getting the approval of the Central Government. In this connection, the President remarked, "If things were done in the routine Government manner, it would have taken quite long. In these matters the personal factor is very important. One can expedite matters, if one personally knows somebody in the higher administration or if one personally meets the officer concerned or writes a letter to him. I have found in my experience that this works well in our administration. I have made it a practice to discuss personally the pending issues with the concerned officials, whenever I visit Ahmedabad and this expedites decisions."

After the Government approval was received by the District *Panchayat*, the Executive Engineer had a discussion with the President. The President impressed upon him that the work had to be completed as early as possible and at the minimum cost. The Executive Engineer suggested that it was possible to reduce the cost and expedite the construction, provided part of the work was taken up departmentally and part of it was contracted to the Village *Panchayat*. The President agreed to the suggestion, since he felt that it was a very good way of involving the local people in the scheme.

It was, therefore, decided to take up the execution of the proposed water works, partly departmentally and partly by contracting it out to the Village *Panchayats* concerned, thus avoiding the normal procedure of inviting tenders and giving the work to a contractor.

The project involved : (1) Installation of a pumping machine at the main well near Chandnagar whence the water was to be supplied to both the villages; (2) Laying down of a common pipeline for one mile for channelling water from the main source; (3) Taking the pipeline to the villages by bifurcating it in two opposite directions; and (4) Building up of the water tank in the villages for storing and direct supply of water to the people.

The District *Panchayat* President held a meeting to discuss the implementation of the project. It was attended by the Executive Engineer and the *Sarpanches* of Pyasa and Tatia villages. It was decided at the meeting that the first three tasks should be taken up departmentally and the fourth task, namely the construction of water tanks, should be contracted to the Village *Panchayats*. The *Sarpanches* agreed to the proposal. They felt that the *Panchayat* would be able to do a better job of building the water works.

The work of installing the pumping machine and laying of the pipeline was undertaken by the PWD department of the District *Panchayat* directly. Some of the village people worked as labourers and were paid their wages at the usual rate. The *Sarpanches* of the two villages personally supervised the work, undertaken by their *Panchayats*, without charging for their services. While the construction was going on, the Executive Engineer (P) took keen interest in the works and often personally supervised it. He observed : "I was deeply impressed by the sincere efforts of the village people and the leaders and particularly, the *Sarpanch* of Pyasa village. There was a sense of commitment among the people, which made me take so much interest in the execution of the project. The spirit and zeal with which people of the village worked on the project was really remarkable. It is really gratifying that we could complete the entire work in ten months."

Commenting on his experiences, the Executive Engineer remarked : "During the period of ten months, a close relationship developed between my department officials, the *Sarpanches* and other people of the two villages. I used to visit the site of construction frequently and spent several hours, supervising and guiding the people at work, in both the villages. I just did my duty well and that has brought me so much appreciation from the people. They have confidence in me and now I get their support and cooperation for any new proposal, I put forward. Many times, I have found officials complain that village people do not take any responsibility and do not extend their cooperation in developmental activities. I personally feel it is all wrong. In my experience, I can cite many instances when village leaders and people have undertaken responsibility on themselves and

discharged it well. It really depends how much confidence, officials inspire in them. Perhaps this is where officials fail in many situations."

The *Sarpanches* of both the villages had high appreciation for the interest the Executive Engineer took in the entire works. The *Sarpanch* of Pyasa observed : "It is only because of the personal interest of the President of the District *Panchayat* and the Executive Engineer, that we get water for our village. We were not hopeful that we will ever get water because all the efforts in the past did not yield any result. It is all the due to efforts of the Executive Engineer that we have completed the work in such a short time. Only such honest and hardworking officials can help in the speedy development of rural areas."

The water works were completed in March 1966 and the villages of Pyasa and Tatia made a contribution of about Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 3,000 respectively. In the case of Tatia, the money was collected by popular contribution from the village people. The *Sarpanch* said that everybody in the village had made his contribution. He further added that some well-to-do farmers had contributed more than their share. In Pyasa, the amount of Rs. 10,000 was not raised by popular contribution. The Village *Panchayat* had a large piece of land, which was made into plots and sold to the villagers. The proceeds were used to contribute towards the water works project. The leaders and the people of the two villages expressed a great sense of satisfaction and achievement, in having secured regular water supply in their villages. One of the *Sarpanches* remarked : "*Panchayati Raj* has been a great success, so far as we are concerned. In this *Raj* we have got, what we could not get for the last so many years."

As mentioned earlier, one of the conditions for providing water to the villages was that the Village *Panchayat* would undertake the responsibility to provide necessary funds for the repair and maintenance of the pumping machine, the pipeline and the two tanks. The total recurring expenditure is Rs. 3,500 which is to be shared equally by the two village *Panchayats*. The funds for the purpose are raised by levying a water tax of one rupee per head per year. In Tatia, the *Panchayat* also charges

one rupee per cattle head. The *Sarpanch* of Pyasa remarked : "We do not charge anything for water for the cattle. We feel there should be no charge for providing water to the cattle. If we charge for that, we shall be committing sin. The cattle render great service to the farmers and we can repay this by providing them free water."

The management of the water supply scheme is vested in a small committee, consisting of four persons; nominated by each Village *Panchayat* in equal number. The committee members personally supervise the repairs and maintenance of the works without charging anything for their services. They consult the district authorities, whenever they need their help.

Both the *Sarpanches* declared that the committee was doing its job quite well and they had encountered no problems. One of the members of this committee proudly mentioned, "We manage the water supply scheme ourselves without bothering anybody. If it is not managed well, we shall have to spend more and if there is a breakdown in the machine etc. we will have to go without water. Ultimately, we will be the sufferers and that is why we take keen interest in its management. After all, the village people have put the responsibility on us and we must discharge it to their satisfaction. A few days back, the Executive Engineer had suggested that we should have a spare engine, as a standby for the present one. We at once decided to purchase another pumping machine. We incur all the expenditure on repair and maintenance. The District *Panchayat* provides us with technical help. We are happy that we are getting water without difficulty. It has really saved the time and energy of our women folk which used to be spent on fetching water from a distance.

"Thanks to *Panchayati Raj*, we have been given an opportunity to manage our own affairs. It has saved so much labour of our women folk who had to face great difficulties in the past in getting water."

DISTRICT PANCHAYAT PLANS FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

H. R. CHATURVEDI

This case describes how a District *Panchayat* succeeded in bringing about a change in the basic attitude of traditional farmers, made them appreciate the benefits of the use of the improved variety of seeds and fertilizers. It also shows how the farmers under the guidance of the *Panchayat* realised the importance of planning in agricultural operations. The role which the District level bureaucracy played in promoting such a change in the attitude of the farmers is also shown.

Iderpur is a predominantly rural District, with agriculture as the main occupation of the people in its 600 villages. Some of the main crops of the District are *Bajra*, Groundnut, *Jawar*, Oilseeds, Rice, Wheat and Sugarcane. Agriculture in this District suffered from want of irrigation; there is a general scarcity of water in the area. Commenting on the difficulties of the past, the President of the District *Panchayat* listed three main problems—firstly, a large number of farmers were ignorant of the use of fertilizers and improved seeds and were, therefore, afraid to use them; secondly, there was the question of the timely supply of seeds and fertilizers to such of the farmers as wanted them; and thirdly, the local leaders did not take keen interest in the development of agriculture of the District.

In March 1967, Shri Dave took over as DDO[1] of Iderpur District. He went round to different areas to acquaint himself with the development work in the District; he was struck by the agricultural backwardness of the District. The farmers did not use improved seeds and fertilizers. Even those who did use fertilizers, applied them in inadequate quantities. Of the dose recommended by the Agriculture Department, they used only

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[1]District Development Officer

9 per cent of the nitrogenous fertilizer and 20 per cent of phosphatic. In his contacts with farmers, he found that there were two main problems in this area :

(1) A large number of farmers were ignorant about the improved variety of seeds and fertilizers and also did not know their use.

(2) Some of them who knew about them lacked confidence and were afraid of taking any risk.

He discussed the matter with the District Agricultural Officer, who had been there for the past few years. In an attempt to find out a solution, the DDO suggested a scheme of practical demonstrations on a portion of land of the cultivators, who had small holdings. This meant a departure from the existing practice in which only the lands of progressive farmers were selected for demonstration purposes. He argued that the demonstrations which were then being held on the land of the big landholders had created little impact on the large mass of farmers. A farmer would not adopt a new practice, unless he personally had an experience of it. He, therefore, believed that demonstrations on the land of farmers, having small holdings who were much larger in numbers would go a long way in boosting the use of the improved methods of cultivation. The District Agricultural Officer also agreed; they both felt that in order to be effective, there must be at least 8-10 such demonstrations in a *Taluka*, which would mean a total of 800-1000 such demonstrations in the District. Each Village Level Worker would have to prepare 10 such farmers from his jurisdiction.[2] They estimated that one such demonstration would cost about Rs. 90-100. The scheme meant therefore, finding funds to the extent of at least Rs. 80,000.

The DDO told the DAO to prepare a detailed scheme for approval by the District *Panchayat* and the Government. The DDO discussed the scheme with the President of the District *Panchayat*. The latter appreciated it; with regard to the money required for its implementation, he suggested that there was a

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[2]The jurisdiction of a Village Level Worker varied from five to ten villages.

lot of balance in the District Equalization Fund[3], which could be utilised. For such a scheme, money could also be obtained from the Community Development Project (CDP) funds. The DDO examined the possibilities and found that there was money available under both the heads, suggested by the President. But the difficulty was in obtaining the sanction of the Government for a new scheme, in the short time[4] that was available. He had hardly one and a half months within which to obtain the sanction, prepare farmers, procure seeds and fertilizers, etc. He was afraid that it would be very difficult to get the sanction of the Government in such a short time. If it was only a question of getting the Development Commissioner's sanction, he could do so easily. He had worked under the Development Commissioner in the past and knew him well. But the Development Commissioner did not have powers to sanction a scheme costing more than Rs. 50,000. So the DDO pondered over the problem for a while and decided to solve it by splitting the scheme into two and making two different proposals under two different budget heads. One related to five *Talukas* and for this, funds were sought from the CDP provision; and the second covered the remaining five *Talukas* and for this, funds were sought from the District Equalization Fund. The estimated cost of each scheme was Rs. 40,000.

The DAO prepared the details of the scheme on the lines suggested by the DDO. The DDO finalised the scheme and informally discussed it with the President of the District *Panchayat* before placing it formally before the District *Panchayat*. The District *Panchayat* approved the scheme at its meeting held on April 11, 1967. Thereafter, the DDO personally went to the State Headquarters to meet the Development Commissioner. He discussed the schemes with him. He got the Development Commissioner's approval on April 17, 1967.

After the approval of the Development Commissioner was received, the DDO discussed the schemes in detail with the

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[3]This fund was established out of the money made available at the rate of 5 per cent of the land revenue collected in the District—by the State Government. This could be spent for development work.

[4]Because agricultural operations had to commence in June.

District Production Committee. He also convened a meeting of all the *Taluka* Development Officers and the Presidents of the *Taluka Panchayats*; this meeting was also attended by all the *Taluka* Agriculture Extension Officers, the DAO, the President of the District *Panchayat*, the President of the District Production Committee, etc. The DDO discussed in great detail the objectives of the scheme, criteria for selecting the farmers, procedure of laying out the demonstrations, etc.

The scheme envisaged that the farmers selected would not be required to pay towards the cost of demonstration. They would give the seed and the required dose of fertilizers, free of charge. But it was pointed out at the meeting, that this might create more demands than could be met for such demonstrations. The DDO explained that, for the time being, a choice will have to be made from amongst willing farmers, in accordance with the criteria accepted at the meeting; he explained that the scheme was experimental and, if it was well responded to, the *Taluka Panchayats*, *Gram Panchayats* and the Cooperatives could lay out such demonstrations from their own funds. This approach was generally favoured by all. Commenting on the scheme, one of Presidents of the *Taluka Panchayat* said in retrospect : "It was a wonderful scheme, wherein, for the first time, an attempt was made to involve the small farmers in the use of modern methods of cultivation. All along, benefits have been extended to rich and well-to-do farmers. Moreover, demonstrations are the only means through which one can reach the illiterate and backward farmers."

It was decided that all demonstrations should be laid out in the presence of the Agriculture Extension Officer. The DAO and the Assistant District Agricultural Officer also undertook the responsibility of carrying out the demonstrations. It was also decided that the TDOs[5], the Presidents of the *Taluka Panchayats* and the members of *Taluka* Production Committee would establish personal contacts with the farmers, on whose lands the demonstrations would be laid out. Besides, the *Gram Sewaks* were charged with the responsibility of seeing to it that the recommended dose of fertilizers was given to all the farms

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[5]Taluka Development Officer.

under demonstration, in time. For this purpose, he was also required to keep a record of contacts he made with the farmers and also of the schedule of giving the doze of fertilizers. The TDOs were to check the records maintained by the *Gram Sewaks*. If the *Gram Sewaks* failed to administer the required dose of fertilizers in time, they were liable to punishment.

Demonstration was in fact laid out on 798 places, as against a target of 800. It was not possible to lay demonstrations beyond a certain number, owing to financial limitations. But these demonstrations were witnessed by farmers in large numbers. These demonstrations were well received by the farmers and many more farmers wanted to benefit from them. The DAO felt that these demonstrations had created a very favourable climate for the use of improved seeds and fertilizers. Farmers in large number wanted to have such demonstrations during the *Rabi*[6] Campaign which was to follow. They made requests to officers and leaders for getting seeds and fertilizers for the *Rabi* crop. The DDO felt that, in order to be able to respond to the needs of the farmers for seeds and fertilizers, it was necessary for the District *Panchayat* to plan in advance for the *Rabi* Crop. There was no use making efforts to create a demand and then failing to meet it in time. In a neighbouring District, the DAO mentioned the full requirements of improved seeds and fertilizers had not been ordered in advance.

Soon after the demonstrations were over and the *Kharif* season was well on its way, the DDO felt the need for holding a meeting of the Presidents of all the *Taluka Panchayats* and TDOs with a view to assess the response of the farmers to the *Kharif* eampaign and to draw out a plan for the campaign of the *Rabi* season which was soon to follow and the *Kharif* crop for next year. He discussed it with some of his colleagues, the President of the District *Panchayat* and the Chairman of the Production Committee. They agreed with his suggestion. The District *Panchayat*, therefore, convened a meeting on July 17 and 18, 1967. At first they reviewed the *Kharif* campaign

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[6]The Winter crop beginning in September-October and ending in March-April.

of 1967. The President of the District *Panchayat* mentioned that there was a general feeling that the campaign was a great success and it had created a great demand for the supply of seeds and fertilizers for the *Rabi* Crop. They then took the following decisions for the *Rabi* and the next *Kharif* campaign :

(1) To lay demonstrations for the *Rabi* crop on the land of small farmers.

(2) To activise the cooperatives at all levels and to make arrangements to supply seeds and fertilizers to them in advance.

(3) To make arrangements for the supply of seeds and fertilizers to the farmers through village, *Taluka* and District Cooperatives.

(4) To make arrangements for the supply of light diesel oil for pumping sets.

(5) To extend credit facilities to farmers who wish to apply a higher dose of fertilizers and improved variety of seeds.

(6) To make the 'extension' effective so that expertise and materials reached the farmers in time and everybody in the chain did his work.

(7) To book orders for hybrid *Bajra* for the *Kharif* season after the *Rabi* crop work got moving.

(8) To give incentives to the individual farmers, *Gram Sewaks*, and *Taluka Panchayats* in cash.

(9) To arrange the visit of successful farmers to Agriculture Research Farm in the State to acquaint them with the latest developments in agricultural techniques.

(10) To make arrangements for getting the samples of soil of progressive farmers, tested in the laboratories.

(11) To hold the meetings of District Production Committee in different *Talukas* to enable the members to visit farms and personally contact the farmers to understand their problems and difficulties.

(12) To prepare a small pamphlet, giving all the details of the programme of *Rabi* and *Kharif* crops in the District, utility of the use of fertilizers and improved seeds for agricultural production and the incentives offered by the District *Panchayat* under the scheme.

Following the meeting of Presidents of the *Taluka Panchayats* and the TDOs, the DDO asked the DAO to prepare the scheme for the *Rabi* and *Kharif* campaigns. He also asked him to prepare a pamphlet on the lines suggested at the meeting. In the meantime, he made arrangements for funds that were needed for laying out the demonstrations. The President of the District *Panchayat* had also attended the meeting of the TDOs and the Presidents of *Taluka Panchayats*. He and the DDO discussed the problems of funds for the demonstration for the *Rabi* Campaign and agreed to utilize Rs. 30,000 from the District Equalization Fund.

Commenting on the use of District Equalization Fund, the President said that this fund had not been used at all during the last two years and a lot of money had accumulated under this head. It was good that the fund was being utilised for a good purpose. He further added that the DDO, who thought of such excellent schemes deserved credit and appreciation for this. He had really taken keen interest and used his imagination and experience to initiate the work.

The President held a meeting of the Executive Committee of the District *Panchayat* on July 25, 1967 to obtain its sanction to use Rs. 30,000 for laying out demonstrations for the *Rabi* campaign. At the meeting, the DDO gave details of the scheme which the DAO had prepared. These details related to the number of demonstrations that would be laid, their cost, the selection of farmers, etc. He also explained the arrangements, made for organising the demonstrations. It was pointed out at the meeting that the amount of Rs. 30,000 was rather small for 800 demonstrations. The Committee was, however, of the view that the number of demonstrations should not be reduced, as there was a great demand for the scheme from the farmers.

