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Research in Panchayati Raj

RESEARCH IN PANCHAYATI RAJ

BY : Iqbal Narain *

Few would question the need of research in the field of Panchayati Raj but there can be honest differences of opinion about the nature of research in the field, a possible focus on it and the research areas which need attention on a priority basis. Even the worst critics of Panchayati Raj would accept that Panchayati Raj is a critical variable in the scheme of democracy, planning and development in India, though some may find it more functional than dysfunctional to the system and others vice-versa. Despite the trend towards devaluation of Panchayati Raj, particularly in the post-1967 election period, the institution cannot just be wished away, in fact, the eclipse of Panchayati Raj particularly after IV general election itself requires scientific study. This digression apart, perhaps Panchayati Raj has come to stay, in spite of the political and the bureaucratic elite at the State level losing faith in it. It will not be far wrong to say that Panchayati Raj has already tended to become an inseparable part of the political system with a new rural elite in the offing and with the phenomenon of linkage politics emerging both vertically and from bottom upwards. The various researches in the field have shown that Panchayati Raj has been more conducive to democracy than to development and the analysts today are confronted with the issue whether there is any basic and inherent dichotomy between Panchayati Raj as a democratic

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institution and Panchayati Raj as a developmental mechanism.¹ They have also to grapple with the issue of making Panchayati Raj institutions reach the desired extent of efficacy. This research in Panchayati Raj is important both for the theoretician and the policy-maker.

II

It may also be recalled here that Panchayati Raj has already turned out to be a fascinating area of research for political scientists, sociologists and, though to a lesser extent, even for economists. Perhaps researches in Panchayati Raj are already having an edge over studies in urban-local government, though the latter is equally important and as such should not be allowed to suffer. In fact, comparative studies of rural and urban local government and, more importantly, of the interaction between the two, have so far been badly neglected. As it will be elaborated in the paper, this is an important potential area of research which should attract attention on a priority basis. This digression apart, the researches in Panchayati Raj have, by and large, suffered from the following handicaps:

1. They have been narrowly local in so far as little effort at intra-State comparisons has been made, let alone the question of inter-State cross cultural comparisons.²

2. They have been narrowly dated also in the sense that they have usually not been spread over a long span of time nor they have been buttressed

1. The issue has been sharply posed and discussed in Parts II (Panchayati Raj and Planning) and III (Panchayati Raj and Democracy) in M.V. Mathur and Iqbal Narain (ed.) Panchayati Raj, Planning and Democracy, Asia, 1969, pp. 109-478.

2. A useful exception can be seen in Iqbal Narain and P.C. Mathur (Ed.) Old Controls and New Challenges (A Report on the pattern of Control and Supervision of Panchayati Raj in Madras, Maharashtra and Rajasthan). The Report is available in mimeographed form in the department of Political Science, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur. It is being published by the Indian Institute of Public Administration which had sponsored the study for use by the Administrative Reforms Commission.

by repeat studies. The result is that the studies highlight more the sporadic phenomena than the continuities in democratic and the developmental process.

3. They have also lacked in methodological rigour³ and little effort has been made, particularly in Political Science and Public Administration studies, to recapitulate the findings of earlier studies before hypotheses of new studies are formulated. The result is that the analysts, more often than not, tend to repeat the hypotheses and duplicate the findings instead of accomplishing a forward academic thrust. Further, the researches are not always conceived on a sound theoretical basis and as such result more in data reports than in conceptually focussed analyses. This is largely due to the fact that research projects in Panchayati Raj have been of a short duration and thus it has not always been possible to devote enough time in the planning of the study from the conceptual angle before the field work actually starts. Another reason has been that the project sanctioning agencies would not easily see the rationale of appointing senior-level quality staff on a full time basis to work on a project and without them it is difficult to aim at methodological rigour and sophistication. Still another handicap is that it is difficult to attract qualified staff and retain it even after training because of the ad hoc nature of the projects and relatively low and consolidated salaries.

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3. Some significant exceptions have been (a) Emerging Patterns of Rural Leadership in Southern Asia : Report on Mussoorie Conference organised jointly by UNESCO Research Centre, Delhi and National Institute of Community Development, Hyderabad, N.I.C.D., 1965, IV, pp. 237; (b) S.C. Dube: India's Changing Villages; Human Factors in Community Development, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958, XII, pp.230, and (c) V.R. Gaikwad : Panchayati Raj and Bureaucracy : A Study of the Relationship patterns, N.I.C.D. 1969, pp. 77.

4. Quite a few researches in Panchayati Raj require an inter-disciplinary focus if they are to be meaningful. What has, however, passed as inter-disciplinary studies are only multi-disciplinary academic efforts.⁴ The implication here is that no real integration of the foci and approaches of different disciplines has really taken place.

5. Finally, researches in Panchayati Raj have so far been isolated phenomena rather than part and parcel of an integrated plan of research on an All-India basis which may have been formulated with an accent on the policy formulation angle and the priorities that it involves. In fact, uniform attention to research in the field has not been given in all the States where it has been introduced. The result is that, while researches in Panchayati Raj have been done in States like Andhra, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, the same is not true of other States. Thus no all India overview of the working of Panchayati Raj in the States where it has been introduced can be had on the basis of available empirical research work.⁵

III

It may be useful now to reflect for a while on the nature of research in Panchayati Raj. We are here essentially in the realm of the 'ought to be' and as such the danger of personal bias vitiating the reflections is very much there for which indulgence of the readers is earnestly sought.

