

DALIT PARTICIPATION IN PANCHAYATI RAJ IN GUJARAT

A RESEARCH REPORT

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Preface

Panchayati Raj in Gujarat has been in existence now for a period of ten years. This is a good time to take stock of the situation and effectiveness of this very significant policy, which has the potential of empowerment of the marginalised communities of the state and of enabling them to participate actively in their own governance.

The Behavioural Science Centre has been in contact with the marginalised communities of Gujarat, especially the Dalits, since 1977. Our intervention in the field areas is fed by researching into issues emerging in our areas of work. Thus, the research that the organisation undertakes is primarily action research.

In our work with the marginalised communities we have realised that socio-economic mobilisation of these communities is not possible without their political mobilisation also. The Panchayati Raj Act has made it possible for people of the marginalised communities to become arbiters of their own fate and their future – if it is properly and adequately implemented.

It is as a result of our years of work in the field of development that we have realised the importance of people's movements and of advocacy for people's rights. The Panchayati Raj Act, in spite of its potential for empowerment, has not resulted in such a significant transformation in people's lifestyle as might be expected. It has been the experience of many development organisations that not all the rules under the Panchayati Raj Act are being adequately implemented. It is our concern as an organisation working for the empowerment of the Dalit community to address the areas of the Act, which have the potential to provide political power to Dalits. Therefore, this study is about the participation of Dalits in Panchayati Raj and the factors affecting it. The objective of this study is to uncover areas which require action, and we hope that this report will be useful to development agencies concerned Dalit empowerment in taking such action.

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A research study on Dalit participation in Panchayati Raj is not possible without the active participation of the people. At the outset therefore we would like to acknowledge the patience and interest of the Dalit Panchayat members of Banaskantha and Sabarkantha districts, who have spent time and effort in giving us information, views and comments on their situation, their needs and their opinion of the Panchayati Raj Act. This report is founded on their information, and we hope it reflects the effectiveness of the Panchayati Raj Act from the point of view of the marginalised.

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Table of Contents

Preface.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of contents.....	iii
List of tables.....	v
List of figures.....	v
Glossary of Terms.....	vi
Executive Summary.....	viii
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
Introduction and background – panchayati raj and the participation of the vulnerable.....	1
The second phase of the action-research: aims and methodology.....	2
Methodology.....	3
Structure of the report.....	4
Chapter 2 Analysis and organisation of data.....	5
Section 1 Profile of Sample.....	6
<i>a. A profile of the sample castewise & sexwise.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>b. Panchayat profile.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>c. Sarpanch profile.....</i>	<i>13</i>
Section 2 Participation of Dalits in Panchayat meetings.....	16
<i>a. Indicators of Dalit participation.....</i>	
<i>b. Types of issues discussed in Panchayat meetings - related to Dalits and related to entire village.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>c. Proportion of Dalit panchayat members and their participation in 18 meetings.....</i>	
<i>d. The relative number of Dalit related and village related issues in Panchayat.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>e. Does the presence of Dalit Sarpanch have an impact on participation of Dalit members in meetings?.....</i>	<i>22</i>

<i>f. Effective participation due to better education level of the Sarpanch?</i>	23
Section 3 Follow-up of Issues – Dalit-specific and Village-specific.....	27
<i>a. Meaning of 'follow-up'</i>	27
<i>b. Types of issues followed up</i>	28
<i>c. The way an issue is followed up</i>	30
<i>d. Caste composition of the Panchayat and its impact on follow up of issues</i>	31
Chapter 3 Internal dynamics of the Panchayat – data from case studies	35
Selection of villages.....	35
Case study: A village Panchayat of Sabarkantha.....	35
Case study: A village panchayat of Banaskantha.....	39
<i>Comparative aspects of the panchayats of Sila-Vani and Vadi villages</i>	43
<i>Comparison between the cases of Vani-Sila and Vadi Panchayats – emerging generalisations</i>	45
Appendix 1 : List of Sarpanches, villages, talukas, and districts.....	46
Appendix 2 : Systems and functioning of Panchayat.....	47
Appendix 3 : List of Issues Taken up in Panchayat Meetings.....	50
Appendix 4 : Socio-Economic and Political Characteristics of Selected Villages.....	51

Glossary of Terms

<i>Adivasi</i>	Indigenous or tribal person in India
<i>Aanaavaari</i>	A system for measuring proportion of crop production against a given standard
<i>Aanganwadi</i>	Nursery schools (0-5 years of children) plus immunization programmes for children and pregnant women established by government in rural areas
<i>Bharatiya Janta Party</i>	The Indian People's Party, one of the dominant political parties in India, having a pro-Hindu ideology
<i>Bhil</i>	A tribal community
<i>BPL</i>	Below Poverty Line; a list of people declared poor by a set of indicators prepared by the government; this group gets the benefit of special schemes as well as preference in social welfare schemes
<i>Chamars</i>	A sub-caste within Dalits; traditionally working with leather and carcasses of dead animals
<i>Chenva/Senva</i>	A sub-caste of Dalits; one which was lower in the hierarchy among Dalit sub-castes.
<i>Dalit</i>	Member of the Scheduled Caste; former 'untouchable'; literally means depressed groups
<i>Darbar</i>	A non-Dalit community belonging to the Kshatriya (warrior) section of the Hindu caste order
<i>District Panchayat</i>	Governing body at district level
<i>Gram panchayat</i>	Elected body of members for administration at the village level
<i>Gram sabha</i>	Meeting of all members of voting age at village level; it meets at least twice a year
<i>Gram sevak</i>	A government employee at village level
<i>Gramin bank</i>	Special banks established for rural credit
<i>Indira Avas Yojana; Sardar Avas Yojana</i>	Government scheme for building houses for poor in rural areas
<i>Luhar</i>	An artisan community; one of the OBC castes traditional blacksmiths
<i>Mahila Mahotsav</i>	A women's fair or festival
<i>Non-Dalit</i>	In this context, includes all other communities apart from Dalits, including members of scheduled tribe and other backward communities
<i>OBC</i>	Other Backward Community; member of a group of communities that are listed as 'socially or educationally backward' by the Government of India.

<i>Pranami</i>	A sub-sect of the Hindu religion, recently founded
<i>Panchal</i>	An artisan community; one of the OBC castes engaged traditionally in carpentry and similar occupations
<i>Prashikshak</i>	Local trainer-cum-animator, in charge of maintaining rapport with local people's representatives
<i>Rabari</i>	A traditionally cattle rearing community
<i>Rajputs</i>	A dominant caste belonging to Kshatriya (warrior) section of Hindu society; enjoy higher status as 'upper caste'
<i>Samajik Nyay Samiti</i>	The Social Justice Committee – committee for the purpose of looking after the interests of the weaker sections – it operates at village, taluka and district levels
<i>Samras</i>	A method of selection of local representative of people, which eliminates competition and the need for elections. A village that has selected its representatives in this way is given certain financial incentives.
Sarpanch	Elected head of people at village level
<i>ST</i>	Scheduled Tribe; member of tribal communities enlisted by Government of India
<i>Soni</i>	Traditional goldsmith community
Talati	Administrator at village level – government employee
Taluka	Administrative block – subsection of district
<i>Taluka Panchayat</i>	Governing body at taluka level
<i>Thakarda</i>	An OBC community
<i>Valmiki</i>	A Dalit community; considered lowest of all Dalit communities, traditionally scavengers
<i>Vankar</i>	A sub-caste within Dalits; traditionally weavers
<i>Yojana</i>	A government scheme for welfare and development of a family as well as for entire village or specific community

Executive Summary

This study is the second phase of action-research; based on a sample of 33 village panchayats from eight talukas of two districts: Palanpur, Vadagam, Vav and Tharad of Banaskantha and Idar, Bhiloda, Himmatnagar and Prantij in Sabarkantha, which are part of BSC's project area. The first phase focused on the level of awareness of non-postholder Dalits regarding Panchayati Raj, Dalit post holders at village, taluka and district levels regarding the Act and their own functioning and responsibility, and the experiences, achievements, and difficulties of Dalit post holders.

Aims and background of the study:

The aim of the study is to gain an insight into the factors responsible for participation of Dalits in the Panchayati Raj institutions in Gujarat, so as to take action for practical level/policy level changes required therein.

The main findings of the first phase were:

- ✦ Reservation is important for Dalits to take up posts of leadership since most of them have won from reserved seats. However, for Dalit women the major importance is of seats reserved for women.
- ✦ There is great support for Dalit Sarpanches from within the Dalit community in most of the villages.
- ✦ Dalit leaders are not fully aware of their potential and power due to their limited knowledge of the Panchayati Raj Act, lower social status, and uncooperative behaviour of the government officials at the taluka and district levels.
- ✦ Gram sabhas are held regularly in almost all villages but very few Dalits attend. Dalit leaders of the village also sometimes do not attend, because they feel that their needs are not fulfilled.

The second phase and the concept of Dalit participation:

The results of the first phase indicated both limitations of the Dalit Sarpanch as well as their potential as Dalit leaders. However there was need to look at not only the functioning of the Dalit Sarpanch but the entire Panchayat. Also there was a need to go into greater qualitative documentation of processes rather than a quantitative survey. Therefore in the second phase it was decided that a documentation of the processes in Panchayat decision making, along with a set of Panchayat profiles, would be used.

The aim of this second phase of the study is twofold:

- i. To derive a set of indicators of participation in governance;
- ii. To study the process of decision making in Panchayat meetings and to draw conclusions about the level of participation of Dalits in Panchayati Raj and the reasons in enabling and obstructing effective participation.

Dalit participation in this meeting is understood in two ways: the types and number of Dalit-related issues that are taken up for discussion in Panchayat meetings, as well as the way Dalit Panchayat members take stands on the issues and follow up these issues for the empowerment of the Dalit community.

Methodology:

The methodology in this phase was a mix of quantitative and qualitative, looking at the profile and processes within panchayats with the aim of correlating the two in the study. There were 4 types of documentation of processes:

- Profile of the panchayats
- Processes of decision making in the Panchayat meetings
- Issues arising in the village between Panchayat meetings and the method of tackling these issues.
- Studying cases of two villages closely to look at the time line of processes taking place; to understand the inter-caste and intra-caste dynamics as well as their impact on Dalit participation.

Sample:

Four villages were selected from each of the talukas, three with Dalit Sarpanch and one with a non-Dalit Sarpanch. It was assumed that Dalit participation would be higher where the number of Dalits was quite high. Therefore population of the village (1991 Census) was decided to be at least 1500 persons, with a Dalit population of 18% or more. This proportion was decided on the basis of Dalit population in Gujarat state, which is close to 14%, so that villages with Dalit population greater than average were selected.

The salient findings are as follows:

1. *Profile of sample in two districts*

- ***Total population and proportion of dalits in the village*** – according to the method of selecting the sample, nowhere the proportion of Dalits in the population is less than 18% of the total population. The maximum population of Dalits in a village among those selected is about 120 families. In a single village, there are more than 1 Dalit communities – Vankars and Chamars form the majority.
- ***Proportion of Dalits in Panchayat*** - The proportion of Dalit members in the village panchayats (including Sarpanch) of the selected villages ranges from 12% to 60%, which is indicative of a wide variation in Dalit representation in various panchayats. Dalits in Sabarkantha are in a much smaller minority in the panchayats and proportion of non-Dalits is higher (their proportion is much smaller) as compared to Banaskantha.
- ***Proportion of Dalits in Committees*** – There are maximum number of Dalits seen in the Social Justice Committee, because it is compulsory that the Social Justice Committee should be constituted entirely of Dalit members. Apart from this committee, Dalit presence is seen in Executive Committee, followed by Construction/ building Committee and Water Committee, where such committees have been constituted. Dalits do not have any representation at all in the health committees of the selected villages in either of the two districts.
- ***Finance related*** – The major source of funds of the panchayats remains the external funds and grants in aid. Internal generation of funds is negligible. However, within these internal sources of funds, there is not much difference in the sources of finance in the two districts. The major sources of funds are the electricity tax, house tax and water levy, which are not enough for the development of the village.