It was finally decided to reduce the demonstration area to only 1/4th of an acre so that 800 demonstrations could be managed within the available amount. The Executive Committee sanctioned the scheme. The DDO then sent the proposal to the Development Commissioner for his approval which was accorded immediately.

The DAO prepared the pamphlet giving information regarding the rate of agricultural development in different countries, India and Gujarat. It also provided information about the usefulness of seeds and fertilizers and the details of the scheme of demonstrations and incentives, etc., which was to be implemented in the District. He circulated the draft to the President of the District *Panchayat* and some of the members of the Production Committee for their comments. They approved of the pamphlet and expressed their satisfaction over the effort. The DDO got the pamphlet, printed in Gujarati. It was decided that the *Gram Sewaks* would make use of it, while explaining the new methods of cultivation to the farmers and they would also be distributed to the educated amongst the farmers.

After the scheme was finalised and the pamphlets printed, the DDO and DAO held a meeting with all the TDOs to discuss the scheme in detail and its implementation. The DDO felt this meeting to be crucial as the TDOs were to convene meetings with the Village Level Workers (VLWs) and to explain to them the scheme and get them involved in it. Their responsibility was no less, as they had themselves to contact farmers, supervise the VLWs and also get the members of the Production Committee of the *Taluka Panchayats*, interested in the scheme.

At the meeting, the DDO first tried to assess the response to the *Kharif* campaign. The response was on the whole encouraging. Taking a lead from the success of the *Kharif* crop in 1967, he stressed that they had to work to boost up the *Rabi* campaign and again the following *Kharif* campaign in 1968. The meeting finally decided that the TDOs should be entrusted with the responsibility for the following :

(1) To discuss the details of the scheme with VLWs.

(2) To get the pamphlets circulated to the farmers through the VLWs.

(3) To actively involve the *Taluka* Production Committee in the campaign.

(4) To personally supervise some of the demonstrations.

(5) To keep a check on the VLWs to see that the dose of fertilizers was given in time.

(6) To hold meetings of the farmers and invite those farmers who had the benefits of demonstration and who had used improved seeds and fertilizers to speak about their experiences at these meetings.

(7) To arrange meetings of the farmers with the Agriculture Extension Officer to discuss the problems of the farmers.

(8) To give the names of the farmers, whose yield had set up a record (along with the figures of yield) for publicity in the local newspapers.

(9) To select the farmers for the award of prizes.

(10) To keep an uptodate account of the advance paid by the farmers for the hybrid seed.

In order to ensure the implementation of these decisions, the DDO introduced some changes in the format of the returns, he used to get from the TDO. At the meeting he explained these changes. He also told them that he would make his comments on their diaries and return them within four days of their receipt. He stressed that they must comply with the comments within a week's time. Commenting on the way these diaries were maintained, he observed that it had just become a routine. No body tried to look carefully into them and offer guidance and suggestions. The TDOs also did not record their problems. In fact, the main purpose was to offer guidance to juniors on the basis of the record in the diary and also to assess their performance on the work done.

In order to ensure credit and supply of seeds and fertilizers for the *Rabi* and *Kharif* crops, a meeting was held of all the

Extension Officers of Cooperatives on August 12, 1967. Besides Extension Officers, it was attended by the DAO and the President of the District *Panchayat*. The DDO explained to them the scheme of *Rabi* and *Kharif* crops and the role he visualised for them. He also explained to them the arrangements he had made with the District Cooperative Purchase and Sale Union for supply of the seeds and fertilizers to *Taluka* Cooperatives who in turn would supply the same to the village cooperatives. He also stressed the need to activise the cooperatives both in the Villages and *Talukas*. Commenting on the working of cooperatives in the villages at that time, he observed : "Many of the cooperatives in the villages existed only on paper. The same was the case with some of the *Taluka* Cooperatives. There was no use of such cooperatives. In fact, they could perform a useful role in promoting agricultural development, provided they were organised and run well. I really wanted to accomplish that because it was difficult to boost up production, if the supply line of fertilizers and seeds was weak and farmers did not get credit in time." But the effectiveness of *Taluka* and Village Cooperatives depended on the supplies made available to them by the District Cooperatives.

In order to ensure the supply of fertilizers and seeds in time, detailed arrangements were made with the District Cooperative Societies and Unions, for the procurement of required quantity of fertilizers and seeds. These cooperatives and unions were given a guarantee by the District *Panchayat* against any loss they suffered on account of fall in prices of the seeds. The guarantee given to the cooperative societies gave them a boost and they made arrangements with the State Sale and Purchase Cooperative Union in advance and got all their requirements. The DDO remarked that they had all the stocks of seeds and fertilizers ready in September—about a month earlier than the beginning of the *Rabi* sowing. This time was enough to ensure that the seeds and fertilizers were supplied to the *Taluka* and Village *Panchayats* before the actual sowing stated.

With regard to the supply of credit, arrangements were made with the District Cooperative Bank to sanction special credit

to those farmers who used fertilizers. The Bank had sanctioned special *Rabi* credit of Rs. 120 per acre to all those who used fertilizers and Rs. 150 per acre to those who applied a higher dose of fertilizers. Of this amount, only Rs. 50 were given in cash and the rest in kind—as seeds and fertilizers. The Bank also gave credit to the cooperatives, in order to enable them to purchase seeds, fertilizers and light diesel oil. The Extension Officers (Cooperative) were asked to send to the Bank their statement of credit requirements for the *Rabi* season by September 25. This was done, and as a result, the Bank sanctioned a sum of Rs. 16,77,510 for the *Rabi* in 1967 as against Rs. 8,67,870 in the previous year, 1966. For the marketing cooperative union, the credit was Rs. 26,90,000 in 1966 which rose to Rs. 29,22,500 in 1967.

In order to encourage the farmers to improve agricultural production, the State Department of Agriculture gave two prizes, a first prize of Rs. 300 and a second prize of Rs. 200, to the best farmers in a District. Since the number of these prizes was only two, very few farmers took part in the competitions. For instance in 1966, there were only 10 competitors in the District. The District *Panchayat* sanctioned a sum of Rs. 1,700 from its own fund to give away more prizes. It also decided to raise the amount of the first prize to Rs. 500 and of the second prize to Rs. 300. It further introduced a third prize of Rs. 200 and seven others of Rs. 100 each.

The District *Panchayat* also decided to give some prizes to *Gram Sewaks* who achieved best results. The first prize was Rs. 300, second Rs. 200, third Rs. 100 and the rest Rs. 50 each.

Besides the individual prizes, the District *Panchayat* also decided to award a prize of Rs. 10,000 to a *Taluka Panchayat* which achieved best results in agricultural production and use of seeds and fertilizers.

The District *Panchayat* had estimated to cover about 80,000 acres for the cultivation of improved variety of seeds for the *Rabi*

crop but it succeeded in covering only 50,000 acres. Commenting on the failure to achieve the target, the DDO observed that it was mainly because of the dry spell in the months of August and September. The leaders and officials did their best but nature did not cooperate. He further remarked that the demonstrations had a great impact on the farmers and they were keen to go in for the production of hybrid *bajra* in a big way. Therefore, the District *Panchayat* decided to book the orders of the farmers for the hybrid seed in advance, so that it could ensure supply of the required seeds and fertilizers in time.

The District *Panchayat* at its meeting held on November 24, 1967 reviewed the decisions it had taken at the earlier meeting, held on April 11, 1967. It worked out a schedule for the following *Kharif* campaign. It was resolved that all the village and *Taluka Panchayats* should vigorously launch on the *Kharif* campaign by booking orders for the improved variety of seeds and take money in advance from the farmers at the rate of rupee one per kilo of hybrid *bajra*. It also resolved that the drive must be launched on December 1, 1967 and completed by January 15, 1968, and by that time the *Taluka Panchayats* must send in their requirements for the improved variety of seeds. It also fixed a target for covering one lakh acres of land out of the total of 2 lakh acres under *bajra* cultivation in the district.

Reviewing the total effort, the DDO observed that it was a great success. By December 15, they had already booked orders for the hybrid *bajra* for 50,000 acres *i.e.* 50 per cent of the target was accomplished within 15 days of the launching of the scheme. He added that in his District, he was able to achieve what was not even achieved in the Districts which were having Intensive Agricultural Development Programme—with at least double the agricultural staff and more funds. He further commented that this was a unique experiment not only in the State but perhaps in the country, where farmers were being enabled to plan in advance for the purchase of seeds and fertilizers. According to him, the success of this project lay not

merely in the targets achieved but in changing the habits and attitudes of farmers, and enabling them to learn to plan in advance.

Commenting on the scheme, a VLW remarked that he had to work very hard to persuade the farmers, who had never planned in advance for anything. It surely took a lot of time to bring home to the farmers the need for advance planning in agriculture. But it was a challenge and he and many of his colleagues had taken it up and they were working hard to prove their worth and also help farmers.

The President of the District *Panchayat* observed that it was an excellent example of the success of the District *Panchayat*. Although the credit for inventing the scheme and effectively implementing it was due to the DDO, the success achieved was a cooperative venture of all.

SETTING UP OF A PRIMARY HEALTH CENTRE IN AMARPUR

H. R. CHATURVEDI

This case-study is about the setting up of a primary health centre in Amarpur—a small village in a district of Gujarat. The proposal first came from the Government under its programme of rural community development; the village people and a few leaders responded to it and mobilized their resources, not only for this specific project but subsequently undertook a series of related projects on their own initiative and resources. The present case unfolds the story of how a self-sustaining voluntary action was made possible through proper leadership and helpful coordination between local political leaders and administrators.

As part of its Community Development Programme, Government had initiated action to set up Primary Health Centres (PHC) to provide medical services to rural people. The programme initially visualised setting up of a PHC in each Community Development Block.[1] This was revised in October, 1961. The revised scheme provided for a PHC with three or four sub-centres for each block which was in stage I and had

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[1]An administrative unit, which generally comprised 100 villages with an area of 150-200 square miles and a population of 60-70 thousand. The community development programme and resource allocation therefor were related to the following stages: (1) The pre-extension phase of one year before the area could qualify for the full community development programme. During this year, a skeleton programme was undertaken, exclusively confined to agricultural development. (2) The first stage, covering a period of 5 years of intensive all-round development. (3) The second stage during which the community development programme was continued for another five years but with a relatively reduced budget provision.

completed four years of its existence. Some of the other important conditions laid down were :

(1) The Block Development Committee, consisting of elected leaders of the district and the *taluka* including the local MLA, officials and representatives of voluntary organisations should propose the location of the PHC.

(2) The District Health Officer and the Civil Surgeon of the concerned Block should approve the location of such a centre, taking into consideration its suitability from the technical point of view.

(3) The community (the concerned village or *taluka* where the PHC was to be located, should contribute 33 per cent (subsequently raised to 50 per cent) of the cost of construction of the PHC.

(4) The District Local Board should undertake to bear 20 per cent of the recurring expenditure towards the maintenance of the PHC after the expiry of the first stage.

The Director of Health Services, Ahmedabad, wrote a letter to the Block Development Officer of Chandnagar on February 7, 1962, asking him to take necessary steps for the location of a PHC in Banjara Block. He also sent a copy of this letter to the District Health Officer for follow-up action at the district level. The District Health Officer in turn wrote to the Block Development Officer of Banjara Block, on February 22, 1962, asking him to inform him of the date of the meeting of the Block Development Committee, which would take a decision regarding the location of the PHC.

Locational decisions of this type had, in the past, aroused conflicts, sometimes bitter, between various interested groups, elected representatives at various local levels and the local bureaucracy. In this context, the Chairman of the Block Health Committee at the time of the events covered in this case-study observed : "There is always a race for grabbing, whatever is available from Government and in this, generally the 'powerful' ones win. Many times, it results in a faulty

decision and waste of meagre resources." He specifically cited two instances; in one case, a PHC was located in a large town, where a big hospital already existed and in another, it was located in a place where no appropriate facilities existed for housing the PHC or its staff, as a result of which no good doctor liked to serve there for long. He, however, added that generally, in his own district, the question of determining the location of PHCs was settled with comparative ease. This was made possible, mainly because the Block Development Committee had arrived at an agreement on the criteria to determine the location of the PHC so that room for exercise of pressure from individual members was minimised. The criteria were as follows :

(1) The headquarters of the PHC should be so located that it catered to the maximum number of villages.

(2) It should be well connected with all other areas by roads and public transport.

(3) It should provide basic amenities to the staff of the PHC.

(4) The people should evince willingness to raise the necessary funds.

He was strongly of the view, that a PHC would not function well, if it was located in a place which did not offer facilities like housing, school for children, market, transport, etc., for the staff of the PHC. Such a place would not attract a good doctor and, if there was no good doctor at the PHC, it was no use having one.

The Chairman of Chandnagar District Health Committee, a well-respected local businessman, was an important leader at the district level. He was concerned with getting things done and had created an image among his colleagues and officials of being an impartial and upright person. He was known for his collaborative approach in decision-making; he used to get all others concerned, involved in the process. He was well informed about matters of health and medical facilities in the district and took keen interest in developing them.

In pursuance of the letter received from the District Health Officer, the BDO, Banjara Block fixed up a meeting of the Block Committee on March 27, 1962 to decide the question of the location of the PHC. He also informed the District Health Officer about the meeting. The District Committee met on March 27, 1962. There were two proposals before the committee, regarding the location of the PHC, one from the *Sarpanch* of Amarpur and another from the *Sarpanch* of Ratanpur. The consensus was in favour of giving the PHC to Amarpur village as most of the officials as well as the elected leaders found Amarpur more favourably located than Ratanpur. The leaders who were in opposition, including the *Sarpanch* of Ratanpur, did realise that with its location in Amarpur, forty-six villages will have access to the PHC, whereas only three or four villages would have access to it, if it was located in Ratanpur. They still persisted in their demand for its location in Ratanpur for two reasons; firstly, Ratanpur was the Block headquarters and secondly, they felt that by pressing hard for a PHC, they would succeed in having at least a health sub-centre located at Ratanpur.

At the meeting held on March 27, 1962, the Chairman indicated that both the proposals should be examined in the light of the criteria, which had already been laid down and which had been used in the past for taking decisions in such matters. The BDO read out the criteria. They were applied, one by one, to both the places in question and it became apparent that Amarpur met the criteria fully. The points in favour of locating the PHC in Amarpur were listed as follows :

(1) Amarpur was so located that forty-six villages could have access to the PHC if it was located there, whereas only three or four villages would have access to the PHC if it was located in Ratanpur.

(2) Amarpur was nearer to Chandnagar (the district headquarters) and patients with serious illness could be easily sent there for treatment.

(3) Amarpur was well connected with other areas by transport whereas Ratanpur was not. Being near to

Chandnagar, it had a net-work of transport and the doctor and other staff could go or send their children for schooling, etc., to Chandnagar whereas Ratanpur did not have the same facilities.

(4) Amarpur was in a position to raise the funds required for the purpose, whereas Ratanpur was not.

During the discussions, the Chairman tried to make the leaders realise that they had a responsibility to ensure that the meagre resources of the district were put to maximum use and also that they should care for the convenience and satisfaction of larger number of people. It was finally decided to locate the PHC in Amarpur, with a sub-centre in Ratanpur. This was agreed to by all.

Amarpur is a relatively large village with a population of 2,944 people. It is connected with forty-six other villages by all-weather roads. It is on the main road between two important towns of the area, Chandnagar (the district town) and Manpara, another big town, and is on the bus route between the two towns. It has a railway station on the narrow gauge : Chandnagar-Manpara line. It is nineteen miles by road and twenty miles by rail from Chandnagar.

Amarpur has a Post and Telegraph office. The water supply is also adequate. There were, however, no medical facilities in the village and the people had to go as far as 19 miles to Chandnagar for medical aid.

Amarpur used to be a *Talukedari*[2] village and people were poor, except a few families which were engaged in business, locally, in Chandnagar, and in Bombay.

Numerically, the *Kanbis* (caste of farmers) constituted the largest majority in the village. Traditionally, they had held the

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[2]A village wherein ownership was held by the *Talukedar* and he had the right to collect land revenue from the village. He was obliged to pay a part of the revenue to the Prince under whose territory the village fell. The *Talukedar* was the virtual king of the village.

leadership in the village; this had lately passed on to the *Brahmins* and the *Baniyas*. The latter, though few in number, were politically and economically dominant.

The office of the *Sarpanch* of the Village *Panchayat* was held by a *Brahmin* for a long time. He owned a small '*Pan* shop' in the village, which was run by his two sons. He was mostly busy with the affairs of the village and had created an image of being a devoted and honest leader, not only in Amarpur but also in the surrounding villages.

He started his political career as a member of the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) and later, joined the Congress when a large number of PSP leaders in that area joined the Congress. He had maintained good relations with his colleagues, one of whom was an MLA, and another a Minister, in Gujarat.

The BDO informed the Collector (as per the prescribed procedure) of the decision of the Block Advisory Committee and requested him to accord his sanction to the proposal so that its implementation could be taken up. The Collector asked the BDO to prepare a detailed scheme for obtaining the sanction of Government and also mobilize the people of Amarpur to raise the necessary funds for their contribution.