4. M.V. Mathur, Iqbal Narain, V.M. Sinha and Associates : Panchayati Raj in Rajasthan, (Impex, New Delhi, 1966) can be cited as an example.

5. For a good approximation see Sugan Chand Jain : Community Development and Panchayati Raj in India, (Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1967). The field work reported in the book is, however, largely confined to Rajasthan.

One can delineate the nature of research in Panchayati Raj, broadly, in terms of its objectives and foci. Generally speaking, researches in Panchayati Raj by its very nature tend to be more evaluative-cum-prescriptive than purely academic. One could suggest in specific terms that from the point of view of objectives, research in Panchayati Raj is to be treated as an exercise in empirical theory against a developmental perspective with a distinct policy orientation. While approaches and methods will have to be carefully chosen in the context of specific projects of research, the researches in Panchayati Raj could broadly be conducted within the confines of the comparative and inter-disciplinary foci.

Let us now turn to elaborate some of the formulations made above. While reflecting on the nature of research from the point of view of objectives it has been suggested that research in Panchayati Raj has, by and large, to be evaluative-cum-prescriptive. This is so because Panchayati Raj falls in the category of an instrumental value and as such it is expected to accomplish certain objectives in the broad context of development and democracy. As a logical growth out of the community development programme it is not merely expected to make good the short-falls of the programme but also to carry it forward. Researches in Panchayati Raj, therefore, have a built-in bias towards evaluation of the working of Panchayati Raj in the context of the realisation of objectives that it is expected to fulfil. Thus researches in the field are bound to have a pronounced evaluative bias, which in turn should make it empirical also. As a corollary to this, the analyst is also enjoined to suggest ways and means to improve Panchayati Raj institutions where they fall short.

One may indulge in a digression here. The legacy, relationship and impact of community development vis-a-vis Panchayati Raj is itself an important subject of scientific enquiry. One may hypothesize here that, if

Panchayati Raj had preceeded community development and if the latter had been administered through the media of the former, it would have been good for both. We only borrowed community development from the U.S.A. but failed to dovetail it with our tradition of panchayats.⁶

It may also be asked here whether the evaluative-cum-prescriptive character of research in the field implies that there can be little effort at theory building in the researches of Panchayati Raj. The answer is obviously in the negative. No research will be worthwhile if it cannot in the ultimate analysis help theory building. But in the case of researches in Panchayati Raj one can talk of theory building with a difference. It will have to be a case of empirical theory⁷ and not of speculative theory - that is to say theory will have to emerge out of actual experience of the working of Panchayati Raj institutions, all the more because theory is here intended to help policy formulation. By way of illustration, it may be pointed out that it is not just enough to assume that parties should not enter the arena of Panchayati Raj ; if one stops with the assertion of this assumption, it will be a case of speculative theory. One has to go further and address oneself to such questions as

1. Whether political parties are really abstaining from entering the arena ;

6. For an interesting discussion on the point see (a) B. Mukherji : Community Development and Panchayati Raj, Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. 8, No. 4, October-December, 1962, pp. 577-588 and (b) B. Mukherji : Community Development in India (Revised edition, Bombay, Orient Longmans, 1967, XIII, pp. 383).

7. Cf. Harold D. Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan in Power and Society: A Framework for Political Enquiry, New Haven Yale University Press 1950: "Theorising, even about politics, is not to be confused with metaphysical speculation in terms of abstractions hopelessly removed from empirical observation and control", p. x.

2. If they are entering, what are their stakes and what are the advantages and disadvantages accruing to the political system in general and Panchayati Raj institutions in particular and that also in the specific context of democracy and development ? and
3. How do the political actors, officials and the uninvolved public look at the interaction of parties and politics under Panchayati Raj.

These are just illustrative questions which can be further multiplied. An enquiry around these questions should result in empirical theorising about the issue whether political parties should enter the arena of Panchayati Raj or not. It may be pointed out in passing that, except for impressionistic observations, no scientific study of the problem has yet been attempted. The discussion of the issue, which has been rather wide spread, can at best be described as an exercise in speculative theory.⁸

Developmental perspective is an integral part of any research in Panchayati Raj. It may be recalled here that the contextual framework of the community development which played a key-role in the genesis of Panchayati Raj imbued its concept with abiding developmental orientation. Thus Panchayati Raj came to be both a development and power mechanism and whatever the specific problem of research may be, the two key variables would continue to be - the variable of development and the variable of power. In fact, researchers in Panchayati Raj will have

8. For interesting discussion of the issue largely in terms of speculative theory see (a) Jayaprakash Narayan : Role of Political Parties in Panchayati Raj, Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. 8, No. 4, October-December, 1962, pp. 602-608; (b) E.M.S. Namboodiripad: Political Parties and Panchayati Raj, Ibid., pp.618-622; and (c) Myron Weiner : Political Parties and Panchayati Raj, Ibid., pp.623-628.

to treat those two variables not as mutually exclusive but as mutually interactive phenomena and it is this perspective of interaction which alone can provide realistic basis for meaningful research, conceptualisation and theory building.