➤ **Attributes of Sarpanch**

This study relates the characteristics of the Sarpanch with the level of participation of Dalit members in the Panchayat. Therefore, we list here the profile of the Sarpanches in the sample villages.

- **Sex** – of the total sample, there are 25 male Sarpanches and 8 female Sarpanches. The proportion of male and female Sarpanches is about the same in Sabarkantha and Banaskantha. As against the 33% reservation of women in panchayats, the proportion of women Sarpanches is only 24%.
 - **Caste** – the sample has been deliberately selected with a larger proportion of Dalit than non-Dalit Sarpanches. There are in all 25 Dalit Sarpanches and 8 non-Dalit Sarpanches, one in each taluka (therefore 4 in each of the districts).
 - **Age** – The average age of the Sarpanches is around 48 years. There is not much difference between the average ages in Banaskantha and Sabarkantha.
 - **Education** - There is a vast difference between the level of education of Sarpanches in Banaskantha and Sabarkantha. Sarpanches in Sabarkantha are much more educated than in Banaskantha. There are 13 Sarpanches in Sabarkantha educated upto high school or more, while in Banaskantha there are only 5 Sarpanches with such level of education.
 - **Occupation** - The majority of non-Dalit Sarpanches consists of agriculturists, who have their own land. However, this is not the case for Dalit Sarpanches. There is a greater variety in the occupations of Dalit Sarpanches. They are equally divided between cultivation on their own land, housework and casual labour. We have observed that Dalits who have become Sarpanches hail from a variety of economic classes.
- **Reservation and its importance** - No Dalit Sarpanch from the sample villages has won his/ her present position from an open seat.
- **Dalit women Sarpanches are:**
- Housewives, and therefore lacking necessary exposure for being politically active (there are seven Dalit women in both the districts together, and five of them are housewives);
 - Elected to the post simply because the seat is reserved for Dalit women; therefore simply used for other men (Dalit and/or non-Dalit) to come to power.
 - It appears that women in the position of Sarpanch are at a double disadvantage, and their participation in Panchayat processes may be a difficult achievement.

2. **Types of issues taken up in gram panchayats**

- It appears that Dalits across villages and districts face similar issues, and also that issues related to the entire village are generally similar in all villages and both the districts.
- Three-fourths of the issues are related to the entire village and only one-fourth is specifically related to Dalits. In general, we can say that Dalit related issues raised are proportional to the Dalit population.
- The variety of issues related to the village in general is much more than that of Dalit related issues. There are a total of 22 Dalit related issues and 45 village related issues.

3. *Issues and their impact on Dalit community*

- Issues have been divided into transformative and non-transformative according to their impact on the Dalit community and those issues that have the potential to create a long-term impact on the level of living of the Dalit community of the village have been defined as transformative. The others (those that have no impact or those that have individual impact) are considered to be non-transformative.
- The classification of these issues shows that most of them are not likely to be of a transformative nature for Dalits.
- **On the other hand, most of the issues that are related to the Dalit community specifically are more of a transformative than of a non-transformative nature. They relate to infrastructural facilities for Dalits, water supply, as well as a number of controversial issues like untouchability, etc. However, Dalits are also influenced by issues that relate to the entire village. Examples of such issues are - BPL list/ BPL benefits, Ration cards/ fair price shop, deepening of village pond etc. It means that panchayats focus mainly on issues that do have a long-term impact on the empowerment of the Dalit community.**

4. *Dalit participation*

- Participation of Dalits in any issues, whether they are Dalit related, or all-village related, is higher in panchayats with a higher proportion of Dalits. **Dalit participation is directly related to the proportion of Dalits in the Panchayat.**
- Apart from the proportion of Dalits in the panchayat, **Dalit participation is not dependent on any characteristics of the Panchayat members, such as age, education, etc.** We may attribute it to village-specific dynamics or personal characteristics of Panchayat members/ Sarpanch. This is borne out by the two cases, where we can see that the relations between the various communities and the political dynamics operating between the various castes in the village have a strong bearing on how Dalit issues are dealt with.
- Specifically **Dalit related issues are taken up only when there is a relatively high proportion of Dalits in the Panchayat.** When there are more Dalits in a Panchayat, they feel more comfortable in taking up Dalit-related issues. Therefore, if we have to increase the number of Dalit related issues taken up at the Gram Panchayat level, higher representation of Dalits is a must.
- Secondly, **Dalit related issues are taken up in larger number when the Sarpanch is a non-Dalit rather than when the Sarpanch is a Dalit.** When the Sarpanch is Dalit, other Dalit members are not so active. This may indicate either more trust on the Dalit Sarpanch, or a desire not to make things difficult for their own Sarpanch by raising tricky issues.
- Thirdly, when the Sarpanch is a Dalit, more **Dalit related issues are raised** by the Dalit members when the Sarpanch is educated rather than when he/she is not educated. **Thus educated Dalits can act as a source of motivation to take up Dalit-related issues.**
- **Non-Dalits do not participate in Dalit related issues in general.** Dalit issues are generally related to land and/ or government schemes. Land specifically allocated to Dalits is reduced from the possible land available to other communities, so non-Dalits are opposed to this. Grants allocated specifically to Dalits means smaller amount of funds available to other communities. This may be a reflection on why non-Dalits generally participate less in Dalit related issues.

5. *Follow up of issues*

- There are many cases when issues are simply mentioned once and then allowed to lapse. Not even resolutions passed. This may reflect internal controversy between the Panchayat.
- In most of the non-transformative issues, only resolutions have been passed in the Panchayat (in seven cases) but only in 4 cases, the relevant authorities have been approached. But in only 2 cases, the issue has come for repeated discussion. This means that the issues are kept alive in very few cases.
- In villages with Dalit Sarpanch, most of the transformative issues are followed up quite well. Most clearly, in 13 out of the 32 transformative issues (40%), the Sarpanch and/ or other Panchayat members have approached the relevant authorities for the purpose of resolving the issue. In the case of villages with non-Dalit Sarpanch, of the 12 transformative issues taken up, 4 (33%) are followed up by approaching the authorities. This proportion is slightly smaller than that in the villages with Dalit Sarpanch.
- Though there is some difference in the way Dalit and non-Dalit Sarpanches deal with issues, the difference is not a major one.

6. *Dalit participation and village-specific characteristics – findings from cases*

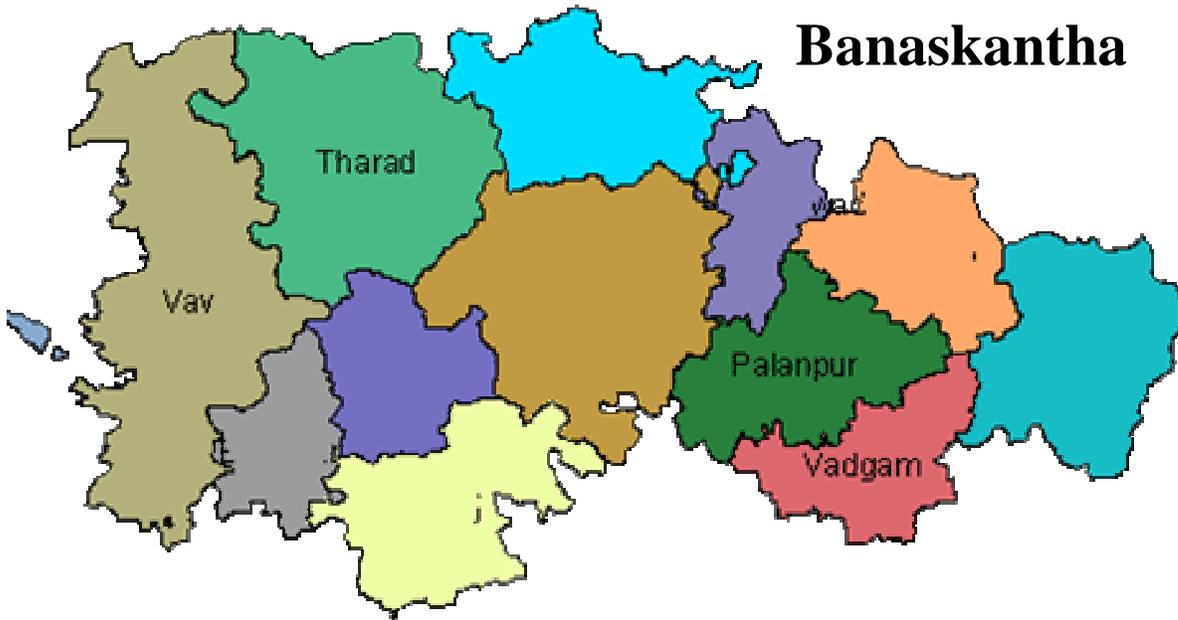
- Traditional stereotypes of ‘Dalit Sarpanch’ and ‘woman Sarpanch’ are not completely applicable: Dalit Sarpanches – men and women – have shown the capacity for handling opposition and obstacles, and have gained the support of Dalits and worked for Dalit empowerment.
- The importance of village dynamics in Dalit participation is extremely high, as is borne out from the cases studied in the two districts. Internal relations and factions among the Dalits, Dalit-non-Dalit relations, and political alliances, all play a crucial role in determining how much Dalit Sarpanches and Panchayat members can achieve for the empowerment of Dalits.
- Dalit unity is an important factor in determining what the Dalit Sarpanch can achieve. The greater the number of Dalit communities and factions, the lower the support to a single efficient Dalit Sarpanch, and the greater the chance of non-Dalit communities making use of the factions to achieve their own interests.
- The level of awareness/exposure/ education as well as the political-economic position of the Sarpanch is also a crucial factor in determining her/his effectiveness.
- The attitude of the Talati, as well as the Sarpanch’s own knowledge of the duties and powers of the Talati, are crucial factors in the effectiveness of the Sarpanch, and ultimately empowerment of Dalits through Panchayati Raj.

7. **Differences between Banaskantha and Sabarkantha at a glance**

Characteristic	Sabarkantha	Banaskantha
<i>Proportion of Dalits and non-Dalits</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proportion of Dalits in the panchayats ranges between 12.5% and 37.5%. ▪ Non-Dalit members in all the villages of the sample together are 2.7 times the number of Dalit members. ▪ Sabarkantha panchayats have a relatively small representation of Dalits (27%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proportion of Dalit members in some of the selected panchayats is as high as 50-60%. ▪ Non-Dalit members are 1.7 times as many as Dalit members. ▪ Somewhat high representation of Dalits (37%).