The BDO went to Amarpur, met the *Sarpanch* and explained the scheme to him. He apprised him of the decision of the Block Development Committee to locate the PHC at Amarpur. Till then, the *Sarpanch* was not aware of it, since he was not a member of the Block Development Committee. The BDO pointed out to him that the village had to raise about Rs. 10,000, which was one-third of the cost of construction of the PHC. The remaining two-thirds would be provided by Government from the Community Development Programme funds. While the *Sarpanch* showed interest in the scheme explained by the BDO, he was doubtful about raising Rs. 10,000 from the people. It seemed too large a sum to raise from his poor village. He, therefore, did not give any definite reply to the BDO but asked for some time to explain the scheme to other people of the village and

explore the possibilities of raising the contribution. The BDO agreed to give him a week's time.

Since it was a scheme of the Third Plan and was to be implemented in the plan period ending 1965-66, the BDO was moving fast in the matter. He also explained the urgency of the matter to the *Sarpanch* and urged the need for a quick decision.

The *Sarpanch* was favourably inclined to the scheme as absence of medical facilities was causing a lot of hardship to the people of the village. He observed : "I thought it was a good opportunity and we should not let it go. I was not very confident that I could raise Rs. 10,000. But I decided to try it out with the help and cooperation of my colleagues."

The *Sarpanch* discussed the scheme with five or six prominent persons in the village. He first approached them for their advice, about the way he should go about in the matter. The *Sarpanch* deliberately adopted this method. To use his own words : "I did not want this to appear as my show. I wanted to present this as a problem of the village as a whole, which required cooperative effort to solve it. I, therefore, asked each one of them to suggest the ways in which the opportunity could be made use of. It was essential to give each one a feeling that he was participating in the building up of the PHC, which was a prime need of the village."

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leadership in the village; this had lately passed on to the *Brahmins* and the *Baniyas*. The latter, though few in number, were politically and economically dominant.

The office of the *Sarpanch* of the Village *Panchayat* was held by a *Brahmin* for a long time. He owned a small '*Pan* shop' in the village, which was run by his two sons. He was mostly busy with the affairs of the village and had created an image of being a devoted and honest leader, not only in Amarpur but also in the surrounding villages.

He started his political career as a member of the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) and later, joined the Congress when a large number of PSP leaders in that area joined the Congress. He had maintained good relations with his colleagues, one of whom was an MLA, and another a Minister, in Gujarat.

The BDO informed the Collector (as per the prescribed procedure) of the decision of the Block Advisory Committee and requested him to accord his sanction to the proposal so that its implementation could be taken up. The Collector asked the BDO to prepare a detailed scheme for obtaining the sanction of Government and also mobilize the people of Amarpur to raise the necessary funds for their contribution.

The BDO went to Amarpur, met the *Sarpanch* and explained the scheme to him. He apprised him of the decision of the Block Development Committee to locate the PHC at Amarpur. Till then, the *Sarpanch* was not aware of it, since he was not a member of the Block Development Committee. The BDO pointed out to him that the village had to raise about Rs. 10,000, which was one-third of the cost of construction of the PHC. The remaining two-thirds would be provided by Government from the Community Development Programme funds. While the *Sarpanch* showed interest in the scheme explained by the BDO, he was doubtful about raising Rs. 10,000 from the people. It seemed too large a sum to raise from his poor village. He, therefore, did not give any definite reply to the BDO but asked for some time to explain the scheme to other people of the village and

explore the possibilities of raising the contribution. The BDO agreed to give him a week's time.

Since it was a scheme of the Third Plan and was to be implemented in the plan period ending 1965-66, the BDO was moving fast in the matter. He also explained the urgency of the matter to the *Sarpanch* and urged the need for a quick decision.

The *Sarpanch* was favourably inclined to the scheme as absence of medical facilities was causing a lot of hardship to the people of the village. He observed : "I thought it was a good opportunity and we should not let it go. I was not very confident that I could raise Rs. 10,000. But I decided to try it out with the help and cooperation of my colleagues."

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of the Village *Panchayat* and another, a businessman) got busy with fund-raising. The businessman though not holding any formal position of leadership was quite an influential person in the village. They decided to go from 'door to door' and collect donations from each and every family of the village. They accepted any amount, no matter how small, but did not leave out a single household in the village. The *Sarpanch* remarked, "I did not care how much a person paid; I wanted each person to contribute and feel that he had a share in it and that the PHC belonged to him. This, I felt was necessary to create a feeling of oneness with the PHC among the village people." In the door-to-door campaign, they could raise Rs. 1,000. Thus in all, they collected Rs. 3,000 and a piece of land.

They had still to collect Rs. 7,000. They decided that two of them should go to Bombay and approach some people of their village there, who had made good in business. The idea was not only to get donations from them but also to mobilize their support in getting donations from those, they knew in Bombay. The *Sarpanch* and the businessman went to Bombay and stayed there with a businessman, who belonged to Amarpur village. He too went around with them, collecting funds and also got donations from two of his local friends who were in business. They contacted about twenty persons of their village and some other businessmen and collected a sum of Rs. 8,000 raising the total to Rs. 11,000. The *Sarpanch* heaved a sigh of relief that they had collected the amount, and even more, required for the construction of the PHC.

The *Sarpanch* then wrote to the BDO that the required money had been collected and he should be advised, where it was to be deposited. In the meantime the amount was credited to the account of the Village *Panchayat*.

Meanwhile, the BDO had prepared the detailed scheme as directed by the Collector and got it approved by the District Health Officer and the Civil Surgeon, as per prescribed procedure,

and presented it at a meeting of the Block Advisory Committee[3] convened for the purpose on May 23, 1962. The Committee resolved to approve the construction of the PHC in Amarpur village. The BDO then informed the District Local Board, as required under the procedure, to undertake to bear 20 per cent of the recurring expenditure towards the maintenance of the PHC after the expiry of the first stage of the block. The District Local Board agreed to bear this cost.

With all these procedural formalities completed, the proposal was forwarded to the Director of Health and Medical Services at Ahmedabad on August 2, 1962. The Director of Health and Medical Services accorded technical sanction to the proposal on August 23, 1962 but stated that as per rules, the work could be taken up only after August 1, 1964, when the Block would complete four years of its existence in the first stage of the Community Development Programme. He added, however, that, in the meantime, the administrative approval may be obtained and the plans and estimates prepared.

The proposal was then sent to the Department of Rural Development; the PWD was also requested to prepare the plans and estimates. In the meantime, *Panchayati Raj* was established in Gujarat in April 1963 and all the Community Development schemes were transferred to the *Panchayat*. The District Development Officer was responsible for all development works in the new set-up. On assuming charge of his office, he wrote to all the concerned offices to expedite the processing of all schemes pending with them; the PHC was one among them.

The Under Secretary, Rural Development Department informed the District Development Officer on May 16, 1963 that in the *Panchayat* set-up, the responsibility for meeting 20

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[3]A body consisting of the MLA and MP elected from the Block, the President of the Municipality which fell in the block area, a social worker and an educationist. Its main function was to advise and help the Block Administration in the planning and implementation of the Development Programmes of the Block.

per cent of the recurring cost of running the PHC, which was originally that of the District Local Board, had been passed on to the District *Panchayat*. Therefore, the District *Panchayat* should pass a resolution to that effect.

The District Development Officer placed this letter before the Executive Committee at a meeting of the District *Panchayat*. The Committee considered the letter and passed the needed resolution. The DDO sent a copy of this resolution to the Rural Development Department. Meanwhile, the original scheme of sharing of costs was revised as a result of which the share of popular contribution by the village was raised from 33 per cent to 50 per cent of the cost of construction of the PHC. The District Development Officer informed the *Sarpanch* of Amarpur village, as soon as he got this information from the State Government.

The *Sarpanch* of Amarpur Village was greatly concerned over this increase in the popular contribution. It meant the village was required to pay Rs. 15,000 instead of Rs. 10,000. Although they had already collected an additional sum of Rs. 1,000 in the first campaign, there still remained a gap of Rs. 4,000. The *Sarpanch* felt it was a difficult task as all the donors had already contributed and it would be embarrassing to approach them again, particularly when the money already collected had not till then been used at all.

He, however, discussed the matter with some of his active colleagues who had worked with him in the earlier fund-raising campaign. He also explained the problem to those residents of the village who had donated Rs. 1,000 each. He was able to raise an additional sum of Rs. 2,000 from them. He still needed Rs. 2,000 more.

The *Sarpanch* got an idea and put it across to other leaders in the village. The idea was to have a drama staged by the *Sanskar Kendra* (a youth organisation) of the village. The money realised by selling the tickets for the drama could be contributed to the fund required for the PHC. This idea was

well received. The *Sarpanch* then contacted the organisers of *Sanskar Kendra* and sought their help in this work. They readily agreed to the proposal and got busy with the preparations for staging an entertainment programme. The *Sarpanch* and his colleagues sold the tickets, not only in their own village but also to the people of some of the neighbouring villages. The drama fetched a sum of Rs. 3,600. As a consequence of this, when the people of some of the neighbouring villages came to know that a PHC was to be set up in Amarpur which would benefit them also, they showed their willingness to make some contribution, Thus another sum of Rs. 2,000 was collected.

So the additional funds required to meet the conditions of the revised scheme were collected. But the *Sarpanch* was not satisfied; nothing concrete was happening to convince the people that the PHC was on its way. He was afraid that, if the work was not taken up early, people might begin to suspect him and might even ask for their donations back. It was already about two years since donations had been collected and nothing visible had happened about the setting up of the PHC. Though the money had been deposited in the post office and the village people knew it, a large number of donors who were in Bombay would not be aware of it. He was anxious to see the work of the PHC started as early as possible. He, therefore, personally met the DDO and informed him about the additional amount raised by the village to meet the requirement of the revised scheme. The DDO told him that there was a technical objection from the Director of Health Services for starting the work of the PHC, as the Block had not yet completed four years of the first stage of its existence. There were still four more months to go. The DDO told him that he was not able to do any thing since it was a matter of prescribed procedure. The *Sarpanch* felt that after all his efforts, nothing seemed to be happening. He contacted an MLA of a neighbouring constituency. He was confident of this MLA's support in the matter as both of them had been members of the PSP for a long time before they joined the Congress together, and were intimate

friends. When asked why did he not contact the MLA of his own constituency who was also a Congressman, the *Sarpanch* said that he did not expect his cooperation because they had been political rivals in the past. He further remarked, "We former socialists are treated differently by the Congress although we are also members of the same party. In fact it is not party that counts; only personal contacts and friendship will help."

The MLA of the neighbouring constituency promised to give the *Sarpanch* all possible help. It was agreed that first the MLA should write to the DDO, asking him to expedite the matter. If nothing happened, they should both go to Ahmedabad and meet the Director of Health Services. The MLA also planned to put a question on the matter in the State Assembly which was to meet in June 1964.

The MLA felt that it was a 'ridiculous situation' that although the people had done so much to collect all the necessary funds, including their enhanced share, government was still not moving in the matter. He knew that procedures had to be prescribed for the orderly conduct of business; but an adherence to the "letter of the law" irked him. The 'spirit' behind the law was more important. The time limit for taking up projects involving people's contribution had been fixed with a view to prepare them for such a contribution. But if the people were able to collect the contribution before the time limit was over, they should not be penalised. Instead, their initiative and enthusiasm should be rewarded with prompt action by the administration.

The MLA wrote to the DDO on May 21, 1964, explaining his viewpoint on the above lines. The DDO replied to him on June 6, 1964, restating the technical objection. He again wrote to the DDO on June 26, 1964 indicating his dissatisfaction with the rules and procedures which interfere with development work. At the same time he had raised the issue in the State Assembly by a question. Soon after, he and the *Sarpanch* met the Director,

Health Services at Ahmedabad, and expressed their dissatisfaction about the latter's insistence on the letter of the rule. The Director of Health Services ultimately agreed to issue orders soon, although there were still two months for the Block to complete four years of Stage I. The orders were issued in September, 1964. The Executive Engineer accorded his sanction on January 5, 1965 for construction of the building of the PHC at an estimated cost of Rs. 29,560. As soon as the sanction was received, the District *Panchayat* invited tenders (according to prescribed procedure) and allotted the work of construction to a contractor. The contractor started the construction work in June 1965 and completed it in July 1966.

As soon as the sanction was accorded for the construction of the PHC, the required staff was appointed and the PHC started functioning in a rented building in the village. But the staff of the PHC did not have residential accommodation in the village and therefore had to commute daily from the town nearby. They were available in the village only during the working hours. In case of any emergency, the patient had to be taken seven miles away from the village where the doctor was staying or to Chandnagar. Also the PHC did not have an independent doctor incharge. A doctor who was already working in a village dispensary at a distance of seven miles was appointed on part-time basis to look after the PHC. He used to visit the PHC thrice a week. For the remaining three days, the work was looked after by the compounder.

The *Sarpanch* and some of his colleagues were not happy with this arrangement. They wanted a full-time doctor to work in the village. This, they felt was possible only if they could provide housing accommodation to the staff of the PHC. The *Sarpanch* discussed the matter with the President of the District *Panchayat* informally. The President agreed with his suggestion that the staff quarters for the PHC staff should be constructed as early as possible. He assured the *Sarpanch* that he would take the matter up with the Executive Engineer. The President asked the Executive Engineer to get the plans and estimates

prepared and accord the technical sanction for the construction of quarters for the staff of the PHC at Amarpur.

The President was a man with varied experience. He was once a Minister in the State Government and years back had also worked as a Collector in a District. He had first hand experience of administration. He had earned a reputation for taking quick decisions. Officials and political leaders in the district had great appreciation of his ability as a leader at the district level. They also admired his honesty, integrity and concern for the development of the district. The *Sarpanch* remarked, "It was due to the *Panchayati Raj* and specially due to the conscientious and efficient President of the District *Panchayat* that the whole formality was completed in a fortnight which normally would have taken a few years, if Government had to accord the sanction."

The Executive Engineer got the plans and estimates prepared and accorded administrative approval for the construction of the quarters for the staff of the PHC in April, 1966. As soon as the administrative approval was given, he invited tenders. The contract for the construction of the quarters of the staff of the PHC was given to a businessman of the village in May 1966. Though he did not have much experience of construction, he deliberately submitted the lowest rates so that the work could be done locally. He did this at the instance of the *Sarpanch* of Amarpur village. The *Sarpanch* had also promised him all possible help in the construction work, by way of physical labour—'*shramdan*'—and also by making the services of local bullock carts, etc. available to him for transporting construction material.

The *Sarpanch* made it clear to the local contractor that he should not expect any profit from this transaction, but view it as a service he had to render to his own village. He, however, assured him that there would be no loss either; he added that should any loss result, he would make it good in some way. The businessman, therefore, had no hesitation in offering an unusually low quotation for the work.

The *Sarpanch* felt there was no possibility of loss in the venture. He was confident of this, because he knew that the man who had constructed the PHC had earned a substantial amount. He felt that better quality construction work could be done with minimum expenditure and, in a reasonably short time, if the contract was given to a person from the village. The contractor would then have a personal responsibility and moral obligation to finish the work early.

As soon as the contract was given to the local businessman, the work was started and completed in about a year's time. During the period of construction, the contractor got all the help, promised to him by the *Sarpanch*. The contractor remarked that many people from his village had given free manual labour and had also offered their carts for transporting building materials to the village. He mentioned that he completed the work with great ease, mainly because he had full support and cooperation from the village people and also because building material was provided by the office of the Executive Engineer promptly. He was satisfied with the job done. He observed : "I was happy that I had done some service to the village. People in this village would remember me as long as these quarters exist. The cooperation that people of the village, the *Sarpanch* and the Executive Engineer had extended was remarkable. I earned some profit from this contract but I really did not care so much for that. I was satisfied that I had been able to do something for the village."

The Executive Engineer was satisfied with the performance of the local contractor and remarked that he had done a 'quick and good job'. He added that this was made possible because the contractor did the work with 'a missionary zeal and not for any personal gain'. He stated that he had observed several times when the construction work was going on, that the *Sarpanch* and many other village people took personal interest in it and they assisted the contractor in his work, as though it was their own work. He further remarked that if such a 'spirit of cooperation' existed in other villages, his work would be made much easier and he would be able to accomplish a lot.

The PHC shifted to the new building on July 15, 1966; the staff quarters were ready in the middle of 1967. When the staff of the PHC came to live in the village, people were very happy as they had easy access to the doctor. Emergency cases could now be attended to in time.

But the staff of the PHC were faced with another dfficulty. They did not have a convenient water supply, both for the Health Centre and their houses. They had to get water from a distance. The *Sarpanch* discussed this with the President of the District *Panchayat* in one of the meetings at which the President of the *Taluka Panchayat* (in which this village fell) and the Executive Engineer were also present. The President of the District *Panchayat* favourably responded to this demand of the *Sarpanch* and asked the Executive Engineer to work out the rough cost of providing water at the site of the PHC. The Executive Engineer gave an estimate of Rs. 6,000. It was decided at the meeting that the District *Panchayat* would contribute 50 per cent and the remaining 50 per cent would be shared by the village and the *Taluka Panchayats* in the proportion of one to two respectively. They decided that the boring work should be taken up by the office of the Executive Engineer at the expense of the Village *Panchayat* and, if they struck water level, and the water was good and in sufficient quantity, further work would be continued. The work of boring was taken up soon after and it was successful. Water was found in sufficient quantity, and therefore, it was decided to go ahead with the project.