Finally, researches in Panchayati Raj are also to have what may be described in the language of Lasswell and Lerner a 'policy science'⁹ orientation. As stated elsewhere also, researches in Panchayati Raj being largely evaluative in character naturally tend to have implications for policy formulation. In fact, the researcher here is not merely to diagnose the disease, as it were, but has also to prescribe for cure. In this sense research in Panchayati Raj assumes a problem solving character. Not merely this. The researcher here has also to think of ways and means, not only for arresting the forces of deterioration and decay from inhibiting the growth of Panchayati Raj institutions, but also (and more importantly) for improving the inner vitality and efficacy of these institutions. It is in this sense that researches in Panchayati Raj should

9. The reference here is to Daniel Lerner and Harold D. Lasswell (ed.) The Policy Sciences, Stanford University Press 1951, where on page 3 Harold D. Lasswell observes: "A policy orientation has been developing that cuts across the existing specializations. The orientation is twofold. In part it is directed toward the intelligence needs of policy. The first task, which is the development of a science of policy forming and execution, uses the methods of social and psychological inquiry. The second task, which is the improving of the concrete content of the information and the interpretations available to policy-makers, typically, goes outside the boundaries of social science and psychology".

Elsewhere also Lasswell has insisted "from a manipulative stand-point, the Social Sciences are better designated as Policy to the integration of the values realised by and embodied in inter-personal relations. We conceive of Political Science as one of the policy sciences - that which studies influence and power as instruments of such integration. The problem of social policy is that of creating conditions under which power can and does act integratively in relation to the major values of the society as a whole". (Lasswell and Kaplan : op.cit., p. xii)

also have an innovative bias.¹⁰

IV

One can identify now the major foci that could be fruitfully employed in the researches of Panchayati Raj. If the foregoing analysis of the nature of research in Panchayati Raj is to serve as the orienting norms of the researcher in the field, he may, broadly speaking, prefer to opt for the following foci of study :

(i) It will be helpful to adopt the comparative focus in the researches of Panchayati Raj as far as possible. Thus comparative studies of institutions, actors and processes of Panchayati Raj in their structural, functional and behavioural aspects can be taken up at intra-district, intra-State and inter-State levels. Comparisons can help in delineating the factors that account for the success or failure of a particular institutional device or functionary. Of course, the infra-structural or cultural variables should not be ignored if comparisons from comparative studies are to be realistically made. Cross cultural comparisons would be meaningful only when it is possible to isolate which causal factors have been culture-bound and which of them can be treated as uniformly applicable in their causality.

10. One can recall here the following observation of Lasswell :

"Whatever the problem, political scientists frequently appear as innovators or critics of policy... It is directly within the scope of Political Science to identify the factors that impede the realization of policy goals and to assess their relative significance". (The Future of Political Science, Tavistock Publications 1959 and Prentice Hall Inc., 1962, pp.4 and 7).

He, however, warns elsewhere "Nor are the policy sciences to be thought of as largely identical with what is studied by the political scientists... Many of the most valuable contributions to a general theory of choice (including decisions defined as sanctioned choice) have been made by persons who are not political scientists... Examples are abundant and include the "Rational Theory of Choice" (called the Theory of Games) developed by the mathematician Von Neumann and

(ii) Researches in Panchayati Raj also have a built-in bias for the inter-disciplinary focus. As Panchayati Raj is at once a mechanism for development and democracy, it gets inextricably mixed and linked up with processes of political development, economic growth, social change and development administration. Panchayati Raj, in fact, becomes both a point of confluence and one of the agents of interaction of the processes identified here. It is, therefore, always germane to researchers in Panchayati Raj to study how far the socio-economic context affects the political context of Panchayati Raj and the vice-versa. Even at the risk of digression it may be worthwhile to observe that autonomy of the political processes in relation to the socio-economic processes and the vice-versa can only be conceived perhaps in a relative sense in the specific context of Panchayati Raj¹¹. It is, thus, both necessary and desirable that researches in Panchayati Raj may be built around a continuous and living dialogue among the social scientists. This can at least assume two forms. First, the research problem may relate to one discipline and yet it may be useful to draw upon the studies and approaches of different disciplines in the interest of a meaningful scientific enquiry. For example, if one were to study Rural Politics Under Panchayati Raj in the specific context

the economist Morgenstern" : (Learner and Lasswell, op.cit., pp.4-5).

11. Besides the developmental perspective even the power component in Panchayati Raj strengthens the processes of interaction. One may, again, recall here a significant observation from Lasswell and Kaplan "The power process is not a distinct and separable part of the social process, but only the political aspect of the social process in its entirety... Political Science is autonomous and not merely applied Psychology or Applied Economics. But its autonomy does not mean that it is independent of all other social Sciences, but rather than it cannot be circumscribed as part of any one of them". (Lasswell and Kaplan op.cit., pp. xvii-xviii).

of the interaction of caste, class and power, it will be desirable that the researcher draws heavily upon the works of Sociologists, Economists and Social Anthropologists. Researches of this type can be described as undisciplined researches with a multi-disciplinary perspective.

Secondly, there are problems of research with a distinct interdisciplinary focus which would naturally take to inter-disciplinary outlook and approaches. For example, if one were to study Politics of Development under Panchayati Raj, one will have to study village polity, economy and society in a living process of interaction and that also against the background of science and technology which as in-puts in the village system may be serving as an earnest for change. This will perhaps be a fit case of inter-disciplinary research.