Dalit membership in committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major representation in Social Justice Committee and water committee. There are no Dalit members in the education committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major representation in Social Justice Committee and water committee. Very negligible proportion in other committees.
Attributes of Sarpanch: Age:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relatively larger proportion of young Sarpanches. The proportion of Sarpanches less than 40 years of age is around 35%. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About a fourth (25%) of Sarpanches are under 40 years of age.
Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only 5% Sarpanches are illiterate. The majority (46%) of the have primary or high school level education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than a third of the Sarpanches are illiterate.
Characteristic	Sabarkantha	Banaskantha
Women Sarpanches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are 3 Dalit and 1 non-Dalit woman Sarpanches. None of the 3 Dalit women has given 'housework' as their occupation; this may indicate slightly more exposure to the outside world. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are 4 women Sarpanches and all of them are Dalits. All 4 are occupied in housework. This may indicate that they have no exposure to the outside world and to the political scene.
Education of Dalit and non-Dalit Sarpanches:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dalit Sarpanches in Sabarkantha are more educated than non-Dalit Sarpanches. Dalit Sarpanches are on an average educated upto secondary school level (more than 10 years). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-Dalit Sarpanches are more educated than Dalit Sarpanches. Dalit Sarpanches have in general reached only primary level of education (less than seven years).
Types of issues taken up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tendency to follow up an issue as far as possible to its resolution. Panchayats deal more with issues that have the potential of influencing the life and empowerment of the Dalit community. In villages with Dalit and non-Dalit Sarpanches, most transformative issues are followed up well and most non-transformative issues are left without being followed up. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of issues taken up in panchayats much larger than Sabarkantha. Most of the issues taken up are welfare oriented. Pay more attention to issues that provide temporary help or (in case of cemetery land) deal with the status of Dalits in the village rather than with their living standards. Majority of issues taken up are related to the entire village rather than to the Dalit community. Issues are brought out but rarely resolved or followed up. This applies to transformative and non-transformative issues and to panchayats with Dalit and non-Dalit Sarpanches equally.
Factors determining Dalit participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No clear relation between the education of the Sarpanch and the number of issues taken up. Political contacts that make it possible for an educated Sarpanch to take up Dalit issues are seen less in the sample villages. Follow up of issues in Sabarkantha depends on the personal attributes of the Sarpanch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the Sarpanch is a Dalit, and he/she is educated, Dalit members take up more Dalit-related issues for discussion. There are some villages in Banaskantha where Dalits have good political connections. This may perhaps be the reason for educated Dalits to be a source of leadership in Banaskantha villages.

Banaskantha



Sabarkantha



Appendix 4

Socio-Economic and Political Characteristics of Selected Villages

Village	Major caste (families)	Major Dalit caste (families)	Economic domination	Political contacts	Prominence in education	Institutional contacts	Caste of Sarpanch	Caste of Talati	Other relational aspects
VADGAM									
Dalvana	Rajput (291)	Vankar (106)	Patels (land); 40 acres with Ganesh Patel	Hemraj Rana – BJP leader; Pravin Hadiyol – taluka delegate – Congress contacts (both Rajputs)	Vankar/Harijan	Hemraj Rana – karmachari (dealer?) in wholesale market in Vadgam	Vankar	Brahmin	
Pilucha	Vankar (422) > Patel (336)	Vankar (422)	Land – Sarpanch (22 acres) SI units with Luhar; Dalit – 1 contractor, 4 shops, 2 tractors	Ex-MLA (Dalit) has relations with Collector, district delegate, MLA	Vankar		Patel	Chaudhri Patel	Chamanlal Modi ex-Sarpanch (holding term for 20 years) is very rich & has political connection
Sisrana	Thakarda (290) Patel (250)	Chamar (190); Turi (197)	Patels (mainly land) Ganesh Narsang 53 acres; contractor – Shyamji	Sarpanch relations with taluka chairperson and SJC chairman – with district chairman, MLA	Patels	SJC chairman is shareholder & member of milk cooperative	Chamar	Rajput	Narsang Patel has relations with CM
Juni Sendhani	Muslim (660)	Vankar (400)	Land owners Muslims – one family	Sarpanch's husband has good relations with MP	Vankar	None	Pandya – Srimali	Tribal – from Danta	NA
THARAD									
Nagla	Patel (300)	Chamar (20)	Patel – Nagji Rupa (land); tractors, jeeps, shops, govt. jobs	Patel Jivraj – relations with MP, politician, father was taluka chairman for 20 years	Patels	None	Patel	Patel from Dudhva	NA

Khoda	Patel (300)	Chamar (60)	Patel and Muslims – I Muslim family Faiz Mohammad (land); Muslims are shop owners, Patels max. tractors,	Patel Shana has relation with ex-MLA	Patel	Milk cooperative – Okha Dhira Patel	Chamar	Patel from Bstelia, Tharad	Dominant families are Patel Shana; Faiz Mohammad
Village	Major caste (families)	Major Dalit caste (families)	Economic domination	Political contacts	Prominence in education	Institutional contacts	Caste of Sarpanch	Caste of Talati	Other relational aspects
Pavdasan	Rabari (200)	Chamar (75)	Rabaris (landed community) Vankar Nagji has max. land in 1 family, shops with Jains	Desai Salubhai (Rabari) relations with MP	Rabari	Milk cooperative is managed by desai Keshav Salu	Chamar		Desai Keshav Salu and Vankar Nagji have max control
Dudhva	Chamar (70) > Thakor & rajput (40 each)	Chamar (70)	Patels (land) – 1 family Patel Nagjibhai; tractors, Centring machine with Suthars	Rajput Rata - relations with MLA	Patel and Brashmin	Milk cooperative managed by Ravji Patel	Chamar (woman)	Kapadi (Vania) from Vajegadhj, Tharad	NA
VAV									
Vavdi	Brahmins (150)	Chamar (90)	Brahmins – 1 rajput – Ruda Jesang; shops with Patels and Jains, 1 rajput has factory, 1 Dalit (Sarpanch) is a contractor	Rajput Rata has contacts with MLA who is also rajput. Other Brahmin and Patels have political connections.	Chamars and Brahmins	Patel is chairman and rajput is secy of milk coop.	Chamar	Muslim from Palanpur	Dominatio n by 5 rajput families. One Rajaji Rajput has good relations with Dalits.
Madka	Patel (450)	Chamar (400)	Patels – land, followed by rajputs and Dalits. 1 rajput Okha Ruda has max.	MLA contact – Okha Ruda and Ganesh Gadhvi (ex-taluka delegate); 1 Rajput has relation with MP.	Patels	Milk coop. managed by Patels, credit coop. by rajputs and school by Vanias.	Chamar	Dalit (Solanki)	

Tadav	Patel (300)	Chamar (200)	Patel – 2 families Patel Rupshi and Rajput Kala; Rajput, Patel also tractors, Jains and Valand have shops;	Contacts with MLA – 1 Rajput and 1 Brahmin; Rupshi Patel/ Nagji Patel contact with MP	Patels followed by Dalits	Nagji Patel is chairman of milk cooperative, Karsan Patel is secretary, Rupshi Patel is secretary in credit coop. & Rajput Raja is chairman.	Patel	Brahmin	One Sodha Rajput was ex-taluka delegate.
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Village	Major caste (families)	Major Dalit caste (families)	Economic domination	Political contacts	Prominence in education	Institutional contacts	Caste of Sarpanch	Caste of Talati	Other relational aspects
PALANPUR									
Lalavada	Patel (500)	Vankar (250)	Patels – land, 1 family Dalji Patel has over 25 acres. But the only tractor belongs to Dalit (?). Patels have service in Banas dairy	Dy. Sarpanch and ex-Sarpanch are BJP workers and have contacts with MLA and	Patels	Patels have domination in Banas dairy. Patels have relation with Bdairy chairman of nearby village	Vankar	NA	NA
Dhanadha	Muslims (2000)	Chamar (600)	Patel and Chamars – same amount of land. 1 family (Patel) Chaudhari Manji has 15 acres. Dalits have no other eco. resources	1 Dalit woman taluka delegate has contacts with Danta MLA. Bhikhabhai Patel is PSI in nearby village and has contacts with MLA	Vankar, Muslim, Patel, chamar and Srimali	Milk coop managed by Patel and Muslim.	Vankar	NA	NA
Karjoda	Patels (250)	Valmiki (210)	Patel – land, 1 family Suraj Patel has max. Dalits have no other eco. resources	Dalit Sarpanch has connections with MP and MLA & uses these to get devt. work done	Patels	Patel chairman in milk coop	Vankar	NA	NA

Vedancha	Leuva Patel (1000)	Chamar (200)	Leuva Patels have max sp. 1 family Amrat Patel 25 acres. No other resources with Dalits	Taluka delegates have been Patels. Amrat Patel was 1995 delegate. Present Sarpanch has contact with MLA. Deputy Sarpanch (Baraiya) is a dominant person	Patels	He is chairman of educational trust and president of another high school. Patel chairman of service coop	Chamar	brahmin	NA
HIMMATNAGAR									
Katvad	Muslims (150)	Chamar, Bhangi (40 each)	Patels and Muslims – 1 family each; Muslims have shops, 1 rajput and 1 panchal from outside the village have factories	Contacts with MLA – Muslim, and Patel 1 person each. 1 Makwana also.	Patels	Patels manage milk coop.	Vankar (?)	Patel	NA
Village	Major caste (families)	Major Dalit caste (families)	Economic domination	Political contacts	Prominence in education	Institutional contacts	Caste of Sarpanch	Caste of Talati	Other relational aspects
Pedhmala	Darbars, Brahmins (150 each)	Vankars (50)	Land – Brahmin, Darbars – 1 Darbar family	Sarpanch (Dalit) & Darbars have connection with MLA because he belongs to nearby village	Dalits, Brahmins, Darbars	A suthar is chairman and a Darbar is secy of milk coop.	Vankar (?)	Prajapati from Himmat nagar	The Sarpanch is Dalit ex-teacher and is accepted leader in the village.
Agiyol	Vankar (60) > Vania and Brahmin (50 each)	Vankar (60)	Brahmins – land esp. Naranbhai ; shops with Vania, Brahmin, Prajapati, Patel and Mansuri	Dalits have good contacts politically	Brahmins, Dalits	NA	Vankar	Darbar (?)	NA
Dhundhor	Darbar (300)	Chamar (40)	Darbars, Vania, Brahmins, Prajapati – 1 Darbar family Parmar Parbatji	Darbars relation with MLA	Pandya, Prajapati	Patel Keshabhai and Darbar Lalsingh chairman and secy. of milk coop.	Patel	Patel from Himmat nagar	
PRANTIJ/ TALOD									

Hadmatiya	Thakarda (400)	Chamar (300)	Patels – land, Patels and Muslims have shops, other business also	Patel and Thakarda	NA	Patel woman is chairperson , Rabari secy	Chamar	Chuhan (Rajput?)	NA
Ujedia	Darbar (Thakarda) (300)	Chamar (50)	1 Darbar person Navalsingh Thakor has over 50 vinghas; high disparity among Darbars, Thakardas are large land owners; 1 Dalit is contractor	Navalsingh Thakor has connections politically with MLA and Taluka president. Congress supporter	Generally, very low educ. Among Dalits extremely low	Rajput control milk coop and service coop	Chamar	Pandya (Dalit) from Prantij	Navalsingh Jhala is involved in resolving village disputes and lends money also
Pogalu	Thakarda (1400)	Vankar (250)	Patels and thakardas – land, shops and business, Dalits in labour	1 Patel family Gopal Bhema has political connections. Thakardas also	Patels, Brahmins and Dalits	Patels manage milk coop. also have influence over service coop	Vankar	Rajput from Himmatnagar	NA