The *Sarpanch* was again faced with the problem of finding funds to contribute the share of the village to meet the cost of the water works. In order to mobilise local resources, the *Sarpanch* discussed the matter with the local businessman who had been given the building contract. He readily agreed to take up the construction work and also to give some contribution towards the cost of it. But the Village *Panchayat* had to pay Rs. 1,000 as its share and there was not enough money with the *Panchayat* to contribute for this. One old man of the village who had fallen sick and had just recovered then, approached the

Sarpanch and told him that he would pay whatever was needed for providing water supply to the PHC. The local businessman also took up the contract for constructing the water works.

While the District *Panchayat* paid its share towards the cost of water supply, the *Taluka Panchayat* did not. This caused a lot of delay in carrying out the work. But the President of the Village *Panchayat* did not wait for the contribution to come from the *Taluka Panchayat* and carried on with the work. Commenting on the relations with the *Taluka Panchayat*, the *Sarpanch* observed : "The cooperation from the *Taluka Panchayat* was minimum in the whole venture of the building up the PHC. The President of the *Taluka Panchayat* was not happy about the location of the PHC in Amarpur village, as he was not on good terms with me. He even did not pay the share of the *Taluka Panchayat* for the water works scheme for the PHC which was agreed to at the joint meeting. I requested the President of the District *Panchayat* to persuade him to give the share of the *Taluka Panchayat* as decided at the meeting. He did ask him but the *Taluka Panchayat* has still not paid its share."

The *Sarpanch* mentioned that he had a lot of difficulty in completing the work, but he ultimately succeeded, mainly because of the help of the businessman who had taken the contract for the construction of the water tank and the continued support he received from the President of the District *Panchayat* and the Executive Engineer.

The PHC provided facilities for outdoor as well as indoor patients. It had about six beds for male patients and four beds in the maternity ward for female patients. It catered not only to the population of Amarpur but to some forty-six villages surrounding it. But Amarpur was a small village and there were no boarding and lodging facilities for those who came along with the patients needing hospitalisation. The *Sarpanch* and some of his associates who had helped him in raising resources for the

PHC were toying with the idea of having a sanatorium attached to the hospital, which might be used for providing boarding and lodging to the people who accompanied the hospitalised patients. But funds had to be raised for the purpose. They had estimated the cost of such a building at Rs. 6,000. This time they decided not to depend on the District *Panchayat* or any other government source. They wanted to raise the money entirely from private resources.

Around this time, a businessman from Ahmedabad visited his village about three miles away from Amarpur. He had several relatives and friends in Amarpur who called on him while he was there. All of a sudden, he took ill. Some of his relatives from Amarpur went to see him and later arranged for the doctor from Amarpur to visit him. The doctor advised that the patient should be removed to the PHC in Amarpur for better treatment. Satisfied with the treatment he got at the PHC and touched by the hospitality of the village people, the businessman —from Ahmedabad—offered to make some donation to the PHC. The *Sarpanch* put forward his idea of having a sanatorium there, in order to provide boarding and lodging facilities to the persons who accompanied the patients. The businessman liked the idea very much and agreed to contribute the entire cost for the construction of the sanatorium.

The *Sarpanch* discussed his plan with the *Taluka* Development Officer who also liked the idea. He advised the *Sarpanch* to formally write to the President of the *Taluka Panchayat* as the responsibility for repairs and maintenance of the building of the PHC was that of the *Taluka Panchayat*.

The *Sarpanch* wanted to avoid writing to the President of the *Taluka Panchayat*, as he knew it would cause a lot of delay. He, therefore, informally discussed the matter with some other officials of the District *Panchayat*. They too advised him to do the same, for the implication of his not taking formal permission of the President of the *Taluka Panchayat* would be that the Village *Panchayat* would have to bear the expenditure of the repair and maintenance of the sanatorium building.

The *Sarpanch* finally submitted a formal application to the *Taluka Panchayat*. The *Taluka Panchayat* took one year to decide the case and grant formal permission in spite of several reminders (oral and written) from the *Sarpanch* and the President of the District *Panchayat*. The *Sarpanch* felt that "the *Taluka Panchayat* President just wanted to delay matters as he was not happy with all that was being done in Amarpur. He had also delayed the construction of the water tank of PHC by not giving the contribution that the *Taluka Panchayat* had agreed to."

After receiving the approval from *Taluka Panchayat*, the construction of the sanatorium was taken up by the local contractor who had built the staff quarters and the water works. The donor and the contractor were relatives and the former had assured the latter that the cost of construction would be borne by him. As of October 1967, six months since the commencement of construction work, about three-fourths of the work had been completed. The rest was scheduled for completion by December. The contractor had taken personal care to speed up the work as he was doing work for his "relative and for his own village".

THE LOCATION OF A PRIMARY HEALTH CENTRE IN KEKAWADA

ANIL BHATT

This case-study—the location of a Primary Health Centre (PHC) in Kekawada—describes how the distribution of resources under the Community Development Programmes gives rise to competition between different groups of the community and what happens when such competition is channelised through political cleavages existing in the community.

Till 1959, PHCs were to be established in each Community Development Block. After the revision of community development programme in 1959, a provision was made to establish one PHC with 3 or 4 sub-centres in each Stage I Block.[1] Government had prescribed certain rules about the location of PHCs. According to these rules, PHCs were to be located in rural areas, preferably in Block headquarters, if it was a rural area. Also, they were to be located only in areas, where no medical facility existed within a radius of five miles.

The Kekawada *taluka* of the District of Anandpur in Gujarat having a Community Development Block, was allocated one PHC.

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[1]An administrative unit which generally comprised 100 villages with an area of 150-200 square miles and a population of 60-70 thousand. The community development programme and resource allocation therefor were related to the following stages of development. (1) The pre-extension phase of one year before the area could qualify for the full community development programme. During this year, a skeleton programme was undertaken, exclusively confined to agricultural development. (2) The first stage covering a period of 5 years of intensive all round development. (3) The second stage during which the community development programme was continued for another 5 years but with a relatively reduced budget provision.

Normally, the PHC would have been located at Kekawada which is the Block headquarters. But Kekawada was a town and already had a small hospital. Therefore, it was decided to locate the PHC in some other part of the *taluka*.

This created a competition between two areas of the *taluka*. Each claimed that the PHC should be legitimately located in a village in their area. This competition took a political turn, involving two leaders of the *taluka* belonging to two rival political parties—the Swatantra and the Congress.

Before we go further, let us understand the geographical and other background of the two areas of Kekawada *taluka* which were contesting for the PHC.

Kekawada *taluka* can be divided into three parts, popularly known after the prominent villages of the area as 'Pachhatpur *Vibhag*', 'Navtar *Vibhag*' and 'Navelli *Vibhag*'. For the location of the PHC, the former two were competing.

The Pachhatpur area forms the northern-most part of the *taluka*; it has about 40 villages and 22 Village *Panchayats*, besides several very small hamlets. It has a population of about 40,000; it is a very backward area socially, economically and politically. It is inhabited largely by backward castes and tribals. The people of the area are very poor, subsistence agriculture being their only occupation. Politically, it was much less powerful than the Navtar area; it was not represented by any powerful or strong leaders in *Taluka* or District *Panchayat* bodies or the District Congress party. Actually, the Pachhatpur area did not have any influential spokesman at *taluka* or district level.

Geographically, it is separated from the *taluka* by a river. Till 1966, there was no bridge over the river connecting it with the rest of the *taluka*. During the monsoon, there was no

convenient means of communication with this area. Even during fair weather, the only means of communication was the camel or the horse. The political leaders of the *taluka* and the district and the extension officers of the Community Development Blocks hardly visited this area because of the difficulty of communication. The area was neglected even during political campaigns at the time of elections. No election meetings were ever arranged and the contestants in the election would carry out their campaigns through *Sarpanches* or village leaders of the area. This area had very little contact with political leaders and administrators. In the absence of even a very small town nearby, the Pachhatpur area had very little of urban contacts.

The Pachhatpur area did not have any medical facilities. The need to provide some medical facilities had been felt even much earlier. During 1961, the President of the then District Local Board had written to the State Government that "the whole of Pachhatpur area does not have any medical facility and it is absolutely essential that it should be given a class III[2] dispensary." Government asked the Civil Surgeon of the district to give his opinion. The Civil Surgeon supported the proposal and wrote that it was very necessary to start a dispensary at Pachhatpur village as there was no dispensary in the whole of the Pachhatpur area, which was completely cut off during the monsoon season due to lack of communications.

The Navtar area and, particularly, the Navtar village was the most developed part of the Kekawada *taluka*. While here also the majority of the population was backward, the higher castes like *Brahmins*, *Banias* and *Patidars* constituted a substantial number. Villages in this area were well connected with roads; and Navtar village had facilities, which even the town of Kekawada did not have. With a population of 4,000 only, Navtar had electricity, water works, *pucca* roads linked with major district

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[2]Class III dispensaries were government dispensaries run by the then District Local Boards before the introduction of *Panchayati Raj*.

roads, and also a fullfledged high school. Some persons from this area and particularly from village Navtar, had established business in Bombay, and, being well to do, had made donations for various developmental works in the village and the Navtar area.

Politically, the Navtar area was a traditional Congress stronghold. Some leaders from this area were very influential. The *Sarpanch* of Navtar village was a powerful Congress leader. He was the Chairman of the Education Committee of the *Taluka Panchayat* and a major power behind the *Taluka Panchayat* President. It was generally known that, without his support, it was difficult for any one to become President of the *Taluka Panchayat*. He was also the main campaign manager of the Congress party in the *taluka* during the *Panchayati Raj* and general elections.

It was generally felt that, because the leaders of this area were prominent and influential Congress leaders, it got the lion's share of all developmental programmes.

The problem of locating a PHC arose in 1960 when the State Government asked the District Local Board (DLB), to send a proposal for starting a PHC in Kekawada Block. The PHC was to start towards the end of 1963 only, when the Kekawada Block would become a Stage I Block; but the matter was initiated well in advance, so that the PHC would start functioning as soon as the Block entered that stage.

When the matter was first initiated in 1960, *Panchayati Raj* had not been introduced in Gujarat. Kekawada was a Community Development Block with a Block Development Committee.

The Kekawada Block Development Committee, at its meeting of January 1961 decided that the PHC should be located at Navtar village and that the Navtar *Panchayat* should collect a contribution[3] of Rs. 15,000 for the purpose. The proposal

[3]The people themselves had to contribute 50 per cent of the cost of construction of the PHC.

to locate the PHC at Navtar was approved by the Civil Surgeon in June 1961 and by the DLB in October 1961. But it took time to prepare the budget and the detailed scheme and the first formal proposal was submitted by the *taluka* in February, 1962.

Let us now see what the political situation in the *taluka* was at that time. The Kekawada *taluka* was a Congress stronghold. In the 1962 general elections, while the district as a whole returned a majority of Swatantra Party to the State Assembly, Kekawada *taluka* remained faithful to the Congress and elected a Congress candidate. In Kekawada *taluka*, there were two local leaders within the Congress party, who competed for supremacy in *taluka* institutions and in the *taluka* Congress party. Though in the same party, they were political rivals. These two were Lalshanker Ved and Veriprasad Doshi. Veriprasad Doshi was the *Sarpanch* of Navtar village; he was very influential in the district Congress party and for all purposes, he was chief representative of the Congress party in the *taluka*. It was difficult to do any thing in the *taluka* against his wishes. Lalshanker Ved was in search of an opportunity to reduce the power and influence of Doshi. He saw his opportunity in the issue of the location of the PHC.

Lalshanker Ved knew that, since long, the Pachhatpur area had been in need of some medical facility and that, in the past, a move had been made to get a class III dispensary for that area. He was a young man, known to be an ambitious and hardworking politician. Although he belonged to Kekawada town proper, he was the only leader of the *taluka* who kept some touch with the people of the Pachhatpur area. During the election days, the Congress leaders, not willing to undergo the hardships of touring this area, would send a young and junior person like Lalshanker Ved to do their campaign in the Pachhatpur area. Lalshanker Ved used these opportunities to cultivate his own personal contacts with the village *Sarpanches* and other leaders of the Pachhatpur area. He had thus become influential with the community leaders of the area and had created some sort of a base for personal support.

He, therefore, went to Pachhatpur village, arranged a meeting of several *Sarpanches* of the area, and told them to make a demand for getting the PHC in their area. He argued that Navtar area was getting all the benefits, while Pachhatpur was being given a step-motherly treatment because the *Sarpanches* of the Pachhatpur area were not active and enthusiastic. Congress leaders of the Kekawada *taluka* were neglecting them. Whereupon, the twenty-two *Sarpanches* of the Pachhatpur area held a meeting on October 10, 1961 and passed a resolution that the PHC should be located in Pachhatpur area. Further, a committee of the *Sarpanches* of three Village *Panchayats*—Pachhatpur, Lakhor and Sodra villages—was appointed to represent their case. All this was done under the guidance of Lalshanker Ved. This was the first time that the *Sarpanches* of the Pachhatpur area ever got together to a discuss a common problem. The Pachhatpur area of the Kekawada *taluka*, which was till now politically dormant and apathetic towards public issues, for the first time got mobilized around this issue.

The sub-committee of the *Sarpanches* of the Pachhatpur *vibhag* met the Congress leaders of the *taluka*, among whom was also Veriprasad Doshi, and strongly represented their case. They argued that Navtar area was well developed and the people of that area could easily go to Kekawada hospital for medical facilities as communications were well developed there. On the other hand, the Pachhatpur *vibhag* did not have any medical facilities whatsoever, while Navtar village already had a subsidised medical practitioner's centre run by Government. An open injustice was being done to Pachhatpur *vibhag*. Briefed by Lalshanker Ved, they also threatened that if their demand was not fulfilled, they would not support the Congress in the coming general elections. They also mentioned that a move had already been made in that direction earlier by the DLB President.

Veriprasad Doshi and his colleague, the Chairman of the Block Development Committee, knew that, on merits, the case of the Pachhatpur area was stronger; but Veriprasad Doshi

wanted the PHC to be located in his area (Navtar). Yet he did not want to antagonise the people of the Pachhatpur area, as the third general elections were only a few months ahead.

So Veriprasad Doshi and other like-minded Congress leaders thought of a move to satisfy both the areas. Kekawada *taluka* was given one and a half Blocks[4] on the basis of the 1951 census population which was 1,14,000; but according to the 1961 census, the population was 1,45,000. The *taluka* therefore had already requested the Government to allot two Blocks to Kekawada. According to the rules, if Kekawada got two Blocks, it would also get 2 PHCs and the tussle between the Pachhatpur and Navtar areas could be resolved. The Congress leaders, who were also in the Block Advisory Committee, advised the BDO to write to the District Health Officer (DHO) that the question of the establishment of a PHC in Kekawada should be taken up, only after the proposal for allotment of new Blocks to Kekawada was considered. The BDO wrote accordingly and the DHO agreed that the proposal may be kept pending.

The 1962 elections were over and the Congress candidate for the Assembly won the Kekawada seat, although in the district as a whole, the majority of seats went to the Swatantra Party. Eventually, Government refused to give two Blocks to Kekawada *taluka*; the District Development Officer was asked to advise the Kekawada *taluka* to put up a proposal for the location of one PHC.

A year elapsed in this process and, in 1963, *Panchayati Raj* was introduced in Gujarat. The Block Development Committees were dissolved and *Taluka Panchayat* Committees were formed. The community development administration was entrusted to the newly formed *Taluka Panchayats*; and the Block Development Officer was designated *Taluka* Development Officer (TDO).

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[4]When Community Development Programmes were introduced, it was decided to allot one Block to an area having a population of 60 to 70 thousand. Those *talukas* which had more were given an additional half or one Block as the case may be.

On receiving instructions from the State Government, the District Development Officer wrote to the TDO to send fresh proposals for the location of the PHC in Kekawada *taluka.*

The *Taluka Panchayat,* controlled by the Congress and under the influence of Doshi, passed a resolution in favour of locating the PHC at Navtar village.

By now, the political situation in Kekawada had slightly changed. During the 1962 general elections, Lalshanker Ved had asked for the Congress ticket from the Kekawada constituency; the ticket was not given to him but to a nominee of his rival, Veriprasad Doshi. Lalshanker Ved tried again. In the new *Panchayati Raj* set-up that followed soon after the general elections of 1962, Ved asked for a Congress ticket to contest for the position of the *Taluka Panchayat* President; but again Doshi was able to get the ticket for his own man. Ved, seeing that it was not possible for him to beat Doshi, while remaining in the Congress, resigned from the party and contested for the *Taluka Panchayat* Presidentship against the Congress nominee—Doshi's man. But he lost.

When the resolution for locating the PHC at Navtar was put forward in the *taluka panchayat*, a hot discussion took place. Ved supported by some *Sarpanches* of Pachhatpur area proposed that Pachhatpur village should be given the PHC. The *Taluka Panchayat* President, knowing the direction in which the wind was blowing postponed the decision till the next meeting. During the intervening period, the President of the *Taluka Panchayat* and his colleagues, including Doshi, played a political trick. They called the *Sarpanches* of the Pachhatpur area and told them that having a PHC was a liability rather than an asset; they would have to collect a lot of money (it was reported that in order to frighten the *Sarpanches* of the Pachhatpur area, the amount of contribution indicated by them was much more than what was actually required); that the President would in any case get them a class III dispensary, for which they would not have to pay a rupee. The *Sarpanches* of the Pachhatpur area agreed to waive their claims for the PHC. So, in

November, 1963 the *Taluka Panchayat* decided, with a note of dissent from Ved, that the PHC should be located in village Navtar.