It may be worthwhile here to point out that neither uni-discipline studies with a multi-disciplinary perspective nor inter-disciplinary researches have been very common. What we have had so far are uni-discipline studies with a uni-disciplinary perspective. The focus has also not always been confined to Panchayati Raj; it has been village and, as such, more often than not, much broader in terms of the thematic universe covered by it. This is particularly true of sociological and anthropological studies.¹²

V

We may now turn to identifying more important research areas

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12. One can recall here such studies as (a) Brij Raj Chaham, A Rajasthan Village, New Delhi, Vir Publishing House, 1967, X, pp. 330; (b) M.B. Desai and R.S. Mehta: Community Development and Change: Case Study of a Block in Gujarat, Hyderabad, National Institute of Community Development, 1967, X, pp.133; and (c) Irawati Karve, Damle and Yaswant Bhaskar, Group Relations in Village Community, Poona, Deccan College, 1963, VIII, pp. 484.

in Panchayati Raj. The listing below is more illustrative than exhaustive and it naturally suffers from the personal bias of the author of this paper in terms of priorities for which the indulgence of the readers is earnestly sought :

CONCEPTUAL STUDIES :

It may be useful to take up some studies from the point of view of empirical theory which will naturally have a distinct conceptual orientation. One could suggest in this regard the following research projects :

- (a) Competing Conceptual Images of Panchayati Raj : a comparative study of the perceptions of civil servants, political elite and the rural masses :

It is common knowledge that there is as yet no consensus about the concept of Panchayati Raj. In fact, there are as many conceptual images as the categories of persons venturing to conceptualize. More importantly, though civil servants, political elite and the rural masses have, in a manner of speaking, to work in a joint partnership concern in the running of Panchayati Raj institutions, they have different and conflicting images of Panchayati Raj. This naturally militates against the efficacy of the institution. Some studies embodying descriptive hypotheses on the basis of field impressions about these varying images have been made.¹³ But no scientific study on the subject is as yet available. It is, therefore,

13. One could refer in this context to (a) Iqbal Narain: The Concept of Panchayati Raj and its institutional implications in India, Asian Survey, Vol. V., No. 9, Sept. 1965, pp. 456-466 and (b) Iqbal Narain: Democratic Decentralisation, the idea, image and reality, Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. IX, No. 1, January-March, 1963, pp. 9-34.

necessary that a scientific enquiry is launched in regard to the very concept of Panchayati Raj. This enquiry can be taken up both at intra-state and inter-State levels.

(b) Political Parties, and Panchayati Raj, a study in the extent, nature and stakes of involvement.

As stated elsewhere also, it has been postulated on the normative plane that political parties should not enter the arena of Panchayati Raj and yet it is common knowledge that they do enter. It is also assumed that association of political parties with Panchayati Raj is more dysfunctional than functional to the process of development and democracy. Similar formulations, however, are not made at least with the same vehemence in regard to participation of political parties in urban local government. Altogether, thus, the subject deserves empirical study which again can be taken up both at intra-State and inter-State levels. It may perhaps be useful to launch this enquiry on a comparative basis in the States of Maharashtra, U.P. and Rajasthan to study the problem in States with different levels of economic and political development as also with varying institutional models of Panchayati Raj.

(c) Factions, pressure politics and Panchayati Raj.

It is also commonly alleged that Panchayati Raj has eaten into the vitals of traditional village harmony, bred and accentuated factionalism and encouraged unhealthy pressure politics for developmental patronage and other favours. Some useful studies on this score have already been made¹⁴ and yet we are a long way to go in empirical research before the precise

14. One could identify here some of the more important studies : (a) Prabhut Sharma : Pressure Politics in Panchayats, Journal of Administration Overseas Vol. VII, No.2, April 1968, pp. 378-388 ; (b) V.M. Sirsikar: Political Role of Panchayati Raj, Economic and Political Weekly.

nature of interaction between Panchayati Raj politics and village factionalism can be scientifically delineated.

INSTITUTIONAL, ORGANISATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STUDIES.

This category of studies is particularly useful from policy science angle. The following research areas deserve attention on a priority basis under this category :

- (a) Panchayati Raj, Development and Democracy : a comparative study in the efficacy of institutional models of Panchayati Raj in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan :

While students of Panchayati Raj are prone to accept that development and democracy are its key objectives, they are terribly divided in their views about the efficacy of different institutional models to realise those objectives. The rivals in the competition for efficacy are provided by the institutional models of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan. It is often hypothesized that, while the institutional model of Maharashtra, is best suited to meet the demands of planned development, the institutional model of Rajasthan is most conducive to democracy with the Gujarat model trying to strike a balance between the two. This hypothesis has, however, yet to be subjected to a rigorous empirical enquiry. As the basic

Vol. I, No. 14, November 19, 1966, pp. 581-584, (c) A.H. Somjee : Groups and individuals in the Politics of an Indian Village, Asian Survey Vol. II, No. 2, April 1962, pp. 15-17; and (d) D.F. Miller : Factions in Indian Village politics, Pacific Affairs, Vol. 38, No. 1, Spring 1965, pp. 17-31.

challenge of Panchayati Raj is how to strike a balance between the demands of development and pressures of democracy, this study needs to be taken up with a sense of urgency, because only structural comparisons of institutional models have so far been attempted, which do not go very far from the point of view of empirical research.¹⁵

(b) The Political Elite, Civil Servants and the Technocrats under Panchayati Raj : a study in the Pattern of Relationships :

