

LEADERSHIP IN RURAL AREAS

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ABSTRACT

This is a Sociological account of the changing patterns of leadership in the villages of Bhimtal Block in Nainital district of Uttarakhand. This study has emerged out of field research carried out in the villages of Bhimtal Block. Though most of the primary data was collected at the chosen villages of the Block, many of the observations made in the course of the study relate to a wider whole. The relations with the wider whole can be verified by looking at the similarities with the neighboring villages. Rural communities are gradually getting themselves politicized and some newer nexus of local and regional leadership and power structure has emerged. This paper will look at the patterns of leadership in rural areas.

Keywords: *Leadership, Rural, Village, Panchayati Raj and Gram-sabha.*

INTRODUCTION

Since even today most of India comprises of rural India, therefore leadership in contemporary India cannot be understood without looking at the local self government and the Panchayati Raj. The institutionalization of Panchayati Raj systems since the 1990s that has added greater momentum to the decentralization process has also had deeper implications for the human rights situation in India.¹The local government ensures the distribution of powers beyond the centre and the states. The local government institutions are those which pertain mainly to regular elections, representation of weaker and hitherto excluded sections like schedule castes, scheduled tribes, women, devolution of powers and financial resources aimed at imparting certainty, continuity and strength to them.²

According to Max Weber, **Leadership**³ is often regarded as the important modifier of organizational behavior. It is regarded as primarily personal in character as being founded upon individual pre-eminence or accomplishment in a

particular field of behavior. Thus superior strength, superior tact, superior intelligence, superior knowledge, superior will power any or all of these may be the means to the attainment of leadership. While what "politics" means for us is to strive for a share of power or to influence the distribution of power, whether between states or between the groups of people contained within a state.

Local Self-Government has existed in India since ancient times. Vedas, Puranas, Smritis and books on statecrafts and religious texts have vivid description of this. In the past, the Panchayati Raj system was confined to solve social problems with the help of five senior members of village called 'Panchas'. When 'Swaraj' was declared Gandhiji said, 'as long as women of India do not take part in public life there can be no salvation for the country. I would have no use for the kind Swaraj to which such women have not made their full contribution. The dream of decentralization could never be fulfilled'. In this regard, Gandhian view prevailed and panchayats became the foundation of self- government.⁴

Panchayati Raj is a system of rural self-governance in India. In this institution, the local bodies are elected by the people and hold authority over the indigenous affairs. This system was constitutionalized in 1992 as a step to the decentralization of power in a democracy. There are 29 subjects listed in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, which elaborates this institution's objectives.

These include "agricultural extension, land development, rural electrification, education, primary health centres, women and child development, and others." The Panchayati Raj exists in all states except in Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Mizoram. The word Panchayat is derived from two words, "Pancha" means five, and "ayat" means the rule. Hence, it means a rule of five people.

The term of each Panchayat ends after five years, and the elections are held within six months after the council is dissolved. Every person over 18, irrespective of class, caste, and gender, has the right to vote. The nominees must be registered on the electoral rolls as voters.

Article 40 of the Indian constitution directs The State to organize village panchayats and endow them with powers. Part IX of the Indian Constitution states that the States and Union Territories with more than 2 million inhabitants will have three levels of Panchayati Raj institutions.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling is a process of selection of a limited number of items from a larger whole or universe of items. Hence, in Bhimtal Block, out of 60 gram panchayats, I have chosen ten percent of the total gram panchayats i.e, six gram panchayats. These 6 gram panchayats were chosen through simple random sampling by using lottery method. Chits of these 60 gram panchayats were made and 6 chits were selected through lottery method. These are the gram panchayats which got selected: 1) Beluakhan, 2) Bhalyuti, 3) Chopra, 4) Gethia, 5) Jyoli and 6) Rausil. Through my research, the leadership patterns

will be observed in the villages of these gram panchayats, keeping in line with objectives of the study mentioned above.

The Panchayati Raj system has three tiers; the Zila Panchayat being at the top, followed by it is the Block Samiti in the middle and at the bottom is the Gram Panchayat. I shall focus on the Gram Panchayat. The selected leaders have been chosen with the **Census method** along with the interview schedule.

Every Gram Panchayat has a Gram Pradhan, an Up Gram Pradhan and a few Ward members depending upon the strength or the population of the village. **Beluakhan** has a Gram Pradhan, an Up Gram Pradhan and 11 Ward members, **Bhalyuti** has a Gram Pradhan, an Up Gram Pradhan and a total of 7 Ward members, **Chopra** has a Gram Pradhan, Up Gram Pradhan and a total of 7 Ward members. **Gethia** has a Gram Pradhan, Up Gram Pradhan and a total of 9 Ward members, whereas **Jyoli** has a Gram Pradhan, Up Gram Pradhan and a total of 7 Ward members, **Rausil** has a Gram Pradhan, Up Gram Pradhan and a total of 7 Ward members. Therefore, a total of 60 leaders (13+9+9+11+9+9=60) will be taken from these 6 Gram Sabhas for research.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design that I will be using in my study will be **exploratory cum descriptive research design**.