Even when the Kekawada *Taluka Panchayat,* with the consent of the Pachhatpur area *Sarpanches,* passed a resolution in favour of Navtar village, Lalshanker Ved did not give up the fight. He tried to have the decision of the *Taluka Panchayat,* overruled by the District *Panchayat.*

Here, it is necessary to know about the political situation at the district level and of the *Zilla Panchayat,* particularly after the 1962 elections. The Swatantra party was formed in 1960; and in the 1962 general elections, it emerged as a major opposition party in Gujarat. This district was one of its strongholds. It secured 50 per cent of the assembly seats in this district in the 1962 elections. In the first *Zilla Panchayat* of 1963, the party position between the Swatantra and Congress was equal. There was a tough fight for the Presidentship of the *Zilla Panchayat* between the Congress and the Swatantra; the Congress candidate won the election because of his personal influence, which brought him two votes from the Swatantra members of the *Zilla Panchayat.* But all the Sub-Committees of the *Zilla Panchayat,* including the Executive and the Health Committees were captured by the Swatantra party.

Ved now sought the support of the Swatantra Party. He asked some Swatantra party members to take up the matter in the District Health Committee and pass a resolution in favour of locating the PHC at Lakor—a village in Pachhatpur area. Simultaneously, he called the *Sarpanches* of the Pachhatpur area and told them that they had been fooled into agreeing to let the PHC go to Navtar. Having a PHC was a great boon as the people would not have to travel long distances to get medical aid. He told them that they should not be carried away by the Congress leaders who were misguiding them; if they gave up the fight in this case, they would never get any benefits in future. He further told them that all was not lost yet; he

was trying to get them the PHC through the Health Committee of the *Zilla Panchayat*. This time, Ved did not want to leave any loopholes in his strategy; so he called the *Sarpanch* of Lakor village and asked him to collect the required public contribution of Rs. 15,000 and deposit the amount with him.

The Swatantra party was quick to seize the opportunity of getting one up on their rivals, the Congress. On July 23, 1964, the District Health Committee controlled by the Swatantra party unanimously decided to change the location of the Health Centre from Navtar to Lakor. The District Health Officer was quick to take follow-up action. On the basis of this resolution, he wrote to Government for their approval of Lakor as the location of the PHC. He also wrote to the *Taluka Panchayat* to amend its proposal in favour of Lakor and wrote to the Lakor *Sarpanch* on August 4, 1964 to send the acceptance of the Village *Panchayat* and start collecting the required public contribution. Before taking these formal steps, the District Health Officer did not make any references to the *Zilla Panchayat*. The DHO was acting under the advice of the Swatantra Party members of the District Health Committee, who in their turn were being advised by Lalshanker Ved not to bring the matter to the notice of the *Zilla Panchayat*. Ved's calculation was that once the approval from the State Government came, Navtar area leaders would not be able to do anything.

The *Taluka Panchayat* reacted to this communication from the District Health Officer promptly and firmly. The President wrote to the *Zilla Panchayat* President, pointing out that even though the *Taluka Panchayat* had decided upon Navtar as the location of the PHC, the Health Committee of the *Zilla Panchayat* had decided to locate it at Lakor and the Lakor *Panchayat* had been asked to collect the necessary public contribution. He emphasised that as the PHC was to be located in the Kekawada *taluka*, it was the *Taluka Panchayat*'s right to decide about its location; the DHC had no right to change the decision of the *Taluka Panchayat*. At the same time, Doshi

and the *Sarpanch* of Navtar village met the concerned Minister and higher officers at the State Headquarters and asked them to hold back the approval to the resolution of the DHC. They also met the President of the *Zilla Panchayat* and a prominent Congress leader of the district and told them that if the PHC was not given to Navtar, the whole of the Navtar area would turn against the Congress and at the same time the Swatantra party people would take the credit for the PHC going to Pachhatpur.

The *Zilla Panchayat* President asked the DDO to enquire into the matter. He also briefed the DDO about the political factors involved, and instructed him to hold back action in the matter. The DDO wrote a private note to the DHO saying, "Did you bring the fact that the Health Committee had passed a resolution in contravention to that passed by the *Taluka Panchayat* to the specific notice of the District *Panchayat* President ? The situation is rather serious. No action, which will complicate the matter, should be taken by you."

Further, Doshi who was no less a politician than Ved, played another trick through the Congress MLA of Kekawada *taluka* who was his supporter. Doshi asked the Congress MLA to write separately to each of the *Sarpanches* of Lakor, Pachhatpur and Sodra villages of the Pachhatpur area that it had been decided to locate the PHC in their village and therefore, they should pass a resolution of acceptance to that effect. This started a quarrel among these three villages of the Pachhatpur area. Doshi's idea was that once they started quarrelling among themselves, it would become easier for him to get the PHC located at Navtar, since there was unanimity among Navtar area villages for the location at Navtar. But Ved was not to be thus outwitted; when he learnt of this, he called a joint meeting of the *Sarpanches* of 22 villages of Pachhatpur area and told them that, if they began to quarrel amongst themselves, they would lose the case and the PHC would go to Navtar; he persuaded them to pass a resolution that "the PHC should be started in the Pachhatpur area as the whole area is very backward and the villages of the

area do not have any medical facility within a radius of 10 miles and that a Committee of 6 *Sarpanches* of the area has been appointed to decide the village, where the PHC would be located."

Before this, in response to the DHO's letter of August 4, 1964, the *Sarpanch* of the Lakor village *Panchayat* had called a meeting of the *Panchayat* and passed a resolution on September 11, 1964, promising to collect the necessary contribution. But the DHO, who had by now sensed that the matter was serious, kept silent and did not respond to the Lakor *Panchayat's* resolution which was communicated to him. After waiting for three months, the Lakor *Sarpanch* reminded the DHO for a reply. He mentioned that he had already collected a contribution of Rs. 15,000 and that he should be advised where he should deposit the money.

The Civil Surgeon and the DHO had to give their expert opinion about the location of the PHC. They were made to opine, it was reported, in favour of Navtar village. Thus, under the pressure of one of the prominent Congress leaders of the district, the DDO wrote to the Deputy Director of Public Health and Medical Services at State Headquarters that he should move the Government to approve the PHC being located at Navtar as per the resolution of the Kekawada *Taluka Panchayat*; and also as per the opinion of the Civil Surgeon, and the DHO, Godhra.

Personally, however, the DDO, the DHO and the Civil Surgeon were known to hold contrary views; that, on merits, the PHC should go to the Pachhatpur area. The DLB had tried in the past to move the Government in the matter even when there was no question of the PHC. The Civil Surgeon himself, during the DLB days, had given an opinion that the Pachhatpur area should be provided with medical facilities immediately. According to one of the prominent local leaders of the Congress, an MP from the area, the administrators held the view that the PHC should go to the Pachhatpur area. They also expressed this opinion, in private, to the Congress leaders of the district.

The DDO then consulted the *Zilla Panchayat* President about solving the tussle between the two areas. The latter, even though he had become President on the Congress ticket, was not a very staunch Congressman. During the agitation for a linguistic state, he had opposed the Congress and even, during the election of the *Zilla Panchayat* President, he was given the ticket only because he had threatened that, otherwise, he would cross over to the Swatantra. As both parties had secured equal seats in the *Zilla Panchayat*, the Congress would have lost even if a single member had crossed over to the other party and so he was given the ticket. The President also was of the opinion, privately expressed, that the PHC should go to the Pachhatpur area. But he did not want to alienate the Navtar group, which was very powerful in the District Congress party. And yet, he did not want to displease the Pachhatpur people, and give an impression of being partial towards the Navtar area. Being in a fix, he decided not to associate himself openly with the decision in favour of any side. He told the DDO to handle the matter and write to the Government on his own. But he did suggest to the DDO to get Government's approval for Navtar, without involving him and the *Zilla Panchayat* body. The President thought that, in this way, he could tell the Navtar people that it was he who got them the PHC and, also impress upon the people of the Pachhatpur area that it was the Government's decision to allot the PHC to Navtar and that he had nothing to do with it.

But Lalshanker Ved had made another move to frustrate the President's strategy. He had already represented the case of Pachhatpur to the State Government through some Swatantra MLAs. The State Government, therefore, knew that there was a tussle between the Pachhatpur and Navtar areas.

The State Government declined to make the choice. After all, the decision concerned the local people. So they should decide. That was why *Panchayati Raj* had been established.

So the Deputy Secretary, Rural Development Department wrote to the DDO that he should obtain the opinion of the *Zilla Panchayat* about the location of the PHC and that, in recommending the location, the reasonableness of the demand of the Pachhatpur area should be considered.

The DDO wrote back, saying that the General Body of the *Zilla Panchayat* had been convened to meet on March 4, 1965 and its opinion would be obtained and sent to Government.

The situation had become very delicate. Some prominent Congress leaders knew the merits of the Pachhatpur demand for the PHC. One of the topmost leaders of the district, when he was President of the DLB, had tried to move the Government to give the badly needed medical facilities to the Pachhatpur area. The *Zilla Panchayat* Congress party was really in a fix. If they did not give the PHC to the Pachhatpur area, the Pachhatpur area would definitely go anti-Congress; this, they could not afford as it was the largest area in Kekawada *taluka*. On the other hand, if the PHC was given to the Pachhatpur area, the Navtar area, already the fort of the Congress with powerful leadership in the Congress organisation would be alienated; perhaps, they would also go anti-Congress. And the Swatantra Party was bound to take the credit of giving the PHC to Pachhatpur area, if that was the ultimate decision.

Before the *Zilla Panchayat* meeting was held, the *Zilla Panchayat* Congress party met to plan their strategy. Lalshanker Ved had mobilised the *Sarpanches* and people of the Pachhatpur area to present their case before the Congress party. He came with a deputation of about 100 persons and presented a memorandum to the *Zilla Panchayat* Congress party. A hot discussion took place at the party meeting. Some Congress leaders, like the ex-DLB President, tried to persuade Navtar leaders to give up their demand. They indicated that the Navtar area had got all the benefits of developmental works till then and that the time had come when they could be generous and allow the PHC

to go to Pachhatpur. But the Navtar leaders had also worked up such a tempo among their people, that it was difficult for them to back out. Not to be out-done by the Pachhatpur people, they also had brought a deputation of some 20 persons with them. They refused to give way. The *Zilla Panchayat* Congress party could not come to any agreement.

At the *Zilla Panchayat* meeting held the same afternoon, a very heated discussion took place. One of the prominent Congress leaders openly favoured the claim of the Pachhatpur area. One of them accused Swatantra members of favouring the Pachhatpur claim on political considerations; on this, the Swatantra party members declared that the matter should be put to vote. They said that all the Swatantra party members would vote in favour of the Pachhatpur area.

But the Congress party did not want to put the matter to vote, because the strength of both the parties was equal; further more, even if the Congress won, it would become clear that the Congress was in favour of Navtar and the Swatantra party was in favour of Pachhatpur. In that case, the Pachhatpur people would think that the Congress did not want to do any good to them. This, the Congress party was at pains to avoid. So the Congress party was very reluctant to put the matter to vote; nor did they wish to decide the matter either in favour of Navtar or Pachhatpur.

The Congress party again found a way out to postpone the decision. The top Congress leaders went out of the meeting for deliberations. They decided that a sub-committee be formed to put up the case for two PHCs for the Kekawada *taluka* before Government. This, they thought would be a good excuse to postpone the matter, so that both the parties who had worked themselves up to a feverish pitch, would cool down.

The task of announcing this decison was given to the ex-DLB President who was also the MP from the area, because he had such a stature that his suggestion would not be rejected even by the Swatantra Party. So the ex-DLB President came in

and said, "The area of Kekawada *taluka* is very big. The *taluka* at present has got one and half Blocks according to the 1951 census which is not proper. According to the 1961 census, the *taluka* should get two Blocks and then it can also get two centres; and we can resolve the problem more successfully and to the satisfaction of the people of both the areas. Everybody will agree that Pachhatpur area is very underdeveloped and it has no medical facilities. According to 1961 census population, this *taluka* can get two centres and therefore, we should postpone the decision and represent the whole matter before Government and request them to give two centres to Kekawada *taluka*. Then both Pachhatpur and Navtar can get a PHC each and this problem can be solved."

The *Zilla Panchayat*, therefore, decided to postpone the decision about the location of the PHC. A sub-committee, consisting of the *Zilla Panchayat* President, the DDO and two other members of the *Zilla Panchayat* was appointed to represent the matter to the Government.

The idea in this postponement was that, while to pacify the Pachhatpur people a sub-committee should be appointed, the work, for the PHC already allotted, should start at Navtar. Later, the Pachhatpur people could be told that the construction work at Navtar had already been started and Government had refused to give another PHC; nothing could be done then. The Congress leaders knew that Government would not give another PHC to Kekawada. The ex-DLB President himself stated : "We know that Government will not give another centre. We appointed the sub-committee so that we could postpone the decision, bide for time, and also show to the Pachhatpur people that the Congress was doing something for them."

The DDO wrote to the Director of Public Health and Medical Services about the decision of the *Zilla Panchayat* and requested him to grant an audience to the sub-committee. At the same time, the DDO, also asked the TDO, Kekawada to prepare schemes for two centres: one at Navtar and the other

at Pachhatpur. So the TDO prepared proposals for the two centres and sent them on to the DDO. The *Taluka Panchayat* resolved that under instructions of the *Zilla Panchayat*, two health centres, one at Navtar and the other at Pachhatpur, were being proposed and should be approved by Government; meanwhile, they argued, that the work for the one centre which was already approved, should start at Navtar.

In reply to the representation of the *Zilla Panchayat* that 2 Blocks be allotted to Kekawada, the Deputy Secretary, *Panchayat* and Health Department wrote to the DDO in May, 1965, "At present Kekawada *taluka* has got only one and a half Blocks and therefore, according to the rules, two centres cannot be given to the *taluka*. So the DDO should send the opinion of *Zilla Panchayat* on the original proposal of one centre in the *taluka*."

But the Congress leaders were not in favour of bringing up the matter in the *Zilla Panchayat* because they wanted to avoid taking a decision and its political consequences. So they wanted the matter to be decided by the administrators; yet, they wanted the administrators to decide it in the manner palatable to them. They asked the DDO to renew the appeal for two centres, and meanwhile requested the Government to go ahead with the work of the one already approved for Navtar. Accordingly, the DDO wrote to Government on June 14, 1965, "The *Zilla Panchayat* has already given its opinion on two centres, and one cannot submit it to the *Zilla Panchayat* for opinion often, as it meets only once in three months; therefore, it is submitted that work on the centre at Navtar should be started and another centre at Lakor be approved." To this, the Deputy Secretary again replied that the opinion of the *Zilla Panchayat* on the previous proposal should be obtained and sent to Government.

Ultimately, therefore, the matter was placed before the meeting of the *Zilla Panchayat* held on July 30, 1965. Again heated discussions took place. The *Zilla Panchayat* Congress

party was from the very beginning reluctant to put the matter to vote. Finally, it was decided that, the *Zilla Panchayat* President should arbitrate in the matter and that his decision should be binding on all. The opposition group insisted that the *Zilla Panchayat* President should give his decision there and then. The Swatantra Party people knew that the President was personally in favour of the PHC going to Pachhatpur; and they were afraid that, if given time, the President might yield to the pressure from his party. Further, they wanted the Congress members of the *Zilla Panchayat* to side openly with Navtar and against Pachhatpur so that they could use this partiality of the Congress people for their own political purpose in future. But the President refused to walk into the trap and said that he would need time to look into the merits of the competing demands and, therefore, he should be given one month's time to give his decision.

The *Zilla Panchayat* then decided that the matter should be represented before the Government once again and Government should be persuaded to give two centres to Kekawada. The matter should be taken up, if necessary, even with the Central Government. Meanwhile, the President was authorised to give his decision about the location of one PHC which was already approved.

On August 10, 1965, the DDO wrote to the Deputy Secretary that the *Zilla Panchayat* had decided to make efforts to persuade Government to give two centres and take the matter upto the Central Government, if necessary.

The next day, the DDO and the President met the Secretary *Panchayat* and Health Department and also the Director of Public Health, both of whom had come to the adjoining district town. They discussed the whole case with these state officials, and apprised them of the political implications. The Secretary suggested that both the DDO and the President should meet him at Ahmedabad. On return to the district headquarters, the DDO wrote to the Secretary for an appointment.

Instead, the Secretary, in his letter of August 18, 1965 wrote that he had looked into the matter, but did not find it possible to give two PHCs to one *taluka*, in any case. This would involve a major change at the all-India level; two centres were not given in any part of India to one and half Blocks. Again this would involve double expenditure; other areas would also claim two centres; and in the plan allocations, it was not possible for the Government to accommodate such additional expenditure.

The President of the *Zilla Panchayat* who was biding his time in the hope that he might not have to take an inconvenient decision, if Government could somehow be persuaded to give two centres, ultimately had to give his decision. For now, the Government was pressing for the opinion of the *Zilla Panchayat*. The Deputy Secretary wrote on August 21, 1965 and again on August 27, that unless the *Zilla Panchayat* gave its opinion, it would not be possible to give approval for the location of the PHC, and that this should be decided immediately as the PHC must start within the Third Plan period, which was soon coming to a close.