The most intriguing problem areas of Panchayati Raj relate to the pattern of relationship among the Panchayati Raj leaders, the block bureaucracy and the extension officers. If the pattern of relationship is harmonious, it contributes to the efficacy of Panchayati Raj institutions; if it is not, Panchayati Raj Institutions fail to deliver the goods. One is not too sure whether the difference in the nature of institutional model introduces a variation in the pattern of relationship. It will, therefore, be useful to probe into this problem preferably against the comparative perspective of Maharashtra on the one hand and Rajasthan/Andhra and the like on the other. Here, again, the available researches, except Gaikwad's study, are more impressionistic than empirical.¹⁶

(c) Collector and Panchayati Raj : a comparative study of different role structures :

There is sharp difference of opinion about the place and role of Collector in the Panchayati Raj system.¹⁷ Different States,

15. For a useful structural - institutional comparison see P.C. Kathur : Institutional Models of Panchayati Raj, Political Science Review, Vol.VI, No. 2, April-June 1967, pp. 200-218.

16. Some useful studies on the subject are (a) A.P. Barnabas: Relations between officials and non-officials in Panchayati Raj, Political Scientist Vol. I, No. 1, December 1967, pp.12-16; (b) C.F. Bhanbhri: Officials-Non-official Relationship in Panchayati Raj, Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol. XXVIII, No.3, July-Sept. 1967, pp. 133-142; (c) T.N. Chaturvedi : Tensions in Panchayati Raj : Relations between

particularly Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Andhra, and Rajasthan have differently experimented on this score. It would, therefore, be useful from the policy formulation point of view to compare the results of different experiments and evolve a generalized model, if possible.

FUNCTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL PROFILES ;

Panchayati Raj is being treated today as the proverbial God that has failed and the result is that it is being continuously devalued, particularly in the post-Fourth General Election period. Some, however, still argue that Panchayati Raj is a case of more sinned against than sinning. According to this school of thought a scientific enquiry into the credit and the debit side of the working of Panchayati Raj institutions may not always bear out the alleged failures. It is, therefore, necessary to attempt an appraisal of Panchayati Raj institutions with a view to finding out whether they are at all functional to democracy and development or not. The following studies may be fruitfully undertaken in this category :

(a) Panchayati Raj and Planning from Below :

It may be recalled here that Panchayati Raj institutions have been involved in planning when the III and IV Five Year Plans were formulated.¹⁸

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- officials and non-officials, Economic Weekly, Vol. xvi, No. 22, May 30, 1964 pp. 921-924, (d) B. Mehta : Some Aspects of Relationship in Panchayati Raj, Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. VII, No. 3, July-Sept. 1961, pp. 297-305, and (e) Ram K. Vepa: Non-official Relations in Panchayati Raj : The experience of Andhra Pradesh, Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. 8, No.2, April-June 1962, pp. 186-189.
17. For descriptive hypotheses on the subject see : (a) P.R. Dubhashi : Collector and the Panchayati Raj Institutions, Kuruksheetra, Vol. XI, No. 5, October 1961, pp. 33-36 and (b) Haridwar Rai : The District Officer and Panchayati Raj - a critique of his alternative roles, Quarterly Journal of the Local Self-Government Institute, Vol. 37, No.4, April-June 1967, pp. 365-374.
18. Two good studies with an empirical bias can be identified in this context : (a) V.Nath : Area development planning at district and block

It is also hoped that this practice would be continued. It will, therefore, be useful to study the nature, extent and impact of planning from below through the medium of Panchayati Raj institutions with a view to identifying the strong and weak points of this experiment as also to improve upon its short-comings and handicaps.

(b) Emerging Rural Elite under Panchayati Raj :
A study of interaction between tradition and
modernity :

Even the worst critics of Panchayati Raj agree that it has succeeded in the emergence of a new leadership at the rural level. Of course, there is difference of opinion on the issue whether this new leadership should be described as 'rural elite' or not. It is also being disputed whether this leadership is traditional, modern or neo-traditional¹⁹ and with this controversy is linked up the issue whether it

levels, Indian Journal of Public Administration Vol. II, No. 2, April-June 1965, pp. 174-193 and (b) P.C. Mathur : Multi-level Planning in Rajasthan, Voluntary Action, Vol. 8, No. 4, July-August, 1966.

19. For a discussion of this aspect see Iqbal Narain : Democratic Decentralisation and Rural Leadership in India : The Rajasthan Experiment, Asian Survey, Vol. IV, No. 8, August 1964 pp. 1013-1022. Other useful studies covering the problem from different angles are : (a) Leela Dube : Leadership in Community Development and decentralized democracy, Kurukshetra, Vol. 14, No. 9, April 1966, pp. 5-11; (b) N.V. Inamdar and V.V. Pendse : Panchayat Leadership: a case study, Journal of the University of Poona, Vol. XV, 1962, pp. 186-193; (c) K. Ranga Rao, Rural Leadership and Conflict: Study on an Andhra Village, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. III, No. 17, April 27, 1968, pp. 674-677; (d) G. Ram Reddy : Social Composition of Panchayati Raj : Background of Political Executives in Andhra, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. II, No. 50, December 23, 1967 pp. 2211-2214; (e) R.S. Robins: Political Elite Formation in Rural India : the Uttar Pradesh Panchayat Elections of 1949, and 1961, Journal of Politics, Vol. 29, No. 4, November 1967, pp. 838-860; and (f) S.S. Thorat, Some Salient Characteristics of Sarpanchas and the success or failure of agricultural innovations in India's Villages, Behavioural Sciences and Community Development, Vol. 2, No. 1, March 1968, pp. 26-37.

is an instrument of change or not. This is also as yet to be empirically investigated which of the two major institutional models of Panchayati Raj (whether the Maharashtra or the Rajasthan model) is better from the point of view of the emergence of leadership at the rural level. Altogether, thus, a research project to investigate into the problem against a comparative prospective of different models deserves consideration on a priority basis.