Village	Major caste (families)	Major Dalit caste (families)	Economic domination	Political contacts	Prominence in education	Institutional contacts	Caste of Sarpanch	Caste of Talati	Other relational aspects
Fatepur	Thakarda (900)	Vankar (300)	Patels – land; shops etc. with Savarnas	One Baraiya Raman has relations with politicians. Brahmins, Patels and Baraiya have political connections	NA	Patel is chairman, Goswami is secy.	Baraiya	Vankar	NA
TALUKA IDAR (VADALI)									
Umedpura	Patel (600)	Chamar and Chenva (200 each)	Patels – maximum land, 3 families of Patels. Patels and Vanias own shops. No Dalits have economic assets	Patels Anilbhai and Pethabhai have maximum contacts with MLA.	Patels have maximum education. Dalits minimum.	Patel is chairman of milk coop, secretary is Thakarda	Dalit (Vankar)	Rajput from Idar	

Bhadresar	Thakarda (Makwana) 500	Vankar (500)	Darbars/ Patels have maximum land. 2 families of Darbars and 1 of Patel. Dalits have minimum land. Vantias, Muslims and Patels have shops.	2 Patels – Rameshbhai and Behcharbhai have political connections.	Patels have maximum education. Dalits have some education, but not much.	Chairman and secretary of milk coop are Patels.	Dalit (Vankar)	Vankar from Idar	A few families of Dalits also are influential in the village.
Revas	Patel (700)	Chenva (700)	Patel maximum lands. 3 families have 35 acres of land. Patels have bought land from other communities. artisans have some small factories.	Patels Khmeabhai and Kodarbhai have political contacts. Dalit Devjibhai also has political contacts, that he uses for his own means.	Dalits and Patels have maximum education.	Chairman of milk cooperative is Patel, secretary is Rabari.	Patel	Muslim (Mansuri) from Bhuvvel, Idar	The non-Dalits are majority but Dalits have dominant position in this village.
BHILODA									
Lilccha	Prajapati, Thakarda (120 each)	Parmar (100)	3 families – land; Prajapatis are eco. well off	Muslims, Dalits and prajapatis are active. 1 Muslim has contact with Congress MLA	Dalits, Adivasis	Dalits and Adivasis control milk coop. and agri. coop.	Dalit (?)	Adivasi (?)	

Village	Major caste (families)	Major Dalit caste (families)	Economic domination	Political contacts	Prominence in education	Institutional contacts	Caste of Sarpanch	Caste of Talati	Other relational aspects
Rajendranagar	Patel (275)	Vankar (55)	Land, shops – Patels	Kumpavat Himmatsingh has contact with MLA and is ex-Sarpanch. He, with Patels and Brahmins is politically active.	Patels, Dalits, Rajputs	Chairman, secy. milk coop are Patels	Patel	Patel of Modasa	NA

Dholvani	Patel (470)	Chenva (350)	Patels and Brahmins – maximum land. Savjibhai Patel and Shamlabhai Patel have maximum. Most Patels have jobs, shops and business within and outside village. one Barhmin and one Patle are also contractors.	Patel, Panchal and Brahmin are leaders in politics. Savjibhai Patle was ex-Sarpanch and has good political connections.	Patels head the milk cooperative – good contact of Savjibhai Patel. A Vania from outside the village is trustee of the school.	Dalit (Vankar) woman	Adivasi (Parmar)	One influential Brahmin is related to ex-MLA.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

1. Introduction and background – panchayati raj and the participation of the vulnerable

Panchayati Raj was initiated in India in 1957, based on the recommendations of Balvantrai Mehta committee. With the realisation that the functioning of the system was not very successful, the Constitution (73rd amendment) was introduced in 1991, which aimed at enabling people to participate in their own governance, and thus to achieve the real meaning of democracy.

The Panchayati Raj Act of 1993 aimed at participation of poor and vulnerable in Indian society, through which they would have a say in defining their own development. De Souza (1999), describes aptly the expectations put on decentralization as expressed by a large number of thinkers and organizations in India: (1) more accessible government; (2) speedier resolution of local disputes; (3) more legitimate government; (4) more accountable and transparent government; (5) a training ground for political leadership; (6) more competition in political leadership; (7) empowerment of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; (8) better service delivery; and (9) a more balanced and sustainable development of the village.¹

The Behavioural Science Centre (BSC), Ahmedabad, an NGO working closely with the poor and marginalised communities in Gujarat, initiated a project aimed at strengthening the participation of Dalits in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The project's activities consist of (a) interventions in 11 talukas of 4 districts in Gujarat and (b) action research to support the interventions.

As part of the action-research, BSC chose the areas where it has been working with Dalits in Gujarat, namely Banaskantha, Sabarkantha, Kheda and Ahmedabad districts. For sampling BSC focused on smaller units – villages and taluka – where the research based activities could be carried to strengthen the participation of Dalits. They are – Khambhat taluka of Kheda district, Dhandhuka taluka of Ahmedabad district, Idar, Prantij, Bhiloda and Himatnagar taluka of Sabarkantha district and Vadgam, Palanpur, Vav, Tharad and Dhanera taluka of Banaskantha district. The intervention process was done through community-based organisations (CBOs) of the Dalits of the areas. Within the CBOs, the local *prashikshaks* (trainers) were responsible for establishing rapport and identifying issues related to Panchayati Raj for Dalits.

The research was carried out in two parts. The first phase of action-research (September 2001 to September 2002) covered in all 114 villages of 11 taluka in 4 districts. The group of *prashikshaks* of CBOs were the investigators, and were given training for data collection.

The first phase focused on three main issues –

- (i) The level of awareness of non-postholder Dalits regarding Panchayati Raj,

¹ *Overview Of Rural Decentralisation In India*, volume 1, World Bank

- (ii) The level of awareness and knowledge of Dalit post holders at all three levels – village, taluka and district – regarding the Act and their own functioning and responsibility, and
- (iii) The experiences, achievements, and difficulties of Dalit post holders.

The main findings of the first phase were:

- ✘ Reservation has proved to be an important factor for Dalits to take up posts of leadership since most of them have won from reserved seats. However, for Dalit women the major importance is of seats reserved for women and not seats reserved for Dalits. Women do not benefit by the existence of seats reserved for Dalits: only seats reserved for women make it possible for them to contest the elections.
- ✘ There is great support for Dalit Sarpanches from within the Dalit community. Most Dalits have great confidence in their leaders.
- ✘ Dalit leaders (post-holders/ Sarpanches) are not fully aware of their potential and power as Sarpanches. This happens due to their limited knowledge as well as due to their lower social status, and therefore they do not use their potential fully.
- ✘ The contribution that these leaders can make in terms of decision making, discussion of issues in the gram sabha and making government schemes available to people is severely limited.
- ✘ One of the reasons for this is their ignorance of rules related to Panchayati Raj, and government schemes; a situation created by the uncooperative behaviour of the government officials and dominant caste members within the panchayat.
- ✘ In addition to this, many Dalit panchayat members find that their ideas are not valued or taken seriously and therefore refrain from expressing their opinions.
- ✘ Gram sabhas are held regularly in almost all villages but very few Dalits attend these. Dalit leaders (including Sarpanches) of the village also sometimes do not attend.

The first phase gave an overview of the situation of each of these types of post holders (Sarpanches, members of Social Justice Committees and Panchayat members). However, a need was felt to study the processes that happen at the level of Gram Panchayat as a unit, so as to enable us to understand the effective participation of Dalits in the Panchayat body. We examine the processes in the second phase.

This report discusses the findings of the second phase of action-research on Dalit participation in Panchayati Raj in Gujarat. It incorporates the findings of the survey and the case studies of villages that we pursued as part of the study. We have analysed the village dynamics and its impact on the effectiveness of the Dalit functionaries, that is, Dalit Sarpanch and Dalit members of Gram Panchayat (mentioned as ‘Panchayat’ henceforth).

The second phase of the action-research: aims and methodology

The second phase of the research was started in November 2002.

The **aim of this second phase study** is twofold:

- i. To derive a set of indicators measuring participation in gram panchayats;
- ii. To study the process of decision making in Panchayat meetings and to draw conclusions about the level of participation of Dalits in Panchayati Raj and the reasons in enabling and obstructing effective participation.

Since the aim of the study is to analyse the participation of Dalits in Panchayati Raj institutions, especially at the level of Gram Panchayat, we decided to conduct an in-depth study with a small sample.

Methodology

Selection of villages

Our assumption was that if the proportion of Dalit population in the village is relatively high and if the Sarpanch is a Dalit, this situation would be the most favourable for Dalit participation. We also felt that the absolute number of Dalit families in the village would also affect the probability that Dalits would be able to participate in Panchayat activities. Therefore, we decided to select villages with these three attributes:

- ✗ The present Sarpanch should be a Dalit.
- ✗ The population of the village should be over 1500 persons as per the Census of 1991.
- ✗ The proportion of Dalits in the population should be 18% or more.

Our understanding was that the presence of these three factors would enable the Dalit community to be in the best bargaining position and would be favourable to enhancing their participation in Panchayat affairs. It would be worthwhile to study the limits of participation of Dalits when all these three factors are in their favour.

We then decided to select three villages from each taluka (part of BSC's intervention / project area) with all the three attributes. Later, we felt that in light of 'participation in Dalits', a comparison between a village with a Dalit Sarpanch and a village with non-Dalit Sarpanch was important, because it would enable us to understand the impact of Dalit leadership on the types of issues dealt with in the Panchayat, and the way they were followed up.

Thus, in addition to the initial three villages, one more village was selected in each taluka where the Sarpanch was a non-Dalit. In all, therefore, we selected four villages from each taluka, giving us a total of 44 villages (see Appendix 2 for details).

Methods and Instruments: Process Documentation and Case Studies

About Survey – three schedules

We aimed to study the processes of decision-making in the Panchayat, and for this purpose, we decided to document the processes occurring in the selected gram panchayats. The process data was collected with the help of three different schedules.

- (i) A one-time profile of the village Panchayat.
This includes the names and details of the members, the various committees, the infrastructural facilities in the Panchayat, regularity of the Talati, financial control of the Sarpanch as well as its sources of income.
- (ii) The second schedule captures the process of decision-making in the village Panchayat. This schedule captured the proposed and actual agenda of each village Panchayat meeting, the level of participation of village Panchayat members in taking different decisions and its financial implications.
- (iii) The third schedule collects data on how the issues in the village Panchayat are followed up, and was filled every fortnight. The investigators used to visit the village every fortnight and meet the Sarpanch, chairperson of Samajik Nyay Samiti (SNS) and a Dalit member of village Panchayat to gather this information. This schedule focused on the

follow up of the resolutions passed at the Panchayat meeting, as well as other issues related to the Panchayat that might occur outside of the meetings.

Based on these schedules, the process data has been analysed pertaining to two areas of study:

- ✦ The profile of the Panchayat, (*not process related information*) and
- ✦ Participation in decision-making and follow up of issues (process data).

The study finally could cover 32 villages of 8 taluka instead of the originally planned 44 villages in 11 talukas. This was mainly due to functional constraints of the project. Of the total 11 talukas, there were 3 talukas where we had to discontinue collection of data, Dhanera of Banaskantha district, Khambhat of Kheda and Dhandhuka of Ahmedabad district. This was because there was a lack of field staff in Dhanera and it was not possible to collect data from there, and in Khambhat and Dhandhuka, Panchayat elections were taking up most of the time of the investigators, who found it difficult to give adequate attention to collection of qualitative data for the study.