To begin with, the *Zilla Panchayat* President had privately assured the members of the Swatantra party that he would give his decision in favour of Pachhatpur and would not yield to the pressure of the Congress leaders. But he also realised that his political position was precarious; he had become *Zilla Panchayat* President only by a marginal vote. And the Congress leaders brought pressure on him to give his decision in favour of Navtar; otherwise, they would not support him in future in the party organisation. Even the threat of a no-confidence motion against him in the *Zilla Panchayat* was made, if he did not decide in favour of Navtar. But the *Zilla Panchayat* President said he had already promised the PHC to the Pachhatpur people and if Pachhatpur people were not satisfied, they would go anti-Congress. However, the Congress leaders' advice prevailed. They even drafted the wording of the *Zilla Panchayat* President's decision. A way was found to mollify the people of Pachhatpur.

A Class III dispensary from another village of another *taluka* which was to be shifted because that village was to get a PHC, was allotted to Pachhatpur area to provide some medical facility for the people there.

The DDO informed the Government on September 13, 1965, that the *Zilla Panchayat* had decided to locate the PHC at Navtar. The Pachhatpur area lost the PHC. But, in the process, had not a politically dormant and inactive area of the *taluka* been activated to articulate their demands?

UTILISATION OF SMALL IRRIGATION TANKS IN SUNDER SHEHAR TALUKA

H. R. CHATURVEDI

This case describes how rules and procedures inhibited the utilisation of small irrigation tanks in Sunder Shehar *taluka* and caused dissatisfaction amongst the farmers and how, later, with the advent of *Panchayati Raj,* these rules and procedures were altered by the *Taluka Panchayat*. As a result, the irrigation facilities came to be utilised, the revenues therefrom increased and the people were satisfied.

In Sunder Shehar *Taluka* of Chandnagar District, three irrigation tanks named Rama, Vijaya and Kirti were built by the erstwhile princely state of Chandnagar, before Independence. Rama was built in 1914 at a cost of Rs. 1,41,000 with an irrigation potential of 600 acres. Vijaya was constructed in 1940 at a cost of Rs. 4,96,000; it had an irrigation potential of 1200 acres. Kirti was constructed in 1941 at a cost of Rs. 1,36,000; and had an irrigation potential of 500 acres. After independence, Government continued its efforts in this direction and built two more tanks, Chandan and Hira. The former was constructed in 1952 (First Plan period) under the "Grow More Food Campaign" at a cost of Rs. 7,23,000, with an irrigation potential of 600 acres. Hira was constructed in 1962-63 at a cost of Rs. 6,01,266 with an irrigation potential of 483 acres. Thus by 1967, there were five minor irrigation tanks in Sunder Shehar *taluka* of Chandnagar district.

After independence, the princely state of Chandnagar was merged in one of the States of the Indian Union. The State Government entrusted the administration of the tanks to its

Public Works Department (PWD). A Canal Officer of the rank of Deputy Engineer of the PWD was in overall charge of the administration of the tanks. His staff consisted of an Overseer, five irrigation Clerks and five Chowkidars. His office was located in the District Headquarters at a distance of about thirty-five miles from Sundar Shehar—the *Taluka* headquarter. The Overseer had his office in Sundar Shehar, at a distance of thirteen miles from the nearest tank and twenty miles from the farthest tank.

The Canal Officer alone was empowered to sanction the use of canal water by the farmers. He dealt with all the complaints, relating to misuse of tank water by the farmers and other irregularities, such as favouritism and bribery in releasing tank water. He also looked after the maintenance and repairs of the tanks.

The Overseer collected the applications for the use of water from the farmers and forwarded them to the Canal Officer for final sanction. He collected the revenue and deposited it in the treasury. He occasionally supervised the tanks. The day-to-day supervision of the tanks was the responsibility of the irrigation Clerks. They also looked after the proper utilisation of tank water, with the help of the Chowkidars.

For getting tank water for irrigation purposes, a farmer had to submit a written application before the 15th of June every year, indicating the area and the type of crop to be irrigated, to the Overseer, who, after scrutinising it for payment of past dues, forwarded it to the Canal Officer for final sanction. After the Canal Officer accorded his sanction, it was conveyed by the Overseer to the Canal Clerk, who, in turn, informed the farmer about it. The Overseer also fixed the turns, by which the water was released for each applicant and it was the duty of the Clerk to see that the turns, so fixed, were adhered to. The farmer, however, was not informed about his turn in advance. He had to keep in constant touch with the Canal Clerk and find out for himself when his turn would come.

A farmer was liable to pay the charges, once his application was approved by the Canal Officer, even if eventually he did not use the water at all. In case he used water to irrigate a larger area than indicated in his application, he had to pay a fine. In the application, he had to specify the crop for which he wanted irrigation water. If, later, he changed his mind and grew a crop other than the one specified in the application and used the water to irrigate that crop, he was charged at the rate fixed for two crops. For example, if a farmer had applied for water to irrigate *Bajari* and, instead, he grew groundnut, he had to pay charges at the rates fixed for *Bajari* as well as groundnut.

If there were disputes and complaints, regarding the use of tank water, the farmers had to approach the Overseer or the Canal Officer. The Chowkidar and the Canal Clerk were not authorised to settle disputes or listen to the complaints of the farmers. For the farmers, this meant taking trips to the *Taluka* and District Headquarters.

These procedures and rules for the use of the tank water presented a lot of problems to the farmers. Their difficulties were :

(1) The farmers felt that it was unjust to expect them to submit applications by the 15th June every year. They could decide the crop to be raised and the area to be irrigated only after ascertaining the total rainfall during the season. Before the monsoon, therefore, it was not possible to take such a decision. As a result, the farmers had often to change their decision after the monsoon and they had to pay more or go without irrigation of their farms. The Canal Officer admitted that 15th June was rather early for a farmer to decide about the area and the crop for which he required water. He felt, however, that it was not possible to change the dates for filing the applications in view of the long procedure that had to be gone through, before a decision was taken on the application of a farmer.

(2) A farmer had to spend a lot of time and money, if he had to lodge a complaint. He had personally to go to the *Taluka* or District Headquarters. By the time the investigations were completed, the harvest period was over and the complaint would be of no use. As one farmer remarked : "Once it so happened that Mr. Kikabhai (a farmer) managed to get water before his turn, by giving a small sum to the Chowkidar. I discovered from the Clerk that my turn was by-passed without my knowledge. I lodged a complaint with the Overseer. The Overseer took two months to investigate this problem. By then, it was no use giving water to the crop. In that year due to the shortage of water, I got only three-fourths of the normal yield. This happened not merely in my case. Many other farmers were affected by such practices and complaints were of no avail." The *Up-Sarpanch* of a village also remarked that such complaints did not help anybody. On the contrary, they caused serious rifts and conflicts among the people of the village. The result was that, in order to avoid such problems, people refrained from seeking any redress of their grievances.

(3) The turns fixed by the Overseer were not interchangeable on the basis of need or requirement of the farmers and sometimes delay of a few days in giving water substantially damaged the crop. Commenting on the delay in getting water, a *Sarpanch* observed : "The Overseer fixed the turn and did not care, when water was really needed for the crop. In this arrangement, many times the crops were severely damaged. After all, the standing crop did not wait for the turn to be fixed by the Overseer. Crops like animals, perish or die, if not given due care in time. But this 'turn' business was so rigid, that even mutual arrangement among farmers in the village was not possible. As a result, the farmer did not benefit at all as the water was not made available to him in time."

(4) There was unauthorised use of water. The President of the *Taluka Panchayat* explained the problem thus : "The channel through which the water passed from the tanks to the farm was *kachcha*—made of mud. It was easy to dig it a little or put some mud to divert the water. This was generally done at night by those who did not apply for water. Since it was a small operation and could be done in a short time, it was difficult to detect those engaged in such activities. Sometimes, a farmer who was entitled to take water tried to divert water to his adjoining farm in the same way. Sometimes, farmers used to get water by bribing the watchman who connived at the acts of diversion of water or by-passing of turns. He also mentioned that a lot of water was wasted, since the farmers did not care and the watchman could not handle the job alone.

(5) Repairs of the tanks and channels were not carried out in time causing waste of irrigation water. According to the *Sarpanch*, the State Governnment was interested in collecting revenue, and not in improving the irrigation facilities. The Government did not pay any attention to improve the channels through which water passed from the tanks to the fields. Since these channels were *kachcha* (muddy), a lot of water was lost during its passage in the channel.

Naturally the area irrigated by tanks and the revenue therefrom declined gradually and the fall was more than 50 per cent. For instance, in 1960-61, the area irrigated from the Vijaya tank was 1405.05 acres and, in 1962-63, it came down to 775.34 acres. Similarly, Chandan tank recorded irrigation of 578.10 acres of land in 1960-61 and it was only 193.08 acres in 1962-63. The amount of revenue realised from Vijaya tank in 1960-61 was Rs. 8,330 which came down to Rs. 2,646 in 1962-63.

Commenting on this, the President of the *Taluka Panchayat*, after the advent of *Panchayati Raj*, observed : "The administration was mainly responsible for this decline. Poor farmers were experiencing hardship in getting water and facing many other problems which nobody attended to. They had to spend a lot of time and money in complaining about small things and that too was of no use, as nobody attended to these in time. I am myself a farmer and I know what it means to a farmer, if he is late even by two days to get water to his crop. But why should an Overseer or a Canal Officer be concerned with it? They were only concerned with the rules and procedures and hardly cared for the satisfaction of the farmers. The farmers decided in disgust to make little use of the tanks for irrigation purposes, and this explains the decline both in the area irrigated and the revenue during 1960-64. The worst was reached in 1963-64, when some of the tanks were not at all used for irrigation. I was really distressed at this state of affairs and, more so, because I felt I could not do much to help my fellow farmers. I felt miserable for not being able to change these rules and procedures, which were detrimental not only to farmers in this area but to the country at large, which was experiencing scarcity of food. Moreover, we were not able to honour the commitments we had made to the farmers before Independence."

Chandnagar had been a stronghold of the Congress for the last many years. Some of its District and *Taluka* leaders were influential in State and Central Governments. They were really concerned with the problems of the development of rural areas. They were naturally anxious to change the rules and procedures, relating to the irrigation facilities, so that farmers got water without much difficulty. Describing these efforts the present[1] *Taluka Panchayat* President remarked in retrospect: "Some of us were deeply concerned with improving the lot of the farmers in the area. We believed that this could be done by certain land reforms and changes in rules and procedures

[1]This refers to the period before the recent elections of *Panchayats* in Gujarat held in March 1968.

for the supply of loans, fertilizers, seeds, irrigation water etc. It was a hard task to change so many things but continuous efforts were made. We particularly tried to change the rules and procedures for supply of irrigation water, as this meant no investment on the part of the Government. We tried hard but did not go very far in our efforts until the introduction of *Panchayati Raj* in the State in 1963. It marked the new era, when administration of the State was decentralised and the District, *Taluka* and Village *Panchayats* were given power to manage their own affairs. Only in this situation could they really redress the problems of the farmers. We must thank Shri Balwant Rai Mehta, who devised *Panchayati Raj*, and who intimately knew the problems of the farmers and tried his best to improve their lot. We always had his support and our success is largely due to him."

The present *Taluka Panchayat* President also had a prominent role in bringing about the changes in the management of the irrigation facilities. Commenting on his role, the present District *Panchayat* President remarked : "Mr. Patel (present *Taluka Panchayat* President), himself a farmer by profession and an old and active Congress worker, was keenly devoted to this cause. He wielded influence in the Congress in the State as well as in the District. He had been an MLA for many years. Presently, besides being the President of the *Taluka Panchayat* he is also the Chairman of the District Production Committee. He has the support of the people because he has worked for them. He is a selfless and dedicated worker. It has to be admitted that people like him are to a great extent responsible for these changes. But what is more gratifying is that these changes are yielding results, because some of the persons like him, who had conceived these changes, are also implementing them."

"The State Government gave powers to the District *Panchayat* for the management of the irrigation tanks and other such schemes after *Panchayati Raj* was introduced in 1963. Since the *Panchayats* took over the administration of the tanks, a number of changes have been introduced to enable the farmers

to make good use of these tanks. I am happy and proud that things have worked well. The area irrigated by the tanks and the revenue therefrom have increased substantially. What is more important is the satisfaction of the farmer with the present arrangements."

Soon after the introduction of *Panchayati Raj* in Gujarat in April 1963, the State Government passed orders, authorising the District *Panchayats* to take over the administration of the small irrigation works in the State. The formalities were completed in July 1963 and Chandnagar District *Panchayat* took over the administration of the irrigation projects in its area. The President and some of the members of Chandnagar District *Panchayat* were keen to give over the administration of small irrigation works to the *Taluka Panchayats*, where such works existed. The Executive Engineer (*Panchayat*) and the Canal Officer jointly discussed the matter with the President. It was decided to hand over the administration of the tanks in Sunder Shehar to the *Taluka Panchayat* along with the necessary staff. The President accordingly asked the Executive Engineer to put up a proposal to this effect, before the Executive Committee of the District *Panchayat*. The President said : "Ever since we got the orders from the State Government, I was keen to hand over the administration of the minor irrigation projects to the *Taluka Panchayat*. I was quite confident that the management of these tanks would considerably improve if it was given to the *Taluka Panchayat* for two reasons.

(1) The leaders in the *Taluka Panchayat* are very able and experienced persons. I can particularly cite the name of Mr. Patel, the President of the Sunder Shehar *Taluka Panchayat*.

(2) The farmers are themselves keen to use the water in the best possible manner, and, if they are associated with the management of the irrigation works, they will extend all cooperation in their own interest.

I felt relieved when the Executive Committee of the District *Panchayat* passed this proposal at the meeting held on

October 3, 1963. I had, of course, not visualised any difficulty, because this was what most of us wanted for a long time."

The General Body of the District *Panchayat* confirmed the decision of the Executive Committee, at the meeting, held on October 20, 1963. The *Taluka Panchayat* of Sunder Shehar got a copy of this resolution from the DDO, Chandnagar on October 27, 1963. The President of the *Taluka Panchayat* of course knew about it even earlier, being the Chairman of the Production Committee and member of the Executive Committee of the District *Panchayat*. He had, therefore, discussed with some of his colleagues, the changes they would like to introduce, in the administration of the small irrigation tanks. To quote his own words, "I had known that the responsibility of managing the tanks was coming to us. In anticipation of the formal orders of the District *Panchayat*, I had formed a small informal group (two officials and three non-officials) to discuss all the changes we wanted to introduce in the 'rules' and 'procedures'. I had formed such a committee because I have found it convenient to arrange meetings of such informal groups more frequently and also people are free and frank in such meetings. Moreover, careful consideration and more serious thinking of various issues and problems is possible, only in a small group of persons, interested in a problem."

After the *Taluka Panchayat* got the resolution, the President asked the TDO to work out a proposal with the assistance of the Overseer on the lines suggested by the informal group. The TDO presented such a scheme to the Executive Committee of the *Taluka Panchayat* at the meeting, held on November 13, 1963. It was passed by the Executive Committee unanimously. About the President of the *Taluka Panchayat*, the TDO observed : "The President is a very honest and devoted person. In every thing he does, he keeps the interests of the people in view. He is very cordial and friendly with the staff. He is flexible and always considers the point of view of others. It is because of these personal qualities that he commands a great

respect in the area. The officials enjoy working with him because of his friendly and brotherly behaviour. In fact, because of his age we all call him *Kaka*[2]. He has really created a family-like atmosphere in the *Taluka Panchayat*. Such an atmosphere of cordiality smoothens the process of decision-making and enables us to work as a team."

The proposal adopted by the *Taluka Panchayat* regarding the administration of the small irrigation tanks, introduced many changes in the rules and procedures of taking water from the tanks. These are summarised below :

(1) The date of filing the application was extended up to July 15th.

(2) A person had not to pay any charges, if he did not use the water even after submitting his application. Moreover, if he planted a crop, different from the one applied for, he had to pay only for the crop actually irrigated.

(3) A farmer had not to pay any fine if he irrigated more area than applied for. He had only to pay at the usual rate for the additional area.

(4) The Canal Clerk received the applications and scrutinised them and forwarded them to the Overseer for sanction.

(5) The farmer did not have to keep track of his application, after it was given to the Canal Clerk. After his application was sanctioned, the watchman was to inform him and give him a 'slip' indicating his day, two days prior to his turn.

(6) A committee of two persons of the Village *Panchayat* was appointed to settle disputes and grievances of the farmers, relating to the use of water. Where the water of a tank was used by two villages, a committee of four (two from each village) was appointed.

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[2]*Kaka* literally means uncle in Gujarati. But it is a word of respect, used to address any elderly person.

(7) Only such cases which could not be locally settled were to be reported to the *Taluka Panchayat*.

(8) Besides settling disputes, the committee members were also to see to it that the water of the tanks was not wasted or misused.

(9) The *Taluka Panchayat* was to collect the revenue.

(10) The maintenance and repairs of the tanks was to be carried out by the *Taluka Panchayat*.

As a result of these changes, the area irrigated by each of these tanks recorded a substantial increase. For instance, Chandan registered an increase of about 1095 acres in two years from 210 acres in 1964-65 to 1305 acres in 1966-67. Similarly there was an increase in the revenue, from Rs. 3,014 in 1964-65 to Rs. 13,581 in 1966-67.