(c) Rural Politics under Panchayati Raj.

As already suggested elsewhere in the paper, a full length study covering this problem in the specific context of the interaction of caste, class and power is yet to be taken up by a political scientist, though sociologists have done some work in this area. ²⁰

(d) Politics of Development under Panchayati Raj :

Though there is some over-lap in this topic and the topic just above it, yet it deserves attention as an exercise in inter-disciplinary research. As suggested elsewhere also in the paper, one will have to study village polity, economy and society in a living process of interaction and that also against the background of science and technology and as such it will have a far wider scope than studies in rural politics in the context of

20. Andre Beteille's Caste, Class and Power : Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village (Oxford University Press, 1966) is a very stimulating study, though it covers a far narrower focus than what is being envisaged here.

Some other useful studies, more impressionistic than empirical, can also be identified here for ready reference : (a) Brij Raj Chauhan : Panchayati Raj and the democratic policy, Sociological Bulletin, Vol. 17, No.1, March 1960, pp. 35-54; (b) E.A. Giles, Political Implications of C.D. Programmes in the newly developing areas, Community Development Review, Vol. 6, Sept. 1961, pp. 4-13; (c) Iqbal Narain, Politics and Panchayati Raj, Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol. 23, No.4, Oct-Dec., 1962, pp. 338-346; (d) W.H. Morris Jones, Democratic Decentralisation - Some political consequences, Economics Weekly, Vol.14, No. 28-30, July 1962 pp. 1100-1103 and (e) V.M. Sirsikar, Political Role of Panchayati Raj, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. I, No.14, Nov.19, 1966, pp. 531-534.

caste, class and power. 21

(e) The Image and Reality of Panchayati Raj :
A study in working and impact :

Under this broad caption which can naturally admit of several smaller studies built around the specific foci identified here, one can study the overall functioning of Panchayati Raj institutions with a view to finding out how far they have been conducive to their basic objective i.e. democracy and development. A comparative focus can also be provided to this study if an attempt is made to compare the achievements of Panchayati Raj and the Community Development institutions.

A specific variation of the area of research identified here can be a scientific probe in 'SUCCESS' and 'FAILURE' stories of Panchayati Raj with a view to finding out the factors that make for success and also the vice-versa. Case studies of prize-winning panchayats can be cited as an example.

(f) Gram Sabha and Panchayati Raj : A study in stunted
institutional growth and its causes :

Paradoxically enough Gram Sabha which has been considered to be a key institution in the theory of Panchayati Raj has turned out to be the weakest link in the institutional structure of Panchayati Raj.²² The few success stories are more exceptions than the rule. It will, therefore, be useful to study empirically why Gram Sabhas have remained a case of

21. This will, broadly be a study on the lines of David E. Apter's The Politics of Modernization (The University of Chicago Press 1965). For some interesting points of study see P.C. Mathur: Sociological Dimensions of Panchayati Raj, Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. X, No. 1, Jan-March 1964, pp. 58-72

22. For empirical notes on the topic see Iqbal Narain : Gram Sabha and Panchayati Raj, The Political Science Review, Vol. I, No. 2, 1962.

stunted growth so far and whether anything can really be done to make the institution of Gram Sabha both viable and vital.

PERCEPTIONAL INNOVATION BASED AND PROBLEM SOLVING STUDIES :

One of the ways of evaluating the efficacy of an institution is to study how people perceive that institution. From this angle it may be interesting to study the impact of Panchayati Raj through the perception of the elite, bureaucracy, and the rural folk.²³ The following specific studies can be undertaken to cover this broad focus :

(i) The Impact of Panchayati Raj : The Study can cover in particular :

- a) The Impact of Panchayati Raj: The Elitist Image ;
- b) The Impact of Panchayati Raj: The Bureaucratic Image;
- c) The Impact of Panchayati Raj: As villagers see it; and
- d) The Impact of Panchayati Raj: A comparative Review of the perceptions of the Political Elite, Civil Servants and the rural people.

(ii) Peoples expectations and Panchayati Raj: The main foci of the study will be two-fold. First, it will be scientifically enquired what people after all expected from Panchayati Raj. Secondly, by way of a follow up, an effort will be made to find out how far these expectations had been actually fulfilled.

Every now and then innovations are introduced in the working of Panchayati Raj. Quite often they are in the nature of pilot experiments. It is, therefore, necessary to evaluate the working of these experiments with a view to finding out whether their use can be extended on a broader

23. One could recall here some useful studies of this nature which have already been undertaken :

- a) Indian Institute of Public Opinion, New Delhi : Evaluation of the Community Development Programme and Panchayati Raj; a selected sample of members of Parliament and opinion leaders, Monthly Public Opinion Surveys , Vol. 9, No. 4, Jan. 1966, pp. 1-38
- b) Indian Institute of Public Opinion, New Delhi: Impact of Panchayati Raj on Political Attitudes; a Survey in Andhra Pradesh, Madras and

scale. For example, the R.A.S. B.D.O. has been replaced by a technocrat B.D.O. in Rajasthan. Some consider this to be a retrograde step; while others favour it in the larger interest of economy and planned development in rural areas. These are, however, impressions which deserves to be verified on the basis of an empirical enquiry. Similar instances can be found out and studied in different States which have introduced Panchayati Raj.