About case studies

We realised that a number of external factors do act on the level of participation of the members of village Panchayat and it is important to capture internal and external dynamics affecting 'participation'. We thought of preparing a case study of two villages, each from Sabarkantha and Banaskantha district, as the other two talukas of two districts were dropped due to the functional constraints mentioned above.

The case study of the village deals with the following areas:

- ✦ The profile of the village and infrastructural facilities in it;
- ✦ The profile of the present Panchayat and its members;
- ✦ The various issues taken up and solved by the Panchayat and factors responsible for that;
- ✦ Issues that have remained unresolved and factors responsible for that;
- ✦ Dynamics within the Panchayat and the role of other dominant non-Panchayat members, and their impact on Panchayat's decision making.

Data collection

The data has been collected between November 2002 and March 2003. A one-day training was organised for the investigators in October 2002, before the data collection began. Subsequently ongoing input was given to the investigators for maintaining the quality of the data collection.

In the process of data collection, we made a series of initial (pilot) visits to some of the selected villages to get an initial understanding about how the gram panchayats functioned. This provided a background for framing the schedules and training the investigators.

Structure of the report

This chapter explains the background and process that went into this study. In the following chapters, we discuss the various issues related to functioning of panchayats, the nature and scope for Dalit participation.

The second chapter is divided into three sections. The first section details the profile of the panchayats and its functionaries. The second section deals with the various issues related to

Dalit participation that emerge therefrom. The third section classifies issues emerging at village level into various categories according to their impact on development, and analyses the extent and pattern of Dalit participation in each of these categories.

The third chapter uses the case study method in two villages – one of Banaskantha and one of Sabarkantha – to document and understand the processes of decision making, as well as Dalit participation in this process.

Chapter 2

Analysis and Organisation of Data

The primary data for this study has been collected from 33 villages of two districts (17 of Sabarkantha and 16 of Banaskantha) with the help of the one-time information obtained about the village Panchayat, in order to understand participation of Dalits in the Panchayat.

The concept of ‘participation of Dalits’ here explores various contours, such as, effective functioning, more result oriented performance, etc. In this context, one of the concerns is to explore Dalit Sarpanch’s capabilities to perform better – whether the caste, sex, age, education, occupation contribute to his/her performance or not. Another concern is to understand dynamics of Panchayat, whether higher number of Dalit members or association/relation with other non-Dalit members is a contributing factor to participation of Dalits.

In order to understand and describe participation of Dalits, we have explored the avenues provided to Dalits for their betterment and empowerment under the Panchayati Raj Act, and actual participation of Dalits in the Panchayat, based on the present study. The Panchayati Raj Act specifies certain rules and regulations regarding the functioning of the panchayats (like the creation of the Social Action Committee in the Panchayat) to enable participation of Dalits. It is against these provisions that the participation of Dalits has to be compared.

With this analysis of primary data, the chapter is divided into 3 sections.

The first section is on sample profile:

- a. A brief profile of the sample – Gram Panchayat members, Sarpanch – castewise & sexwise;
- b. Panchayat profile – separate committees formed, sources of finance and financial control of the Sarpanch, presence and availability of Talati; and
- c. Attributes of the Sarpanch (sex, caste, age, education, occupation and whether on reserved or non-reserved seats).

The second section is on Dalit participation in the areas of Gram Panchayat functioning like meetings, its agenda and discussions over agenda, resolution passed and related procedures:

- a. Indicators of ‘Dalit participation’
- b. Types of issues discussed in Panchayat meetings – related to Dalits and related to entire village
- c. Proportion of Dalit Panchayat members and their participation in meetings – impact of attributes of Sarpanch on Dalit participation
- d. The relative number of Dalit related and village related issues in Panchayat
- e. The impact of the Sarpanch being a Dalit on participation by Dalit members
- f. The impact of the education level of the Sarpanch on Dalit participation

The third section is on the ‘follow-up of issues’, whether Dalit-specific or village specific:

- a. Meaning of ‘follow-up’
- b. Types of issues followed-up
- c. The way various issues are followed-up
- d. Caste-composition of Panchayat and its impact on follow-up of issue

SECTION 1 PROFILE OF SAMPLE

a. A profile of the sample castewise & sexwise

This section provides an overview of the sample of 33 panchayats that we are working with. We will look at the number of Panchayat members that we are working with and their sex and community.

The following table classifies the sample into Dalit and non-Dalit as well as male and female categories.

**Table 1
Districtwise caste category and sex of panchayat members**

Classification of members		Sabarkantha	Banaskantha	Total
<i>Non dalits</i>	<i>Males</i>	71	65	136
	<i>Females</i>	32	21	53
	<i>Total</i>	103	86	189
<i>Dalits</i>	<i>Males</i>	29	30	59
	<i>Females</i>	9	21	30
	<i>Total</i>	38	51	89
<i>Total male members</i>		100	95	195
<i>Total female members</i>		41	42	83
<i>Total members</i>		141	137	278

- The 33 panchayats in the sample have in all 278 members. There are 141 members in the 17 Sabarkantha panchayats and 137 members in the 16 panchayats of Banaskantha. The number of members in the two districts is almost the same.
- There are in all 189 non-Dalit members and 89 Dalit members. Therefore the non-Dalit members are 2.12 times the dalit members.
- The difference between proportion of Dalits and non-Dalits in Banaskantha is less than that in Sabarkantha. In Sabarkantha the number of non-Dalit members is 2.71 times the number of Dalit members, in Banaskantha there are 1.7 times more non-Dalit than Dalit members. This means that there are relatively more non-Dalit members as compared to Dalit members in the panchayats of Sabarkantha. In Banaskantha, the number of non-Dalits is more than the number of Dalit members, but the proportion is not so much higher.
- There are 195 male members and 83 female members. Therefore, the male members are 2.34 times the female members.
- There is very insignificant difference in the male: female ratio of members in the two districts. In Sabarkantha the male: female ratio is 2.44 while in Banaskantha it is 2.46. Again Sabarkantha panchayats are somewhat polarised in terms of men and women in comparison to Banaskantha panchayats.

Looking at the caste of Gram Panchayat members in the selected villages, the proportion of Dalit members ranges from 12% to 60%. The following table will analyse the various categories of Panchayat members in both the districts viz. Sabarkantha and Banaskantha.

Table 2
Castewise average number of Panchayat members

Average number of members in each category	Sabarkantha	Banaskantha	Total
<i>Dalit (men and women) members</i>	2.24 (27)	3.19 (37)	2.70 (32)
<i>OBC members</i>	3.71 (44)	3.13 (36.6)	3.42 (40.6)
<i>Total women members</i>	2.41 (29)	2.63 (30.7)	2.52 (29.9)
<i>Dalit women members</i>	.53 (6.3)	1.31 (15.3)	.91 (10.8)
<i>Total Members</i>	8.29 (100)	8.56 (100)	8.42 (100)

- The panchayats in the selected villages have on average 8.42 members.
- Average number of members in panchayats is higher in Banaskantha than in Sabarkantha – panchayats in Banaskantha are larger than in Sabarkantha.
- There are relatively few women in the panchayats. Out of 8.42 members only 2.52 members are women (29%). This is almost the same as the proportion of reserved seats for women (33%). In fact, Dalit women are a very small proportion – only 10%.
- The average number of Dalit members, and Dalit women members is higher in Banaskantha. But the average number of OBC members is higher in Sabarkantha.

Thus, Banaskantha panchayats have a higher representation of Dalits (37%) and the Sabarkantha panchayats have a smaller representation of Dalits (27%).

b. Panchayat profile

This subsection deals with the following areas:

- Classification of the Panchayats based on various committees;
- Financial status of the panchayats and sources of finance;
- Financial control of the Sarpanch;
- Presence and availability of Talati

The study concentrates on the impact of the structure of the panchayats on dalit participation. Therefore these characteristics of the panchayats are important from the point of view of their likely impact on dalit participation.

Committees within the Panchayats

According to the Panchayati Raj Act, the Panchayat has the power to create various committees as per the need. The following committees may be set up under the chairmanship of the Sarpanch:

- ✖ Social Justice Committee – for the welfare of the Dalits and other marginalised communities of the village;
- ✖ Gokul Gram Yojana Samiti – for the implementation of basic infrastructure including roads, water facilities etc.;
- ✖ Gram Panchayat Water Committee – for construction and/or repair of water supply facilities in the village;

- ✘ Village education Committee – for implementation of education related schemes of the government, in the village, and to look after the quality of education in the village school;
- ✘ Village Supply and Consumer Protection Advisory Committee – to see to it that the ration shop remains open and required goods are provided in time and in adequate quantity;
- ✘ Midday meals Committee – to supervise midday meals provided in the schools.

Apart from this, a number of other committees like the Building Committee, the Farm Protection Committee, etc. can also be created.²

The Social Justice Committee

The most important Committee within the Panchayat is the Social Justice Committee. The role of the Social Justice Committee is related to the welfare of the marginalised communities. The activities of the Social Justice Committee include the following:

- To see to it that government schemes relating to SC and ST communities of the village are adequately obtained and reach the beneficiaries;
- To take up issues related to the SC and ST communities of the village, including issues of atrocity and discrimination, and report these to the taluka and district level Social Justice Committees where further action can be taken;
- In general, to look after the welfare of these communities in the village.

The establishment of Samajik Nyay Samitis (SNS) or Social Justice Committees (SJC) within the Panchayat is compulsory by law. The issue of social justice in panchayati raj structure was taken up for the first time in the 1961 Panchayat Act and it is continued until today in the 1993 Panchayati Raj Act also. The high level committee for Panchayati Raj headed by Zinabhai Darji in its report recommended the establishment of Social Justice Committees as part of the Panchayati Raj institutions.³

This recommendation was made in response to repeated reports that the poor and marginalised communities had a poor impression of Panchayati Raj, because it is mainly the non-Dalit residents of the village who hold posts in the panchayats and they do not pay adequate attention to issues relating to Dalits. The Dalits as a consequence continue to face the same atrocities and discrimination that they have faced for years. It is in response to this need to make the Gram Panchayats more Dalit oriented that the Zinabhai Darji Committee recommended that Social Justice Committee should be established. These committees function independently under their own chairperson, and deal with issues related to the welfare and empowerment of Dalits.

Table 3
Committee status – existence of various committees

Existence of committees	Sabarkantha	Banaskantha	Total
Social justice committee	15	15	30
Executive committee	11	2	13

² Ghanshyam Barot (2000), *Sarpanch Manual: a Guideline for Sarpanches in Gujarati*, Ahmedabad: Rannade Publications

³ Vaishnav, Bipinchandra, (2000), *Samajik Nyay Samitio ane Nabla Vargone Sahayroop Kayda – Niyamo – Yojanao*, Ahmedabad: Navsarjan Publications, p. 21

Education committee	4	2	6
Health committee	2	0	2
Building committee	3	1	4
Water committee	10	2	12

Table 3 above shows the following:

- The Social Justice Committee has been formed in 31 panchayats and no information is available for 3 Panchayats of the total 34.
- Other committees are formed as per need.
 - o Executive committee is formed in 13 panchayats; we observed that the names of Gram Panchayat members are repeated in this committee, which could mean that they are formed for names sake.
 - o Water committee is formed in 12 panchayats; in response to the prevalent drought condition. Most of these villages are in Sabarkantha. In all the villages where the water committee has been formed⁴, we assume that the issue of water is recognised as important. However, relief work has been actually started in only about 5 of the 12 villages. In the other villages, the committees function by way of deepening of village ponds, the repair and establishment of water tanks in the village and the installation of pipeline in the village.