Commenting on the increase in the irrigated area and the revenue, the TDO observed : "There has been increase both in the irrigated area and the revenue. This is due mainly to the fact that the villagers are themselves associated with the management of the tanks. They see to it that the water of the tanks is fully utilised and not a drop is wasted. Besides, ever since the *Taluka Panchayat* has taken over the administration of the tanks, it has been trying to make *pucca* channels with bricks and cement, through which water passes from the tanks to fields. As a result there is very little seepage of water in the soil. Collection of revenue has also increased ; there are still arrears and farmers do not pay easily. The leaders do their best to persuade the farmers and I am sure, slowly the farmers would cooperate with the administration and pay the revenue. In fact, the relations between the officials and the farmers have considerably improved."

The local leaders and farmers also expressed satisfaction over the changed situation. One of the farmers observed : "The irrigation facilities have considerably improved since the *Taluka Panchayat* has taken over its administration. We settle most of our disputes, relating to the irrigation tanks in the

village itself. In fact, these are rare, and there is more mutual cooperation and sharing. Even the turns are not strictly adhered to, and they are adjusted according to the needs of the farmers in the village. It is all due to Mr. Patel—our *Taluka Panchayat* President, who is a farmer himself and knows our problems very well." The *Sarpanch* of Kakra village remarked : "Since the management of tanks have been taken over by the *Taluka Panchayat*, it has benefited the villagers and the administration. The farmers get enough water for irrigation and in time. Moreover, it has minimised the conflict within, and between the villages, over the use of the tank water. The village leaders listen to the complaints and grievances of the farmers and settle them by negotiations among themselves. They have not to go out of the village for these as they had to earlier. This has created a congenial atmosphere in the village and now there are no conflicts regarding the use of tank water."

APPENDIX

Statement showing the Revenue collected (in rupees) from the Irrigation tanks in Sunder Shehar Taluka in the Years 1960-67.

Tanks	Before *Panchayat* took over the Administration				After *Panchayat* took over the Administration		
	1960-61	1961-62	1962-63	1963-64	1964-65	1965-66	1966-67
Vijaya	8,330.00	4,251.00	2,646.00	7,065.20	22,085.86	22,741.31	27,527.00
Rama	2.354.00	3,550.00	2,120.00	—	10,089.71	17,263.14	22,019.00
Kirti	1,053.00	2.122.00	1,976.00	—	9,093.20	8,397.64	7,667.00
Chandan	2,798.00	1,974.00	1,025.00	—	3,014.83	8,403.20	13,581.00
Hira	—	—	—	1,525.25	4,217.39	9,096.05	5,834.00

Statement showing the Total Area (acres) Irrigated during the Years 1960-67 in Sunder Shehar Taluka

Tanks	Before *Panchayat* took over the Administration				After *Panchayat* took over the Administration		
	1960-61	1961-62	1962-63	1963-64	1964-65	1965-66	1966-67
Vijaya	1,405.05	410.00	775.34	417.17	1,446.05	1,981.25	2,400.00
Rama	646.32	447.00	305.08	—	586.10	1,628.25	2,249.00
Kirti	308.10	417.12	245.16	—	608.33	830.15	937.00
Chandan	578.10	483.28	193.08	—	210.30	822.30	1,305.00
Hira	—	—	—	115.27	227.32	567.10	485.00

RECLAMATION OF KHARLAND

ANIL BHATT

The reclamation of *Kharland*[1] in Tundafalia of Surat District is an inspiring example of how people's initiative, hard physical labour and continuous cooperative effort and the sincere efforts of an elected representative can evoke a sympathetic and helpful response from the Government.

The Bombay *Kharland* Act, 1948 provided for reclamation of *Kharland* for agricultural cultivation. A separate organisation —The *Kharland* Development Board (KLDB)—was formed for the purpose, with the Deputy Minister, Revenue, as its Chairman. In January 1958, the Secretary KLDB wrote to the Collector of Surat to prepare a scheme for the reclamation of *Kharlands* in his district.

After three months, the Collector wrote to the *Mamlatdars* of the coastal areas of the district to prepare schemes for reclamation of the *Kharlands*. The Collector also wrote to the Executive Engineer, Surat Division, asking his opinion about the technical feasibility of the scheme.

In Olpad *Taluka* of Surat District, there is a long coastal strip. The *Mamlatdar* of Olpad *Taluka* submitted a scheme for one of the villages of the *Taluka* namely, Pinjarat. "In the proposed scheme", the *Mamlatdar* wrote, "4979 acres and 32 gunthas of the *Kharlands* can be covered." According to the *Mamlatdar*, there was no '*Khatedar*'[2] in the said land as the land was '*Kharkharaba*'—salt spoiled. The estimated yield after the land was reclaimed, leached and made cultivable, would be 50,000 Bengali maunds of paddy. Ninety-four cultivators who were around the *Kharland* would get the benefit of this scheme.

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[1]Salt land

[2]Cultivator

On receiving this scheme, the Collector inquired of the Executive Engineer, Surat Division, whether his office had done anything about the reclamation scheme of this *Kharland* ; and also wanted to have his opinion about the technical feasibility of the scheme.

Similar procedures prevailed in other *Talukas*. The KLDB had asked the Collector in the beginning of 1958, to prepare the *Kharland* schemes. The Collector wrote to *Mamlatdar* after three months. The *Mamlatdar* took more than six months to visit the sites and prepare the scheme. Thus, one year had passed in the preparation of the scheme and in the movement of papers from one office to another. Meanwhile, the people of Tundafalia, a hamlet of Pinjarat village began tackling the problem on their own.

The coastal village of Pinjarat is divided into five small hamlets known as *falias*. Although each of these *falias*, is administratively a part of Pinjarat village and have a common Village *Panchayat*, ecologically, they are five different entities. Tundafalia—is about one and a half miles from the main village of Pinjarat. There are about 80 families, all belonging to the caste of *Kolis*. The *Kolis* are well known for their hard labour and perserverence. In the social hierarchy, the *Kolis* are placed somewhat higher among the lower castes.

There was a social and economic homogeneity in Tundafalia. Everybody was poor and belonged to the same caste. Barring few, everyone was landless and faced the same hardship for earning their livelihood. In 1958, only 20 persons of this hamlet were neo-literates; 6 persons had some primary education; and the most highly educated person of the hamlet had gone through six years of primary education. No one had a single stable occupation on which he could depend throughout the year, but had to do different types of work, such as casual agricultural labour, wood-chopping and toddy-tapping for his livelihood. For some months in a year they had to go without any income. Only seven out of the eighty families had some land (the biggest

landholder having two and a half acres of land); and this land was not very fertile.

During late summer and early monsoon, the whole hamlet had to go without any food grains; they had to depend entirely on fish caught from the sea. It was not possible to get any food grains from the cities as communications during monsoon were difficult. The food problem during these months was acute.

In Zaverbhai Patel of Tundafalia, a local youth of 28 years, tailor by occupation, and the most highly educated person in the village, Tundafalia found its leader. He had gone to *Vedchchi Ashram* for being trained in the *Amber Charkha* Scheme, so that he could start the scheme in his village. Surat district has a long tradition of the Gandhian type of constructive social work. Through the large net-work of *Ashrams* being run by Gandhian constructive workers, various activities were carried out for the development of the tribal and backward population of the district.

When he came back, Zaverbhai began his work by starting the *Amber Charkha* Scheme in Tundafalia which gave an additional means of livelihood to the people. While he was in the *Ashram*, he had not only learnt the craft of the *Amber Charhka* but was greatly influenced as he put it, "by the *Ashram* life which taught people to live in accordance with Gandhiji's principles of self-help and cooperative effort". Zaverbhai Patel was all the time thinking of improving the economic conditions of the people of his hamlet. This gave him the idea that the vast area of the *Kharland* of the village should somehow be brought under cultivation.

During the British days, a rich Muslim had come to their village and tried to construct an embankment after getting the land on lease from the Government. But this effort had proved too expensive for him and after doing some initial construction, he had given up the idea and had left the village.

This gave Zaverbhai the idea that first an embankment had to be constructed to reclaim the land. He, along with two

elders of the village went to the nearby village of Rang where people, after forming a Cooperative Society, had reclaimed some land and started cultivation. The Chairman of that Society told them that they should apply to the Collector for permission to construct a bund to stop the ingress of tidal waters; and also, form a cooperative society to organise their efforts.

The same evening, Zaverbhai Patel, called a meeting of the village people and told them, "If we can reclaim this land, we can cultivate some food crops." He also told them that a cooperative society should be formed. Zaverbhai himself did not know the procedure involved in forming a cooperative society. But he had been told by the Chairman of the Cooperative Society of "Rang" village that each member should pay a rupee for enrolment and buy a share worth Rs. 10. The heads of the 60 households who were present in the society immediately became members.

The next day, the newly formed Cooperative Society applied to the Collector to give them permission to construct an embankment. In the application, the members requested that, "Government should grant us about 300 acres of *Kharkharaba* land out of 893 acres (in survey plot no. 603) on lease under rule 40 of 'Land Revenue Rules'. We are prepared to construct the embankment at our own cost."

They waited for a month for a reply, but did not hear anything from the Collector. Before the enthusiasm of the people died out, Zaverbhai wanted to start constructing the bund. He therefore, decided to start the work without waiting for the permission from the Government.

By this time, the membership of the 'Pinjarat *Ganjawar Khar Sudharnari Sahakari Kheti Mandli* Ltd.' (that was the name given to the Society) had gone up to 71. Only 9 families of the hamlet were not in it; and that too because, either they had some land or not having any children, were not interested in cultivating more land.

In February, 1959, Zaverbhai who was now Secretary of the Society, called the members of the Society and told them that they should start construction of the bund themselves by their own labour, that each family should daily send two adult members for doing this work. Zaverbhai's proposal was wholeheartedly accepted by the members of the Society.

Even though only two members were required from each family, some families sent 4 and even 5 members to help in the construction of the embankment. The Secretary said, "Without any guidance, without any help from outside, without any leader and without any technical knowledge, we started constructing the bund. About 250 to 300 people worked for about two months daily. Their only desire was to overcome the hardships faced in the past; and they began work with a rugged determination to improve their lot." They constructed a 3,600 feet long bund on the north side and 1,800 feet long bund with a base of 48 feet on the west side to stop the tidal water of the sea. "It looked as if", wrote a reporter, "an army of 250 to 300 was daily fighting against the aggression of the sea."[3]

In 1959, they carried out 2840 brass feet of work on constructing the embankment, the money value of which was Rs. 5680. Besides they spent Rs. 1767.19 for constructing a water outlet, maintaining the embankment and towards other expenses. All this money was contributed by the members of the Society (see Appendix). In all, they put up 17 to 18 thousand man-days of work, all on their own initiative. But the construction of the bund was not enough; it had to be maintained, and annual repairs to damage caused by ingress of tidal waters had to be carried out. In all, from 1959 to 1963, they put in 7668 brass feet of work, the money value of which was Rs. 15,336, and contributed cash, amounting to Rs. 3,063.77.

On the part of the district administration, while no reply was given to the people's request for the permission to construct

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[3]Quoted from "*Panchvani*" (Gujarati)—an official weekly of Surat District *Panchayat*, Vol. 2, No. 28, March 26, 1966.

the embankment, the *Mamlatdar* had written to the Collector that people of Tundafalia had applied for a lease of 300 acres of land, out of 893 acres forming survey plot number 603 under Rule 40 of the Land Revenue Rules. The people had also shown their willingness to construct the embankment at their own cost. The Collector, however, wanted the people to acquire the land under the *Kharland* Act Scheme and not under the Land Revenue Rule 40.

Here, it is necessary to understand the difference between the two. According to Rule 40 of the Land Revenue Rules, salt land or land occasionally overflown by salt water is given to the people on lease, free of charge, for a specific period (generally for 999 years) and they are allowed to cultivate it. No land revenue is taken for the first 10 years. For the next 20 years, the holder has to pay rent at the rate of four annas per acre. The full assessment is charged after the expiry of 30 years. Further, during the period of the lease, the holder is fully responsible for maintaining and cultivating the land. During the British days when there was no government scheme for reclaiming *Kharland*, individuals who wanted to cultivate *Kharland* were given the lease under Rule 40 of the Land Revenue Rules.

Under the *Kharland* Act of 1948, provisions were made, whereby KLDB would reclaim large plots of the land; would undertake the responsibility of constructing embankments and the leaching of the land; and then give it to the holders for cultivation in accordance with the Special Resolution of the Government of April 24, 1957. The holders of the land, under this scheme, would have to pay full assessment from the seventh revenue year and would also have to pay 60 per cent of the cost as land price for occupancy (40 per cent of the price being given by the Government as subsidy), and would have to maintain the land and embankment according to the conditions laid down by KLDB.

It was the policy of KLDB not to give *Kharland* under Rule 40 of the Land Revenue Rules but under the *Kharland* Act, because making *Kharland* cultivable was a difficult, long

and expensive process. First, an embankment had to be built to avoid ingress of tidal water, then, the land had to be leached to wash out the salt from the surface. This required a lot of water and also the facility of storing the water on the plots. Rainwater alone was not sufficient for this purpose, unless the area had a very heavy and regular rainfall. The leaching process had to continue for several years, at least for 4 to 5 years, before the land became fully cultivable. Experience in the past of leasing out *Kharland* according to the terms of Rule 40 did not prove encouraging. The land given got fragmented into small holdings. The holder of the plots was neither technically equipped nor financially capable of constructing a large bund. The construction of an embankment to avoid tidal water would be feasible and fruitful only if the bund could cover a large area of the land. It had to be a very strong bund and maintained regularly. Then there was also the problem of getting water through some irrigation channels. Past experience had shown that the holder, who acquired the land under the Land Revenue Rule 40, could not properly shoulder this responsibility and, as a result, large portions of the reclaimed land again became *Kharland* in course of time.

The Collector, therefore, wrote to the *Mamlatdar*, "The applicants have requested that they should be granted only 300 acres of land out of 893 acres; so the remaining land will be left unreclaimed. The schemes for reclamation of *Kharlands* are to be formulated for homogeneous compact blocks and such piecemeal disposal will not serve the purpose. The people have volunteered to construct the embankment at their cost. But the bunds are to be put up after contour survey in such a way as to protect the maximum area with minimum cost. The applicants say that the land should be given to them and they will develop it but it is not proper. Whether they are willing to develop it or not is not the point. The point is that private enterprise has failed in the past to achieve proper development and has resulted in the loss of natural resources. KLDB, to which a similar question was referred in the past in case of Danti Bhatha villages, declined to recommend such grants.

Therefore, you should inform the applicants that their request for granting land under Land Revenue Rule 40 cannot be granted. They may take up the *Kharland* after they are reclaimed under the scheme. At this stage, an assurance should be given by them that they would be prepared to take up the land that may be included in the scheme for reclamation of the *Kharland* at this village."

To the Collector's letter, the *Mamlatdar* replied that he would go to the site after the monsoon was over and persuade the people in accordance with the Collector's instructions.

The people of Tundafalia also approached the Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies for registration of their Society. The Assistant Registrar wrote to the Collector to issue the land availability certificate for 324 acres and 36 gunthas of land, to be included in the proposed Society so that he could register it.

The Collector reminded the *Mamlatdar* about his earlier letter, asking him to report on the scheme and asked him whether land availability certificate could be issued to the Society. Several reminders by the Collector and the Deputy Collector failed to elicit any response from the *Mamlatdar* for 6 months. The Assistant Registrar was very eager to register the Society. The establishment of a cooperative farming Society, which would utilise waste land for agricultural purposes in a remote and backward village would bring great personal credit to him. He took a personal interest in the matter and approached the Collector from time to time. He also sent his agent to the *Mamlatdar* to request him to expedite the issue of the land availability certificate but nothing happened.

Finally, after a threat from the Deputy Collector that his name would be included in the register of defaulters, if he did not comply immediately, the *Mamlatdar* in August 1960, visited the site and found that the embankment had already been constructed by the people without government's knowledge and permission.

He told the people that as the construction was unauthorised, the bund would have to be pulled down. He wrote to the Collector that the land availability certificate could not be issued as there was unauthorised construction of bund by the members of the Society and that they had acquired land without asking anybody. The Collector informed the Assistant Registrar accordingly. But the Assistant Registrar, who was very eager to see the Society started, frequently met the Collector and urged him not to discourage the voluntary efforts of the people in reclaiming the *Kharland*, which ultimately meant increase of agricultural production, which was the objective of the Government. He, therefore, urged the Collector to regularise the unauthorised construction somehow.

Although the Collector could not regularise the unauthorised construction, he instructed the *Mamlatdar* to issue the land availability certificate, so that the Society could be registered, and in February 1961, the Collector wrote to KLDB that the land might be given to the Society.

In March 1961, the Secretary, KLDB visited the site. When he saw that the bund construction was unauthorised, he wrote to the Collector, seeking information about the action taken against the persons who had unauthorisedly constructed the bund. He wanted to know the grounds on which the *Mamlatdar* had issued the land availability certificate to the Society.

The Collector now seeing the need to protect his *Mamlatdar*, cleverly interpreted the issue of the land availability certificate and wrote to the Secretary, KLDB, "It was merely an availability certificate which meant that the land is Government waste land and can be made available for cultivation; it does not mean that the land is given to the Society."

The Collector took a sympathetic attitude towards the efforts of the people and wrote to KLDB that the whole Society should not be punished, because of unauthorised construction, made by a few individuals.