I have used **interview schedule** and secondary data in my research. The primary data of this research is collected by interview schedule. An interview is a direct face-to-face technique to obtain reliable and valid measures in the form of verbal responses from one or more respondents. It is a conversation in which the roles of the interviewer and the respondent change continually.

In the interview method,⁵ heavy reliance is placed in the subject's verbal report about the stimuli or experiences to which he is exposed for knowledge of his behavior. However, the subject's report may or may not be taken at face-value as it

may be interpreted in the light of other's knowledge about him or in terms of some psychological theory.

Secondary data is also used in this research. Secondary data means data that is already available i.e., they refer to the data which has already been

collected and analyzed by someone else. When the researcher utilizes secondary data, then he/she has to look into various sources from where he can obtain them. In this case he is certainly not confronted with the problems that are usually associated with the collection of original data.

Table 1 : Sufficiency of the budget for developmental works in the village

Serial no.	Budget sufficient for the developmental works	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	5	08.33
2	No	41	68.33
3	Partially	11	18.34
4	Cannot say	3	05.00
Total		60	100.00

The table above shows tabulation of whether the budget is sufficient for the developmental works in their village. To this, 08.33 percent respondents said yes, 68.33 percent people said a no. 18.34

percent people responded with partially as their answer and 05.00 percent people went with cannot say as their response.

Table 2: Awareness of the budget allocation in the village?

Serial no.	Awareness of budget allocation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	34	56.66
2	No	26	43.34
Total		60	100.00

The table above shows tabulation of whether the villagers are aware of the budget allocation in their village. To this, 56.66 percent respondents said yes they were aware of the budget allocation in their

village for developmental works. Whereas, 43.34 percent people were not aware of the budget allocation in their village.

Table 3: Whether the family been a beneficiary of any work done by the panchayat

Serial no.	Beneficiary of panchayati work	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	57	95.00
2	No	3	03.00
Total		60	100.00

The table above shows tabulation of whether the respondent's family has been a beneficiary of any kind of work done by the panchayat. To this, 95.00

percent respondents said a yes. Whereas, 03.00 percent people gave a no as their answer.

Table 4: Whether the government schemes have led to the betterment of villages

Serial no.		Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	38	63.33
2	No	22	36.67
Total		60	100.00

The table above shows tabulation of whether the government schemes have led to the betterment of villages To this, 63.33 percent respondents said a

yes. Whereas, 36.67 percent people gave a no as their answer.

Table 5: Sector which has improved due to implementation of government schemes in the village

Serial no.	Improvement due to government schemes	Frequency	Percentage
1	Education	11	18.33
2	Employment	5	08.33
3	Women upliftment	35	58.34
4	All of the above	9	15.00
Total		60	100.00

The above table represents which sector has improved due to the implementation of government schemes in the village. To this, 18.33 percent of the people considered education sector has improved due to the implementation of government schemes in the village. Whereas, 08.33 percent people went

with employment as their answer , 58.34 percent people considered women upliftment as their response and 15.00 percent people considered all of the above has improved due to the implementation of government schemes in the village.

Table 6: Whether or not the village can function without the presence of Gram Panchayat

Serial no.	Functioning without Gram Panchayat	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	-	-
2	No	39	65.00
3	Partially	4	06.66
4	Cannot say	17	28.34
Total		60	100.00

The above table consists of tabulation of whether the village can function without the presence of Gram Panchayat To this, no respondents said yes. Whereas, 65.00 percent people said a no. On the

other hand, 06.66 percent people responded with partially as their answer and 28.34 percent went with cannot say as their response.

Table 7: Can women leaders of your village can make political decisions

Serial no.	Women making political decisions	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	14	23.33
2	No	5	08.33
3	Partially	22	36.67
4	Cannot say	19	31.67
Total		60	100.00

The table above shows tabulation of whether the women leaders of the village can make political decisions. To this, 23.33 percent respondents said

yes, 08.33 percent people said a no. 36.67 percent people responded with partially as their answer and 31.67 percent people went with cannot say as their response.

Table 8: Which among these has higher representation of women after the Panchayati Raj Act

Serial no.	Increased representation of women after the Panchayati Raj Act	Frequency	Percentage
1	Politics	38	63.33
2	Family decisions	4	06.66
3	Money related decisions	5	08.34
4	None of the above	-	-
5	All of the above	13	21.67
Total		60	100.00

The above table represents which among the following has higher representation of women after the Panchayati Raj Act To this, 63.33 percent of the people considered politics has higher representation of women after the Panchayati Raj Act. Whereas, 06.66 percent people went with family decisions as

their answer , 08.34 percent people considered money related decisions as their response. On the other hand, no one responded with none of the above as their response whereas 21.67 percent responded with 27.65 percent as their response.