Table 4

Committee status – average number of Dalits in committees other than SNS

Committees formed	No. of Dalit members (average per committee)		
	Sabarkantha	Banaskantha	Total
Executive committee	0.9	1.1	1
Education committee	0	1	0.3
Health committee	0	0	0
Construction/building committee	0.67	1	0.75
Water committee	0.5	1.5	0.67
Total	0.41	0.92	0.54

- The table shows the average number of Dalits in the committees (except the Social Justice Committee which has not been considered because it consists of all Dalits). In table 6, we had seen that the average number of members in the Panchayat is 8.46. Out of these members if we consider the minimum size of any committee to be of 3 members we find that the proportion of Dalits in that committee of 3 is quite low – between 0 and 1 members. It means that in no committee more than a third of the members are Dalits. It is significant that though reserved seats provide for 1/3 Dalit membership in panchayats it is nowhere provided that Dalits must be given membership in the committees.

⁴ Villages are as follows: Umedpura, Katvad, Pedhmala, Aagiyol, Dhundhar, Fatepur, Bhetali, Lilchha, and Rajendranagar, all in Sabarkantha, while Dholvani, Karjoda, and Dhanadha are in Banaskantha.

Therefore, Dalits are simply Panchayat members but are not given posts in the committees.

- The proportion of Dalits in these committees is quite low (0.54), as their presence is not mandatory as per law. The number of Dalit members per committee ranges from 1 to 4 (excluding those villages where the respective committees have not been formed) and it is clearly seen that in none of the committees (Executive, Education, Water etc.), in either of the districts do we find the number of Dalit members to be anywhere near 2.

Dalits do not have any representation in any of the health committees. Similarly, there are no Dalit members in the education committees in Sabarkantha. The highest number 1.5 is the average number of Dalit members in the water committees in Banaskantha. The average number of Dalit members in the various committees is higher in Banaskantha (0.92) than in Sabarkantha (0.41).

Sources of finance

The panchayats are not self-sufficient, as the following table reveals. Majority of the funds are from various welfare and development schemes of the State Governments while funds generated by the respective Panchayat is meagre, mainly by house tax, water levy, electricity levy, etc.

Table 5
Internal sources of funds for Gram Panchayat

Source of funds	District		
	Sabarkantha	Banaskanth a	Total
Tax on cart	0	2	2
Fine for stray cattle	0	3	3
Tax on maintenance	0	1	1
Electricity levy	10	8	18
Grassland	3	1	4
House tax	14	16	30
Land revenue	5	9	14
Rented building	0	1	1
Shop tax	1	0	1
Water levy	13	10	23
Tax on cutting dry wood	2	1	3

The average amount of fund that a Panchayat may receive in a year varies according to the size of the Panchayat and the schemes available in the district. In many ways, political contacts of the Sarpanch play an important role in getting funds for the Panchayat. Various schemes of the government are available for different objectives but the actual amount that may be received by the Panchayat depends on political connections. In fact, there is hardly any standard or range available for Panchayat funds.

Apart from those mentioned in the above table, Panchayat funds are available from regular government schemes as well as from grants given by the local MLA or MP. Therefore, sources of income are not stable.

The table shows the various sources of finance in panchayats in Sabarkantha and Banaskantha districts.

- As in most panchayats, finance related or tax related documents are treated as confidential (though they are not), we found it very difficult to get numerical data on this issue.
- The most popular source of own funds for the panchayats is the house tax. Almost all the panchayats in the sample do get some funds from house tax.
- The other important source is the water levy. Electricity levy and land revenue are also sources of finance for some panchayats, while the others are minor sources.

As in most panchayats, authorities are not willing to give information about finance related or tax related documents, we found it very difficult to get numerical data on this issue. **There is not much difference in the sources of finance in the two districts.**

Because of this situation, the panchayats are to a great extent dependent on the grants and welfare schemes disbursed by the state and central government. The Eleventh Finance Commission has decreed that 40% of the state's finances would be distributed among the panchayats, but it is not specified what would be the criteria for such distribution and what amount should be distributed to which taluka. Therefore very often panchayats face shortage of funds.

Financial control of the Sarpanch

In this section, we look at the extent of control that the Sarpanch has on the financial affairs of the Panchayat.

The areas of financial control include –

- the preparation of the yearly budget of the Panchayat,
- the regular transactions of the Panchayat, and
- the control of financial documents like the bank passbook.

Request for finances of the Panchayat are made on the basis of an yearly budget prepared by the Talati with inputs from the Sarpanch. In general, the rule is that the actual writing of the budget may be done by the Talati (as official secretary of the Panchayat) but the substantial inputs must come from the Sarpanch.

This budget has to be prepared before the end of the calendar year. The budget proposal for the forthcoming year is put before the Gram Sabha in November and has to receive the sanction of the Gram Sabha. In actual practice, the Talati simply reads out the budget proposal and it is approved without much dissent. After this the actual budget is prepared in the Gram Panchayat before 31st December and sent to the taluka Panchayat for approval before the 15th of January. The taluka Panchayat sends back its comments before the 15th of February and the Gram Panchayat gives its final approval to the revised budget by the 31st of March⁵. On the basis of the final budget the gram Panchayat sends proposals to the various government departments requesting for funds.

In general, in a number of panchayats it is seen that the Talati maintains control over the documents and processes of finance, and the Sarpanch is relatively sidelined.

The substantial preparation of the budget is the duty of the Sarpanch, in consultation with the panchayat and the Talati. However, in some of the villages the Sarpanches are illiterate and not capable of preparing the budget.

⁵ Extract from *Gram Panchayatman Aayojan*, an information booklet of 'Unnati' on Panchayati Raj finances.

Table 6
Number of Sarpanches participating in financial affairs of the Panchayat

Dimensions of financial control by Sarpanch	Sabarkantha			Banaskantha			Total		
	Non-Dalit	Dalit	Total	Non-Dalit	Dalit	Total	Non-Dalit	Dalit	Total
Dealing with and managing funds	3 (75.0)	12 (92.3)	10 (62.5)	2 (66.7)	8 (61.5)	15 (88.2)	5 (71.4)	20 (76.9)	25 (75.8)
Keeping the bank cheque book	3 (75.0)	5 (38.5)	4 (25.0)	0 (0)	4 (30.8)	8 (47.1)	3 (42.9)	9 (34.6)	12 (36.4)
Preparing budget	2 (50.0)	6 (46.2)	7 (43.8)	3 (100.0)	4 (30.8)	8 (47.1)	5 (71.4)	10 (38.5)	15 (45.5)

- * A much larger proportion of non-Dalit Sarpanches than Dalit Sarpanches involve themselves in the preparation of the budget. The difference is much sharper in Banaskantha than in Sabarkantha.
- * The chequebook is an important instrument of financial control. Again, more non-Dalit Sarpanches than Dalit Sarpanches keep the chequebook with them. In other cases, it remains with the Deputy Sarpanch or with the Talati.
- * Three-fourths of the Sarpanches carry out transactions themselves. Again more Dalits than non-Dalits fall in this category. In Banaskantha almost all Dalit Sarpanches carry out cash transactions on their own.

Presence/availability of Talati

The number of days that the Talati remains present in the Panchayat is an important factor because those are the days when the Panchayat office remains generally open for transactions. In terms of certificates, documentation etc. required by the village residents, the Talati is the responsible person. Therefore it is only on those days that the Talati is present, that such official transactions can take place.

It must be noted however that most Talatis are in charge of more than one village. In some districts of Gujarat, one Talati is in charge of 5-7 villages, and therefore cannot remain present very regularly in the same village. The following table shows the average attendance of the Talati in the villages with Dalit and non-Dalit Sarpanches in the two districts.

Table 7
Average number of days per month Talati remains present in Panchayat office

District	Sabarkantha			Banaskantha			Total		
	Non-Dalit	Dalit	Total	Non-Dalit	Dalit	Total	Non-Dalit	Dalit	Total
Caste of Sarpanch									
Average no. of days/month Talati is present	8.00	12.33	11.71	4.00	8.86	7.78	5.33	10.46	9.50

- * On an average Talatis remain present for 9.5 days a month.
- * Talatis are present for a greater number of days per month in those villages that have a Dalit Sarpanch rather than those that have a non-Dalit Sarpanch. This could mean two things:
 - o The Talati may perhaps belong to a Dalit/ OBC/ minority community and supports the Dalit Sarpanch.
 - o The Talati takes a greater interest in villages with Dalit Sarpanch because he sees a greater chance of embezzling funds coming into welfare schemes for the village.
- * Talatis spend a greater number of days per month in Sabarkantha panchayats than in Banaskantha panchayats. This is true for villages with Dalit as well as non-Dalit Sarpanch.

Functioning of the Talati

Field observation in village Vavdi of Vav taluka of Banaskantha district has given a lot of information regarding the effective and cooperative functioning of the Talati and Sarpanch. The Talati belongs to a minority community and is extremely regular in the village. Though he has charge of three villages in all, he sees to it that the attendance in all the villages is regular. The researchers have seen this Talati discussing possibilities for village development late into the night with the Sarpanch and some of the Dalit Panchayat members. The next day he was present in the Panchayat office for the full eight-hour period and a number of people dropped in with documents and work. This is an indicator of the effective support of the government employee to the Dalit Sarpanch.

c. Sarpanch profile

This section covers the following areas:

- (i) Sex of the Sarpanch
- (ii) Caste of the Sarpanch
- (iii) Age of the Sarpanch
- (iv) Level of education of the Sarpanch
- (v) Occupation of the Sarpanch
- (vi) Whether the Sarpanch has attained the position through a reserved or an open seat.

The aim of this section is to understand whether these have any impact on the level of participation of Dalit panchayat members or not.

Table 8
Profile of Sarpanch – Sex and Caste Category by District

Sex of Sarpanch	Sabarkantha			Banaskantha			Total
	Non-Dalit	Dalit	Total	Non-Dalit	Dalit	Total	

Male	3 (75.0)	10 (76.9)	13 (76.4)	3 (100.0)	9 (69.2)	12 (75)	25 (75.8)
Female	1 (25.0)	3 (23.1)	4 (23.6)	0 (0.0)	4 (30.8)	4 (25)	8 (24.2)
Total	4 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	17 (100.0)	3 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	16 (100.0)	33 (100)

As seen in table 1 -

- Among the Sarpanches in our sample, there are 8 women and 25 men; there are 7 non-Dalit and 26 Dalit Sarpanches.
- Of total 7 non-Dalit Sarpanches, 6 are males and one is female while of 26 Dalit Sarpanches, 19 are males and 7 are female Sarpanches.
- In case of Dalit Sarpanch there are 7 out of 26 Sarpanches (27%) who are women. In all there are 76% men and 24% women Sarpanches. this shows that the proportion of women Sarpanches is slightly higher in case of Dalits than in case of non-Dalits.