He officially informed the people that the bund would have to be pulled down. Simultaneously, however, word was unofficially sent to the people that they should apply to KLDB, meet the Deputy Revenue Minister (who was the Chairman of the Board) and do all they could to have the construction of the bund regularised.

The people, under the guidance of an *Aval Karkun*, (who was in charge of the case in the Collector's office and who was very helpful and sympathetic to them), applied to the Collector for regularising the bund, saying that it was the government's policy to grow more food, that they had no means of livelihood, and that the reclamation of *Kharland* would give them some means of livelihood. Copies of the memorandum were sent, as advised by the *Aval Karkun,* to the Secretary and Chairman of KLDB, the Chief Minister of Gujarat, and to the Home Minister of Gujarat, who happened to belong to their *taluka* and represented their constituency.

The promoters of the Society led, by Zaverbhai and the Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies, met the Home Minister and the Chairman of KLDB. The Assistant Registrar put forward the people's case. He emphasised the fact that the people were extremely poor but hard working, and that the bund was constructed entirely on their own initiative and by cooperative effort. It was reported, that the Collector also put in a favourable word, from time to time to the Secretary KLDB, whenever he met him.

The stand taken by KLDB was that a small portion of 325 acres out of more than 800 acres should not be given, and that the land should be reclaimed under the *Kharland* Act and not given to the people under Land Revenue Rule 40.

The people, however, were insistent upon getting the Land under Land Revenue Rule 40, because they said they had no money to pay the price of the land nor would they be able to pay the land revenue tax after the first seven years.

In 1963, the Secretary of KLDB and the Deputy Revenue Minister (who was also Chairman of KLDB), visited the hamlet. A discussion took place between the promoters of the Society and the Chairman, KLDB. The Additional Collector of Surat and the Assistant Registrar of the Cooperative Societies were also present. The promoters showed their inability to agree to reclaim the land under *Kharland* Act. The Collector and the Registrar acted as spokesmen on behalf of the people. "We did not know what they talked, because they were talking in English" said one of the promoters, "but we knew that the Collector and Registrar were speaking in our favour".

The Chairman agreed to regularise the bund and give the land under Land Revenue Rule 40. The whole matter was then placed before the meeting of KLDB, which in 1963 recommended to the Government to give land to the Society under Land Revenue Rule 40. Government approved this in February, 1964.

By now, *Panchayati Raj* had been introduced in Gujarat and the subject of land development was entrusted to the District *Panchayat;* and so the District *Panchayat* also now came into the picture.

Although, it was decided to give the land under Land Revenue Rule 40 and a resolution was passed to that effect, the District and KLDB Officers were not happy about it. They were afraid that people themselves would not be able to maintain the bund, develop the land, and show higher agricultural production.

Whenever any promoter of the Society went to the District Office, these officers would point out that they should take the land not under Rule 40 of the Land Revenue, but under KLDB Scheme. The people said that under Rule 40, they got the land free while they would have to pay 60 per cent of the price of the land under the provisions of KLDB Scheme. They were poor and had no money to pay the price of the land and it was difficult for them to pay the full land revenue from the seventh year.

In March 1963, the Chairman, KLDB visited the Pinjarat village and asked the people to change their decision about acquiring the land under Rule 40. The people stressed their inability to pay the price for the land and pay land revenue from the seventh year. The Chairman said that he would consider this problem of the payment of land price separately, if they agreed to take it according to the Board Scheme. The latter agreed to do so, if they did not have to pay the land price. On return, the Chairman informed the Secretary about this and the Secretary immediately wrote a letter to the District Development Officer not to dispose of the land under Rule 40.

KLDB reconsidered the matter of payment towards the price of land. Ultimately, the Board approached the Government and the Government passed a special resolution in April 1964 setting aside the requirements and amending the rules specially for the Society of Tundafalia. Under this new resolution, the Society was given the land, free of charge and the members were exempted from paying full assessment for the first 9 years. The resolution is reproduced below : "The Pinjarat *Ganjawar Khar Jamin Sudharnari. Kheti Mandli* Ltd., Tundafalia, village Pinjarat, *Taluka* Olpad, District Surat has constructed protective bunds for reclamation of *Kharland* of an estimated area of 325 acres, affected by ingress of tidal water. The Cooperative Society has incurred an expenditure of Rs. 643.25 towards the construction of the protective bunds. The Government had under consideration the question regarding the disposal of the *Kharland* reclaimed at its own expense by by the Pinjarat *Ganjawar Khar Jamin Sudharnari Kheti Mandli* Ltd., at Pinjarat."

"With a view, to encourage the initiative taken by the Society and with a view to utilise the *Kharland* covered by the protective bunds and for implementing the centrally sponsored scheme for the settlement of landless agricultural workers, Government is pleased to direct as follows :

(1) The said *Mandli* should be granted land out of Sr. No. 603/A, comprising the area reclaimed by it.

(2) No occupancy price should be charged.

(3) No contribution should be recovered from the beneficiaries towards the cost of reclamation.

(4) Land revenue assessment shall be recovered at concessional rates as under :

1st 2 years	1/4 of the land revenue
The next 2 years	1/2 of the land revenue
The next 5 years	3/4 of the land revenue
Full land revenue thereafter.	

(5) The protective bunds constructed by the said Society shall be taken over by the Government for the purpose of administering them under the Bombay *Kharland* Act.

(6) Government shall pay to the Society an amount of Rs. 11,714.60 being the subsidy payable by the State Government and the Central Government in equal proportion '(*i.e.* 10% of the actual cost to be borne by each) incurred by the said Society for the construction of the said bund minus the cost to be borne by the Society.

Thus the Government not only amended its previous resolution and granted the land free and gave concession in land revenue payment but also paid the people for the labour they had put in, for the construction of the bund. (See Table at Appendix).

It took about 6 years to complete the reclamation of the land but the labour and initiative of the people were rewarded and the requirements of both Government and the people were fulfilled to the satisfaction of both. The government officials showed enthusiasm and eagerness to solve the problem of the people who, as they happened to be residing on the coastal strip, were very poor and led a life of hardship.

In 1963, there was a centrally sponsored scheme for the settlement of the landless agricultural labourers. According to the scheme, landless labourers were to be given government

waste-land including reclaimed *Kharland*. Moreover, a subsidy of Rs. 500, which later was raised to Rs. 750, was also to be given to each family. There was also a colonization scheme, which provided for an expenditure of Rs. 5,000 per family to be given to the landless labourers. This colonization scheme, however, was given up later on. As indicated in the Government Resolution, this scheme was well coordinated to help the Tundafalia Society and this made it possible to give the land, free to the Society.

Thirtyseven of the 71 members of the Society were given a subsidy of Rs. 500 each; and 22 other members got Rs. 750 each. Thus a total subsidy amounting to Rs. 35,000 was distributed among 59 members of the Society.

By this time, the *Taluka* Development Officer (TDO) of the Olpad Taluka *Panchayat* had started visiting Tundafalia frequently, as he had got interested in the people of this hamlet. He started extending the benefit of some other developmental schemes like poultry breeding to them. He advised the people about the distribution of land among the members of the Society. Some portion of the reclaimed land was divided into plots of one acre each, and 3 acres each were first given to 59 members of the Society, who were landless.

The members started cultivating the land from 1964. In 1962, the Society sowed paddy in 12 acres, jowar in 24 acres and jute in 5 acres. But they got only 83 kg. of paddy as yield. Only then they realised that the salt layers of the land had to be leached before the land could be brought under cultivation. They, therefore, dug an irrigation tank to store rain water. But the average rain in the area, being only 15 to 20 inches, the water was not enough to leach the salt layers from the land.

They approached the TDO. He advised them to apply to the District *Panchayat* for an extension of the Kakrapar irrigation canal which was already extended upto Bhandut village, situated at a distance of about two miles from Tundafalia.

The canal would require quite a long extension, if water was to be given to the Tundafalia *Kharland*. The main obstacle in such an extension was a sandy hill of about 29 feet height. It was not a local elevation, but a long strip between Bhandut and the proposed *Kharland* area. It was not possible to avoid it by deviation. Nor was it possible to dig a canal as the hill might collapse while digging. Moreover, the sandy soil would increase the cost of canal construction. Because of the sand, the water would get absorbed and, while passing through a long strip, much of it would get evaporated. The only way to take the water from Bhandut minor canal upto *Kharland* was to provide pipe lines. This would mean greater cost. The canal extension work was such, that it was not possible for the people to contribute anything by their own labour.

Drinking water was another problem. The area being *Kharland*, the water in the wells was salty. People used to dig small pits in great numbers—almost one for each family—and get drinking water from currents immediately under the earth surface. But the pits would not give enough water and sometimes they had to waste hours, finding water. If they could get the canal extended to their village, it would also solve their long standing problem of drinking water.

As advised by the TDO, the members of the Society applied in 1965 to the District *Panchayat* through the *Taluka Panchayat* to give them canal water at government expense, as rain water was not enough for leaching away the land. The members pointed out that their efforts at cultivation had failed, because the land was not leached.

The difficulty in extending the irrigation canal to Pinjarat *Kharland* was that the total expenditure would be Rs. 1,76,100, while, according to government rules, the irrigation department could spend only Rs. 50 per acre, *i.e.*, Rs. 22,800 for 456[4] acres of land. The problem was how to get the remaining amount of Rs. 1,53,300.

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[4]The Canal Extension Scheme covered 325 acres reclaimed by the Society plus 131 acres of other land of the near by hamlet.

In May 1965, the Secretary, KLDB came to Surat and arranged a meeting with the District President, the Superintending Engineer, Canal and officers of other departments concerned and the promoters of the Society. But KLDB had no budgetary provision.

The TDO of Olpad *Taluka*, who was now taking a keen interest in the matter, met the President of the District *Panchayat* and told him about the people's initiative in constructing the bund and the difficulty about water. When the District *Panchayat* President came to know about the land reclamation, people's initiative and enthusiasm and their difficulties and poverty, he was very much impressed and visited Tundafalia himself on January 26, 1966, along with the President of Olpad *Taluka Panchayat*. He realised the acute scarcity of drinking water and the helplessness of these hardworking people.

After returning from the village, he wrote a letter to the Deputy Minister, Revenue (Chairman of KLDB) on February 2, 1966 and sent a copy of this letter to the Chief Minister who represented the Olpad *Taluka* Constituency in the State Legislature. He stated, "People are very enthusiastic and hardworking but they are not in a position to make any financial contribution as they are very poor. They have done a lot through their initiative and labour and now it is we, who have to do something about extending the canal.

"According to the rules, the Irrigation Department cannot spend more than Rs. 50 per acre. But they must be given water at any cost. Is it not possible to convert the amount of Rs. 5,000 per family which the Government had decided to give these people for constructing houses under the colonisation scheme for the purpose of extending the canal ?

"If it is not possible for KLDB to do something in this regard, let us all—you, the Irrigation Department, the Agriculture Department—come together and find out a way. The District *Panchayat* is also prepared to participate in this. But water must be given."

In July 1966, the Secretary, KLDB replied, "The Board cannot contribute any amount towards the extension of canal to the Tundafalia Kharland. Fifty-nine families of the landless labourers of the Pinjarat area had been granted financial assistance under the settlement of landless labourers' scheme; they might pay their share of the contribution from this."

The District *Panchayat* President, who came from the group of the constructive workers of the district, was known for his feelings for the tribals and for the backward and the poor people. He had put in a great effort in the organisation of forest cooperatives in the district and had earned a name as a hardworking and strong leader. By 1965, he had become the most powerful leader in the district Congress party. He decided to take up the matter. In him the people of Tundafalia found a strong spokesman, who acted as a very effective link between them and the administration.

The District *Panchayat* President thought that the reply of KLDB was not reasonable and the problem could not be solved without the District *Panchayat* taking the initiative. He asked the Superintending Engineer, Canal, to send them the detailed estimates, so that they could find out what they could do in the matter.

He also called the *Taluka Panchayat* President and discussed the matter with him. He persuaded him to contribute Rs. 25,000. It was decided that the *Taluka* and District *Panchayats* should pay Rs. 25,000 each, and thus an amount of Rs. 50,000 could be given by them on behalf of the members of the Society as their contribution.

As the TDO reported, "Both the *Taluka Panchayat* and the District *Panchayat* Presidents belonged to the same party, and this made it possible for them to collaborate. The readiness on the part of the *Panchayati Raj* bodies to share the expenses increased the receptivity of the proposal of the canal extension."

The District *Panchayat* President told the Superintending Engineer that they were prepared to contribute Rs. 50,000 on behalf of the people of Tundafalia.

On October 1, 1966, the Superintending Engineer sent the detailed estimates to the Government, stating that the District *Panchayat* was prepared to pay Rs. 50,000.

Even then there was a shortage of about Rs. 1,03,300, as the Irrigation Department could spend only Rs. 22,800 at the rate of Rs. 50 per acre.

The District *Panchayat* President wrote a letter to the Chief Minister on November 4, 1966.

> "I have informed you about this problem earlier. I think that you should yourself take interest and go deep into the problem. If handled departmentally, no decision will be taken.
>
> "This area badly needs the facility of drinking water. To provide drinking water is the *Dharma* (duty) of the Government.
>
> "The people are willing to dig canal and do labour themselves, but the soil is such that the canal cannot be dug. Water will have to be given only through pipe lines.
>
> "The people are poor and cannot contribute. So the Government has to help. According to the rules of the Irrigation Department, it can spend upto Rs. 50 per acre. In this scheme the estimated expenditure per acre is Rs. 387; how will this materialise ? The *Zilla Panchayat* or *Taluka Panchayat* would have gladly helped but we do not have resources.
>
> "Government gives Rs. 300 per acre for lift irrigation. In minor irrigation also, Government spends Rs. 1,200 per acre. In view of this fact, if the Government rigidly adheres to the rule of Rs. 50 per acre, the problem will never be solved. If you think that what I say is just and reasonable,

then you must take a decision with determination. If Government is not ready to undertake the responsibility under any circumstances, then give the District *Panchayat* a loan on long term basis. We will take this responsibility."

No reply to this came from the Chief Minister for two months. So the District *Panchayat* President sent a reminder in January 1967.

The Chief Minister forwarded the letter to the Chief Engineer, Irrigation, with the remark that something should be done in the matter. The Irrigation Department called the Executive Engineer to Ahmedabad to discuss the matter. The Executive Engineer wrote to the District *Panchayat* President that plans and estimates of the canal extension were ready and that he was going to meet the Chief Engineer on April 17, 1967. The District *Panchayat* President should immediately send him the resolution of the Executive Committee to give Rs. 50,000 on behalf of the District and *Taluka Panchayats*, so that he could take up the matter with the Chief Engineer.

The District *Panchayat* President along with the *Taluka Panchayat* President went to Ahmedabad, met the Chief Minister, and the Chief Engineer, Irrigation Department and pressed them to change the rule of Rs. 50 per acre in this case. The Chief Engineer gave them a sympathetic hearing. At the State level, they felt that some thing should be done in the matter. But the Chief Engineer told the District *Panchayat* President that he had no authority to change the rule about spending only Rs. 50 per acre.

After coming back, the District *Panchayat* President wrote a letter to the Chief Engineer on May 11, 1967 :

"Thank you for taking a sympathetic attitude towards the problem during our discussion. The rule of spending Rs. 50 per acre is understandable. But whoever is autho-rised to change this rule must change it in special circums-tances and in abnormal situations. The District and the

Taluka Panchayats will give Rs. 50,000. Please take up the matter immediately."

The Chief Engineer responded at once and wrote a letter on June 2, 1967 :

"I am very eager to take up the scheme. I am putting up the scheme before the Government for approval and requesting them to provide all expenses beyond Rs. 50,000 which you have agreed to pay. I am hopeful that the scheme will be approved. So please send the resolution of your Executive Committee to give Rs. 50,000 so that I can take up the matter with the Government."

On June 7, 1967 the District *Panchayat* President wrote a letter to the Under Secretary, Public Works Department, enclosing the relevant resolution. The Government finally agreed to waive its rule of Rs. 50 per acre in this special case of providing water to the Tundafalia Kharland for leaching of the salt layers of the Kharland.

A special resolution, specific to this scheme, was passed by the Public Works Department, Government of Gujarat on June 17, 1967, giving administrative approval to the scheme and sanctioning Rs. 1,26,340 for the purpose.

The work of the canal extension from Bhandut to Tunda-falia started in November 1967.

APPENDIX

Statement Showing the Details of People's Initiative & Government Response

Year	Embankment construction work (Brass feet.)	Value of the work done by people Rs.	Money contributed by members of the Society.			Total of people's contribution Rs.	Government Aid		
			For constructing water outlet. Rs.	Towards maintenance of embankment. Rs.	Contribution towards other expenses. Rs.		Subsidy	Loan	Total
1959	2840	5,680.00	1,234.69	284.00	248.50	7,447.19	—	—	—
1960	1491	2,982.00	184.60	284.00	149.81	3,600.41	—	—	—
1961	1136	2,272.00	—	177.50	85.20	2,534.70	—	—	—
1962	710	1,420.00	—	106.50	115.02	1,641.52	—	—	—
1963	1491	2,982.00	—	142.00	142.00	3,266.00	—	—	—
1964	—	—	—	—	—	—	13,875.00	4,625.00	18,500.00
1965	—	—	—	—	—	—	12,375.00	4,125.00	16,500.00
Total	7668	15,336.00	1,419.29	904.00	740.53	18,489.82	26,250.00	8,750.00	35,000.00