Table 9: Who influences the decisions of women representatives

Serial no.	Decisions of women representatives influenced by	Frequency	Percentage
1	Villagers	4	06.66
2	Husband	42	70.00
3	Men of the family	6	10.00
4	Women	-	-
5	Herself	8	13.34
Total		60	100.00

The above table consists of tabulation of who influences the decisions of the women representatives. 06.66 percent people responded

with villagers, 70.00 percent responded with husband, 10.00 percent people responded with men of the family, no one responded with women while 13.34 percent responded with herself.

Table 10: Which among the following are women mostly associated with

Serial no.	Women are mostly associated with	Frequency	Percentage
1	NGOs	17	28.33
2	Domestic industry	27	45.00
3	Self-help groups	12	20.00
4	Political groups	4	06.67
Total		60	100.00

The above table consists of tabulation of which among the following groups/organizations are women mostly associated with. To this, 28.33 percent people responded with NGOs, 45.00 percent

people went with domestic industry. 20.00 percent people responded with self-help groups while 06.67 percent respondents responded with political groups.

Table 11: Do Panchayats have any sources of their income

Serial no.	Sources of income of the Panchayat	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	-	-
2	No	54	90.00
3	Cannot say	1	01.66
4	Don't know	5	08.34
Total			

The table above shows tabulation of whether the panchayats have any source of their income. To this, no respondents said yes, 90.00 percent people said a

no. 01.66 percent people responded with cannot say as their answer and 08.34 percent people went with cannot say as their response.

Table 12: Whether Gram Panchayat meetings are held regularly

Serial no.	Gram Panchayat meetings held regularly	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	44	73.33
2	No	-	-
3	Partially	14	23.33
4	Cannot say	2	03.34
Total		60	100.00

The table above shows tabulation of whether Gram Panchayat meetings are held regularly. To this, 73.33

percent respondents said yes, no respondents said a no.23.33 percent people responded with partially as

their answer and 03.34 percent people went with cannot say as their response.

Table 13: Were there any precautionary measures taken by the Gram Panchayats during Covid-19

Serial no.	Precautionary measures taken by the Gram Panchayats	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	53	88.33
2	No	-	-
3	Partially	7	11.67
4	Cannot say	-	-
Total		60	100.00

The above table represents whether any precautionary measures were taken by the Gram Panchayats during Covid-19. 88.33 percent of the people responded with a yes, no respondents responded with a no, 11.67 percent people responded as partially while no respondents responded with cannot say.

CONCLUSION

This study reflects upon rural leadership in contemporary times. It can be seen in this study that according to the respondents (village representatives) the budget allocated to them by the government for developmental works is not sufficient as 68.33 percent felt that it is insufficient. This budget is allocated to gram sabhas for developmental works. About 56.66 percent responded that people of their village are aware of the budget allocation whereas 43.34 percent felt that the people of their village are not aware of this allocation for various developmental works. It could be seen that families of village representatives who had been a beneficiary of the government schemes were 95 percent. Whereas 63.33 percent respondents felt that the government schemes have led to the betterment of villages. Out of the total respondents, 58.34 percent respondents felt that the government schemes have led to the women upliftment, 18.33 percent felt that education has improved, only 8.33 percent felt that employment has increased due to the government schemes. Whereas. 15 percent thought that all these spheres

such as education, employment and women upliftment have benefitted from the government schemes.

Surprisingly, none of the respondents felt that the village can function without the presence of the gram sabha. Only 23.33 percent of people felt that women leaders of their village can make political decisions on their own. About 36.67 percent people felt that women leaders of their village can partially take political decisions on their own. After the advent of the Panchayati Raj Act, women have higher representation in politics. Whereas, in spheres such as family decisions and money related decisions their say has increased. It can be clearly seen that political decisions of women representatives are majorly influenced by male members of the family especially that of the husband. Women are associated with various groups and organizations. About 28.33 percent are associated with NGOs, 45 percent are associated with domestic industry, 20 percent with self-help groups (SHGs) and 6.67 percent are associated with political groups as per the respondents.

Panchayats do not have their source of income according to the respondents. Out of all the respondents, 90 percent felt that there is no source of income for Panchayats whereas others either could not say anything or did not know about it. Each gram sabha must conduct gram panchayat meetings for discussing and providing a solution to the problems of the villagers. Out of the respondents, 73.33 percent said that these meetings

are regularly held by the gram panchayat. During the outbreak of Covid 19, a large number of people came back to their villages, hence a greater responsibility fell on the shoulders of the village representatives. Precautionary measures were required to be taken during this time. out of the total respondents, 88.33 percent respondents felt that precautionary measures were taken by the gram panchayats.

It is crucial to understand that the local government ensures the distribution of powers beyond the centre and the states. The local government institutions are those which pertain mainly to regular elections, representation of weaker and hitherto excluded sections like schedule castes, scheduled tribes, women, devolution of powers and financial resources aimed at imparting certainty, continuity and strength to them. Therefore, the Panchayati Raj enables the reach of leadership in rural areas of India.

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