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Table 9
Districtwise classification of age of the Sarpanch

Age category	Sabarkantha	Banaskantha	Total
26-40 years	6 (35.3)	4 (25.0)	10 (30.3)
41-60 years	8 (47.1)	9 (56.3)	17 (51.5)
Over 60 yrs.	3 (17.6)	3 (18.8)	6 (18.2)
Total	17 (100)	16 (100)	33 (100)
Average age (years)			
Non-Dalit	40	45	42.14
Dalit	49.69	50.46	50.07

- Among the total of 33 Sarpanches in the selected villages, about half are middle aged (between 41 and 60 years of age), while a third are young (under 40 years). There is also a small proportion (18%) over 60 years of age.
- The average age of Sarpanches in the two districts is quite similar – around 49 years.
- **Sabarkantha has a relatively larger proportion of young Sarpanches than Banaskantha.** While 25% of Sarpanches of Banaskantha are under 40 years of age, this proportion is around 35% in Sabarkantha. These young Sarpanches are likely to have started taking interest in politics around 1985-1990, immediately after which the new Panchayati Raj Act came into effect.
- There is a difference in the age categories of Dalit and non-Dalit Sarpanches. On an average, Dalit Sarpanches are older than non-Dalit Sarpanches – Dalit Sarpanches' average age in both districts taken together is 50 years while it is 42 years for non-Dalit Sarpanches.

Table 10
Districtwise education level of Sarpanches

Education category	Sabarkantha	Banaskantha	Total
Illiterate	1 (5.8)	6 (37.5)	7 (21.2)
Primary level (1-4 years)	3 (17.6)	5 (31.25)	8 (24.2)
Higher primary level (5-7 years)	4 (23.5)	2 (12.5)	6 (18.1)
High school (10 years)	4 (23.5)	0 (0)	4 (12.1)
Higher secondary (11-12 years)	1 (5.8)	1 (6.25)	2 (6.06)
Graduation and above (more than 13 years)	4 (23.5)	2 (12.5)	6 (18.1)
Total	17 (100)	16 (100)	33 (100)
Average years of education			
Non-Dalit	8.25	8.67	8.43
Dalit	11.26	6.46	8.96

- About a fourth of the Sarpanches are illiterate. If we consider the primary school level together with the illiterate category, almost half (48%) of the total Sarpanches appear to have no education or very low (upto 4 years) education.
- About 18% of the Sarpanches have been educated upto college level.
- **There is a vast difference between the proportion of illiterate Sarpanches in Banaskantha and Sabarkantha; in Sabarkantha, there are only 5% of illiterate Sarpanches while more than a third of the Banaskantha Sarpanches are illiterate.** The same situation is seen in primary educated Sarpanches.
- **There are only 4 Sarpanches with high school level education and all of them are from Sabarkantha. Similarly, the Sarpanches who have graduation-level education or more are 4 in Sabarkantha and only 2 in Banaskantha.**
- There are significant differences in the average levels of education of Dalit and non-Dalit Sarpanches in the two districts. **Dalit Sarpanches in Sabarkantha are more educated than non-Dalit Sarpanches, while the situation is reversed in Banaskantha where the non-Dalit Sarpanches are more educated than Dalit Sarpanches.**
- If we look at education categories, **Dalit Sarpanches in Sabarkantha are on an average educated upto secondary school level (more than 10 years) while in Sabarkantha they have reached only primary level of education (less than seven years).** In the second section of this chapter we shall look at the impact that an educated Dalit Sarpanch has on participation of other Dalit members in Panchayat decisions, and also on the types of issues taken up in the Panchayat – whether they are Dalit related or related to the entire village.

Table 11
Districtwise occupation categories of the Sarpanch

Caste classification	Category	Sabarkantha	Banaskantha	Total
Non-Dalit	Cultivation on own land	3	3	6
	Housework	1		1
	Total	4	3	7
Dalit	Cultivation on own land	2	3	5
	Agricultural labour	4		4
	Own shop/business	1		1
	Housework		5	5
	Retired	1	2	3
	Casual labour	4	2	6
	Total	12	13	25

- **The majority of non-Dalit Sarpanches consists of agriculturists who have their own land. However, this is not the case for Dalit Sarpanches. There is a greater variety in the occupations of Dalit Sarpanches. They are equally divided between cultivation on their own land, housework and casual labour.**
- **The only single non-Dalit woman Sarpanch (from Sabarkantha) is a homemaker. In Banaskantha as we have seen earlier there are 5 women Sarpanches and all of them are Dalits. Table 4 shows that all 5 are homemakers. This may indicate a relatively lower level of exposure to the outside world.**
- **Non-Dalits who become Sarpanches are economically well off and belong to the land owning class. This however is not the case for Dalit Sarpanches. Dalits who depend on casual labour for their main income have also become Sarpanches. There are also three Dalit Sarpanches who are retired from service.**

In this study, we treat occupation as a proxy for the economic status of the Sarpanch. **Therefore, we can conclude that Dalits who have become Sarpanches hail from a variety of economic classes.** In section 2 of this chapter, we will also take a look at the impact that the economic status of the Sarpanch has on the type and level of participation of Dalits in the Panchayat.

Table 12

Districtwise classification of type of seats of sample village Sarpanches

Category of seat	Sabarkantha			Banaskantha			Total		
	Non-Dalit	Dalit	Total	Non-Dalit	Dalit	Total	Non-Dalit	Dalit	Total
Open (general category)	3 (75.0)		3 (17.6)	3 (100.0)		3 (18.8)	6 (85.7)		6 (18.1)
Reserved for SC		10 (76.9)	10 (58.8)		9 (61.5)	9 (50.0)		19 (73.1)	19 (57.5)
Reserved for SC women		3 (23.1)	3 (17.6)		4 (38.5)	4 (31.3)		7 (26.9)	7 (21.1)
Reserved for OBC	1 (25.0)		1 (5.9)				1 (14.3)		1 (3.03)
Total	4 (100)	13 (100)	17 (100)	3 (100)	13 (100)	16 (100)	7 (100)	26 (100)	33 (100)

- Non-Dalit Sarpanches for obvious reasons have won from open seats (in one case – woman Sarpanch from Fatehpur village of Prantij taluka in Sabarkantha – she won from a seat reserved for OBC), and all Dalits have won from seats reserved for Dalits. **No Dalit Sarpanch has won from an open seat.**
- None of the Dalit women Sarpanches have won from seats that are open to women from non-Dalit communities i.e. seats that are only reserved for women. All of them have won from seats specifically reserved for Dalit women. Therefore, they do not even compete against other caste women. Combined with the data from table 4, it tells us that **Dalit women Sarpanches are housewives, and therefore relatively have less exposure in the political spheres.**

SECTION 2 PARTICIPATION OF DALITS IN PANCHAYAT MEETINGS

The participation of Dalits in panchayat covers a range of issues, such as, nomination for election, canvassing, to become a part of panchayat committee – as Sarpanch and panchayat members, participating in Panchayat meetings and decision-making, managing financial assistance – getting funds, implementing development programmes/facilities, etc. and interacting with the village residents.

a. Indicators of Dalit participation

We have developed a few indicators to understand the participation of Dalits in Panchayati Raj based on fieldwork. They are:

During elections

- * Freely filing nomination for contesting elections
- * Freely campaigning for getting elected

Internal meetings and processes of Panchayat

- * Attending all meetings of the gram panchayat
- * Having access to all the information and records of the gram panchayat

- * Fearlessly voicing opinion on issues
- Networking with higher levels/ authorities
- * Initiating contact with taluka and district level authorities
- * Being knowledgeable about panchayat finances

Based on field observation we were able to classify these indicators into three main categories. The first two indicators are election related and would bear similar results, i.e., a person irrespective of caste is able to file nomination and campaign freely for the elections. The following three indicators are directly related to participation and the last 2 indicate effectiveness and ability of the Sarpanch in dealing with other tiers of the Panchayati Raj hierarchy.

In this study we have focused on active participation in panchayat meetings as one of the important indicators. This indicator incorporates aspects such as: being present in the meetings, agenda setting for development activities and panchayat functioning, participating in decision-making process, follow-up actions and execution of the decisions related to development activities. In relation to this process and indicators, we have explored whether attributes of Sarpanch play any role or not, such as sex, caste, education and the economic status.

The analysis is based on 36 Panchayat meetings held in 33 villages over a period of 4 months, as Panchayat meetings are not held with equal frequency in all the villages. In some villages the meetings happen once a month; in others once in two months and so on.

As part of attending meetings, agenda setting is the first issue that we have dealt with.

1. We have *categorized* the issues discussed in Panchayat meetings as Dalit related and all-village related.
2. We have then tried to see the *extent of Dalit participation* in each of these two categories.
3. In the last part of this section, we have *related Dalit participation* in each of these two categories *with the attributes of the Sarpanch* (i.e. Dalit/non-Dalit, sex, education level etc.), and also with the proportion of Dalits in the Panchayat.

g. Types of issues discussed in Panchayat meetings - related to Dalits and related to entire village

At the outset we need to define what we mean by Dalit related and village related issues. **Dalit related issues** generally relate to those areas where especial facilities are made for Dalits in the Panchayati Raj Act e.g. the provision of separate cremation/burial land for Dalits, or the provision of residential plots for Dalits. Apart from this, there are **issues that are related to the entire village** such as deepening of the village pond, or building a road or a water tank in the village. Disbursement of government schemes not specifically aimed at the Dalit community alone is also treated as issues related to the entire village. a good example of this is the BPL beneficiaries list.

There are 22 issues taken up only by Dalits, where non-Dalit members have not participated. One of our major concerns in this study is whether the issues taken up are likely to have any impact on the life of the Dalit community of the village. In this sense, we will divide the issues into two broad types – *transformative* and *non-transformative* (welfare-oriented).

In this study, we consider those issues as transformative, which help or have a long term potential for helping the Dalit community (not a few individuals) to attain a better standard of living and/or to become more empowered. They include issues like building of school, residential plots, and agricultural land allocation etc., which have a direct developmental

impact. Other issues, such as provision of funds for welfare purposes etc. may be termed as 'non-transformative' or 'status quoist' or welfare oriented.

The analysis is based on 36 Panchayat meetings. In the 36 meetings, a total of 91 agenda items were discussed, covering a total of 40 different issues. There are 12 Dalit related issues and 28 issues related to the entire village. (Appendix 3 - list of issues discussed in meetings).

h. Proportion of Dalit panchayat members and their participation in meetings

In this section we will look at the proportion of Dalits in the panchayats and the impact of these proportions on their participation in their own as well as village level issues. We work with the assumption that when the proportion of Dalits in the panchayat is relatively high, Dalit members will find greater support from each other and will therefore be able to take more active part in discussion of issues in the panchayats.