It is also common knowledge that Panchayati Raj is beset with problems like any other experiment in planning, development and democracy. As Social Sciences are policy sciences also, it becomes the obligation of the Social Scientists to study scientifically these problems and suggest remedies. For example, management of Primary Schools under Panchayati Raj has been bitterly criticised in Rajasthan. It may, therefore, be useful to study the problem scientifically and come forward with both analytical and problem-solving studies. Such examples can be multiplied.

RURAL-URBAN CONTINUUM STUDIES :

Finally, as pointed out elsewhere also, rural and urban local

Rajasthan with special reference to the 1962 General Elections, Monthly Public Opinion Surveys, Vol. 8, Nos. 6-9, March-June 1963, pp.1-127.

- c) Indian Institute of Public Opinion, New Delhi: Opinion Survey of Rural Leaders and Officials in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Cooperatives, Monthly Public Opinion Surveys, Vol. 10, Nos. 1-2, Oct-Nov. 1964, pp. 1-62.
- d) National Institute of Community Development : People's Image of Community Development and Panchayati Raj, by L.K. Sen, V.R. Gaikwad and G.L. Verma, Hyderabad, N.I.C.D., 1967, p. 31

governments have been treated as mutually exclusive categories and no effort has been made to study the two against a comparative prospective, let alone as part and parcel of a living and interactive continuum. As a country develops, the lines of demarcation between urban and rural communities get blurred and, more often than not, they tend to influence each other in terms of value orientation, thought structures and action patterns. Peri-urban communities in their socio-economic and political profiles are classical illustrations of the interaction between urban and rural areas.²⁴ It is, therefore, in the fitness of things that studies in Panchayati Raj are also undertaken on the rural-urban continuum. Some areas which can admit of fruitful investigation in this category are listed below :

- a) Resource mobilisation, expenditure pattern and financial administration in local government institutions: A comparative study in the context of rural-urban local governments.
- b) The problem of official-non-official relationship: A study in relationship patterns and problems under Panchayati Raj and Municipal institutions.
- c) The pattern of State-Local Relationship: A comparative study in linkage politics and pattern of supervision and control in the context of rural-urban local governments.
- d) Electoral behaviour in local Government: A comparative review of Panchayati Raj and Municipal elections.

24. The Rural-Urban Relationship Committee Report, 1966

Delhi Ministry of Health and Family Planning, throws useful light on the dimension under review here. One could also recall the following two empirical studies having a bearing on this problem :

- a) A.H. Sonjee: Politics of a Peri-urban Community in India, Asia 1964, and
- b) Iqbal Narain, P.C. Mathur and P.S. Varma : The Pattern of Urban-Rural Relationship - A case study in Jaipur District, University of Rajasthan Press, 1967.

Separate studies of municipal and panchayat elections are available.²⁵ They are important and should as such be encouraged. But the comparative vista is yet to be developed and has great potential both for conceptualisation and theory-building. Even at the risk of digression one may mention by way of a descriptive hypothesis that continuous postponement of Panchayat elections has been one of the factors that account for the devaluation of Panchayati Raj and lack of zest about it among the people. This can be easily illustrated with reference to Rajasthan and U.P.

VI

We have deliberately not talked about approaches and methods of study; it is assumed that these will have to be discretely chosen in the specific context of the projects of study. It may, however, be useful to point out that it is not always helpful to postulate a dichotomy between traditional and modern approaches and methods. It is much more useful to bring to bear a syncretic outlook on this issue and an effort is made to combine the traditional and the modern if it is in the larger interest of the enquiry. It may also be added that there has been a plethora of study team reports on the working of Panchayati Raj which can be very useful in

25. The more important studies of panchayat elections are :

- (a) Iqbal Narain : Political Behaviour in Rural India : The Case of Panchayat Election in Rajasthan, Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies, Vol. 5, No.2, July 1967, pp.109-120.
- (b) K. Seshadri : Principle of Unanimity in Panchayat Elections in the State of Andhra Pradesh, India, Journal of Local Administration Overseas, Vol. 3, No.4, Oct. 1964, pp. 214-220.

postulating the hypotheses for empirical researches in Panchayati Raj.²⁶

Finally, there are a number of important unpublished theses in the field of Panchayati Raj which need be abstracted so that future research projects do not just replicate what has already been done.²⁷

VII

It will be presumptuous to think that any one can exhaust the topic under discussion, let alone the question of giving a final verdict on it. The foregoing analysis is only meant to start a dialogue; if the paper succeeds in doing so in a meaningful way, its purpose would have been achieved.

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26. For detail see Panchayati Raj in India - A Select Bibliography (mimeographed), National Institute of Community Development, Hyderabad, pp. 37-42.

27. For a list of these theses see Ibid., pp. 86-94.

APPENDIX II

TRAVEL REGULATIONS FOR OFFICIAL AND NON-OFFICIAL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL AND ITS COMMITTEES.

PART B: Regulations for persons who are not employees of the Council.

I. Officials

TR.16 Travelling allowance of officials (i.e. persons who are employees of Central or State Governments) for journeys undertaken in connection with the work of the respective Governments. They shall draw their TA/DA from their own Governments, who may then claim reimbursement from the Council.

II. Members of the Council other than Officials.

TR.17. Travelling allowance of members of the Council who are not employees of Central or State Governments (hereinafter referred to as 'members') will be regulated as under:-

(1) Journey by Rail:

- (a) Normally, the members should travel by 1st class by rail, return journey tickets being invariably purchased wherever available,
- (b) Chairman may permit any individual member to travel by ACC where this concession is in his opinion justified by the fulfilment of one or more of the following conditions:
 - (i) When travel in ACC is required on grounds of health or because of very advanced age and/or infirmity;
 - (ii) When the member concerned is or was entitled to travel in air conditioned coach under the rules of the organisation to which he belongs or might have belonged before retirement;
 - (iii) Where the Chairman is satisfied that ACC travel by air condition is the customary mode of travel by the non-official member concerned in respect of journeys unconnected with the performance of Council's duty.
- (c) In addition to cost of the ticket under (a) or (b) above, a member will be entitled to reimbursement or other incidental expenditure actually incurred by him in connection with the journey subject to a maximum of Rs.8 for every 12 hours of the journey or part thereof.

(2) Journey by Air: A member may travel by air:

- (a) At his discretion when performing the journey to attend a meeting of the Council or its Committees, Working Groups, Study Groups, etc., set up by the Council or the Chairman or to participate in a Seminar, Conference or Discussion, etc. organised by the Council or on its behalf; and

- (b) With permission of the Member-Secretary when performing any other journey connected with the affairs of the Council.

For such travel, he may claim the actual cost of air ticket (return ticket should be purchased wherever available) plus an allowance for incidentals equal to one-fifth of the standard air fare subject to a maximum of Rs. 10 for each journey, provided that if return journey is completed within 24 hours, the incidentals will be restricted to Rs. 16 for the entire journey.

(3) Journey by Road; (a) Road journey should normally not be undertaken between places connected by rail. If for any reason, such journey is performed the TA will be limited to what the person would have been entitled to if he had travelled by rail.

(b) A member travelling by road will be entitled to the actual cost of bus or taxi hire paid by him, subject to a maximum of 32 paise per km. in the case of taxi, plus an allowance for incidental expenditure as far rail journey, under sub-rule (1) (c) above.

Note : Road mileage under this clause, without an allowance for incidentals, will also be admissible for road journey between the residence/place of halt and railway station/city booking office in the case of air travel.

T.R. 18. DAILY ALLOWANCE : (1) A member shall be entitled to a daily allowance of Rs. 30/- for each day of the meeting.

(2) In addition to the daily allowance for the day(s) of the meeting a member shall also be entitled to full daily allowance at the rate mentioned in sub-rule (1) above, for the day preceding and/ or the day following the meetings, if

(a) he arrives in the forenoon of the day preceding the day of the meeting or on an earlier day and / or

(b) he departs at 12 Noon or in the afternoon of the day following the day of the meeting or on a later day.

But he will be entitled to half daily allowance for the day following the meeting if

(a) he arrives at 12 noon or in the afternoon of the day preceding the day of the meeting and/or

(b) he departs in the forenoon of the day following the day of the meeting.

TR.19. CONVEYANCE ALLOWANCE : A member resident at a place where the meeting is held will be entitled to the actual cost of conveyance hired subject to a maximum of Rs. 15 per day and to no other travelling or daily allowance, if such member wishes to use his own car, he may claim mileage allowance at the rate of 32 paise per km. subject to a maximum of Rs. 15/- per day.

III. NON-OFFICIALS OTHER THAN MEMBERS :

TR.20.

(1) The provisions of TR 17, 18 & 19 shall also apply

to non-officials who are not members of the Council but who are working as members of a Committee, Working Group, study group, etc. etc. set up by the Council or Chairman or who are participating in a Seminar, Conference, Discussion, etc. organised by the Council or on its behalf except that they shall obtain permission of the Member-Secretary for air journeys in all cases.

(2) TA/DA entitlement of a non-official who is not a member of the Council and who is required to undertake a journey in connection with the business of the Council that is not covered by (1) above shall be determined, with due regard to such person's position in life, in accordance with regulations under Part A.

IV. MEMBERS AND NON-OFFICIALS

TR.21. Notwithstanding anything contained in TR 17,18,19 and 20 a non-official who is not a member of the Council but who is a Vice-Chancellor or teacher of a University as defined under the University Grants Commission Act, 1956 or an employee of an autonomous body set up by Central or State Government may, at his option, draw TA/DA from his employing authority who may then claim reimbursement from the Council.

APPENDIX III

Train timings from Bangalore to Mysore and back.

| | Bangalore <u>Depr</u> | Mysore <u>Arr.</u> | |
|----|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. | 0730 | 1130 | Hubli-Mysore Mail |
| 2. | 1130 | 1620 | Bangalore-Mysore Passr. |
| 3. | 1610 | 1955 | Bangalore-Mysore Expr. |
| 4. | 2245 | 0525 | Bangalore-Mysore Passr. |

| | Mysore <u>Depr.</u> | Bangalore <u>Arr.</u> | |
|----|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. | 0645 | 1030 | Mysore-Bangalore Expr |
| 2. | 0810 | 1350 | Mysore Bangalore Passr. |
| 3. | 1150 | 1650 | -do- |
| 4. | 1625 | 2020 | Mysore-Hubli Expr. |