Table 13
Proportion of Dalits in Panchayat and Types of Issues Taken up in Panchayat by Dalits⁶

District	Proportion of Dalits in Panchayat	Number of panchayats	Types and number of issues participated in by Dalits					
			Related to Dalits		Related to all		Total	
			Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio
Sabarkantaha	Less than 15%	2	0	0	1	0.5	1	0.5
	16-30%	11	5	0.45	3	0.27	8	0.72
	31-50%	4	3	0.75	0	0	3	0.75
	More than 50%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TOTAL	17	8	0.45	4	0.24	12	0.71
Banaskantha	Less than 15%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	16-30%	7	1	0.14	1	0.14	2	0.28
	31-50%	7	5	0.71	1	0.14	6	0.85
	More than 50%	2	1	0.5	2	1.0	3	1.5
	TOTAL	16	7	0.44	4	0.25	11	0.69
Total	Less than 15%	2	0	0	1	0.5	1	0.5
	16-30%	18	6	0.33	4	0.22	10	0.55
	31-50%	11	8	0.72	1	0.09	9	0.82
	More than 50%	2	1	0.5	2	1.0	3	1.5
	TOTAL	33	15	0.45	8	0.25	23	0.7

Overall

- Of the 33 villages, proportion of Dalits in 2 villages was less than 15% in the Panchayat, 18 panchayats have 16-30% Dalits and another 11 have between 31 and 50% Dalits as their members. In both these categories (16-30% Dalits, and 31-50% Dalits) taken together there are 14 Dalit related issues discussed in the panchayats. **Thus, we can definitely see that Dalit related issues are taken up only when there is a relatively high proportion of Dalits in the Panchayat.**

⁶ Only those issues where only Dalits have participated are included.

- In both of the villages with a less than 15% representation of Dalits in the panchayat, most of the issues dealt with in the Panchayat meetings that we have studied are related to the entire village. We have found only a single issue discussed that relates exclusively to Dalits.
- In order to take a look at the proportion of issues per Panchayat we have computed a ratio of issues to panchayats. This has been done in order that we may be able to look at the number of issues taken up per Panchayat. Panchayats with less than 15% of Dalit membership have taken up only 1 Dalit related issue. Therefore, the ratio of panchayats to issues is 0.5. On the other hand the 11 panchayats with 31-50% Dalits have taken up 9 issues. The ratio is therefore $9/11 = 0.81$. We can see that as the proportion of Dalits in the Panchayat increases the ratio of Dalit issues taken up also increases. **This may show that when there are more Dalits in a Panchayat, they feel more comfortable in taking up Dalit-related issues.**

In Sabarkantha

- There are no panchayats with a Dalit membership of more than 50% among the selected villages. The majority of the Panchayats (11) have between 16-30% Dalit members. Bhadresar and Pedhmala are the largest panchayats with 10 members each. Each of them has 3 Dalit members, all of whom have been elected on reserved seats.
- Of the 12 issues taken up by Dalits alone (no participation of non-Dalit members) 8 are Dalit related. Villages where such issues have occurred are Umedpura, Hadmatiya, Pogalu, and Fatepura. All these villages have between 25 and 38% Dalit members in the Panchayat. If we look at the dynamics of these villages, we find that all of them have a majority of the dominant community – either Darbars or Patels or Thakarda (OBC). In all these villages again, this dominant community owns the maximum land and other economic resources. They also have political connections. Education is concentrated in Patels, and traditional educated communities like Brahmins; however, Dalits are also educated. In this sense there does not seem to be any way in which the Dalit community there is any different from any other village. Of all of them, Fatepura is the only village that has a non-Dalit Sarpanch. **Therefore, there are no specific characteristics of these villages or their panchayats that may lead to more Dalit issues being discussed there. We may attribute it to internal dynamics or personal characteristics of Panchayat members/ Sarpanch.**
- Of the 8 Dalit related issues, none have been taken up in those villages where there are less than 15% Dalit members in the Panchayat. Five of the 8 are taken up in villages with between 16 and 30% Dalit membership.
- Even in the case of issues related to the entire village, the largest amount of Dalit participation is in those villages where 16% or more Panchayat members are Dalits.
- It appears that participation of Dalits in any issues, whether they are Dalit related or all-village related, is higher in panchayats with a higher proportion of Dalits. Therefore, if we have to increase the number of Dalit related issues taken up at the Gram Panchayat level, higher representation of Dalits is a must.

In Banaskantha

- There are seven panchayats with 16-30% Dalit members, and another seven with 31-50% Dalit members. Two of the panchayats even have more than 50% Dalit members.
- Seven of the eleven issues taken up relate to Dalits. Five of these are raised in panchayats with 16-30% Dalit membership.
- There are 9 panchayats with a membership of more than 30% Dalits and they have taken up 6 Dalit related issues so that the ratio is $6/9 = 0.67$.
- In Banaskantha, we do not see the rising trend that is so visible in Sabarkantha. In the seven panchayats with 16-30% Dalits, only one Dalit related issue was taken up, so that the ratio is

1/7 = 0.14. In the seven panchayats with 31-50% Dalit membership the ratio is 5/7 = 0.71. Again in the 2 Panchayats with more than 50% Dalit membership only one Dalit related issue is taken so that the ratio becomes 1/2 = 0.5.

In Banaskantha, apparently the participation of Dalits depends on factors other than proportion of Dalits in the Panchayat.

i. The relative number of Dalit related and village related issues in Panchayat

Table 14

Number of Dalit Related and Village Related Issues in Banaskantha and Sabarkantha

District		Sabarkantha	Banaskantha	Total
Issues related to Dalits	Only Dalits have participated	8	7	15
	All members (including Dalits) have participated	4	3	7
	Total	12 (25.5)	10 (22.72)	22 (24.17)
Issues related to entire village	Only Dalits have participated	4	4	8
	All members (including Dalits) have participated	31	30	61
	Total	35 (76.5)	34 (77.27)	69 (75.83)
Grand total		47 (100)	44 (100)	91 (100)

- * In both Sabarkantha and Banaskantha the proportion of issues related to the entire village that come up for discussion in Panchayat meetings is much higher than the Dalit related issues. **In fact, three-fourths of the issues are related to the entire village and only one-fourth are specifically related to Dalits.**
- * If we compare this with the proportion of Dalits in the population of the sample villages we find that the Dalits in the sample villages in Sabarkantha form 20% of the village population while in Banaskantha it is 24%. Compared to this the issues related to Dalits raised in Sabarkantha are slightly higher than the proportion of Dalits (25% of the issues are Dalit related while Dalit population is 20%) while in Banaskantha the population is 24% and the issues raised are 22%. **In general, we can say that Dalit related issues raised are proportional to the Dalit population.**

Table 15
Break-Up of Issues by Relevance and Participation

District	Issue related to	Participation by		Total
		Dalits	All	
Total sample	Dalits	15 (67) [65.22]	7 (33) [10.3]	22 (100) [24.18]
	All village	8 (11.6) [34.78]	61 (88.4) [89.7]	69 (100) [75.72]
	Total	23 (25.27) [100]	68 (73.73) [100]	91 (100) [100]
Sabarkantha	Dalits	8 (67) [67]	4 (33) [11.4]	12 (100) [25.5]
	All village	4 (11.4) [33]	31 (88.6) [88.6]	35 (100) [74.5]
	Total	12 (25.5) [100]	35 (74.5) [100]	47 (100) [100]
Banaskantha	Dalits	7 (70) [63]	3 (30) [9]	10 (100) [22.72]
	All village	4 (11.76) [37]	30 (88.34) [91]	34 (100) [77.27]
	Total	11 (25) [100]	33 (75) [100]	44 (100) [100]

- Figures in round brackets () are row percentages showing proportion of participation by Dalits and all members in various types of issues.
- Figures in square brackets [] are column percentages showing proportion of a specific category (Dalits or all members) participating in a particular type of issue.
- ✖ In every issue related to Dalits, participation of dalits is assured. In two thirds of the cases, only Dalits have participated (15 out of 22 cases). In the remaining, other members have participated along with Dalits.
- ✖ **Dalits participate alone mainly in their own issues.** Of the total 23 incidents of Dalits' exclusive participation, 15 incidents (65%) relate to Dalit issues. However there are 8 all-village issues where only Dalits have participated. This may reflect the marginalisation of non-Dalits in panchayats where Dalits have a strong presence (e.g. Vavdi, Banaskantha; Kump, Sabarkantha) or that the non-Dalits have marginalized the Panchayat where there is a relatively large number of Dalits in the Panchayat (Asaravas, Banaskantha; Jaska, Dhandhuka). We have seen in the course of our fieldwork that in certain villages, Dalits are stronger in terms of education and political connections than non-Dalits.
 - o A case in point is Vavdi (district Banaskantha) where the Sarpanch is a Dalit but the non-Dalit deputy Sarpanch is quite supportive and other non-Dalit members also cooperate with the Sarpanch. The Sarpanch himself is extremely knowledgeable and able to deal with bureaucrats at both the taluka and the district levels. Apart from this, the village also has a history of a Dalit being quite active in the Panchayat in previous Panchayat terms. This will be explained more in detail in section 2, where we consider the case of Vavdi as an individual case study.
 - o Another case is that of Asaravas where the Sarpanch is an elderly and illiterate Dalit man. His level of knowledge is extremely limited. In our interview with him, he was not even able to recall the month in which he was elected, and whether it was from an open or a reserved seat. It was other Dalit members of the Panchayat who were more active, and gave the information that the Rajput members of the Panchayat had stopped attending meetings since a Dalit was elected as Sarpanch, and there were two other Dalits as Panchayat members. According to our informants, the reason was that the Rajputs could not accept the fact that Dalits could participate in the Panchayat.

In Sabarkantha: participation of Dalits

- ✖ Dalit members of the panchayats alone participated in 25% (12 of the 47) points. This included a number of issues related to Dalits such as building of road in Dalit vas/ Indira Avas houses, water facilities in Dalit vas, revision of the BPL list, provision of facilities such as handcarts etc. to Chamars. In the other 35 cases, they participated along with the other non-Dalit members.
- ✖ Dalits' exclusive participation is much more (67%) in issues related to Dalits alone. However there are 4 cases (11%) where the Dalit members alone participated in issues that related to the entire village.
- ✖ Non-Dalits participate mostly, but not only in all-village issues. There are 4 cases where non-Dalits have also participated in issues related to Dalits.

In Banaskantha: participation of Dalits

- A total of 44 agenda points of Panchayat meetings has been recorded. Of these 10 (23%) related to Dalits and the other 34 (77%) are related to the entire village. The issues specifically related to Dalits included the building of protection walls, water connection in Dalit vas, crematory land for Dalits, etc. Other issues (related to the entire village) dealt with encroachment, administrative and tax related matters, relief work in the village, etc.

- The same trend is seen as in Sabarkantha; Dalits' exclusive participation is greater in Dalit related issues than in general (all-village related) issues. Out of the eleven issues where only Dalits have participated, seven related to Dalits themselves.
- However there are four all-village issues where no non-Dalit has participated.
- Non-Dalits participate mainly in all-village issues: 30 out of 33 cases where non-Dalits do participate relate to the entire village. But there are three significant exceptions where non-Dalits have participated in Dalit issues.

Obviously, **land that is allocated to the Dalits comes out of the sum total of the land belonging to the village.** Land is an extremely complex issue in the village complex. In most villages that we visited in the course of the study, encroachment for residential as well as agricultural purposes was widespread, and done by both non-Dalits and Dalits. **Land specifically allocated to Dalits is therefore reduced from the possible land available to other communities, and that is why non-Dalits are opposed to this.**

In other cases, there are issues related to the use of grants. **Grants allocated specifically to Dalits means smaller amount of funds available to other communities.**

For the above reasons non-Dalits of the village may be opposed to Dalits getting the benefits of land or other grants. **This may be a reflection on why non-Dalits generally participate less in Dalit related issues.**

Comparison between districts

- There is a remarkable uniformity in both the number of agenda items discussed in Panchayat meetings in the two regions during the period of the study. A total of 47 agenda points were discussed in the selected Sabarkantha villages and 44 in the Banaskantha villages in this period. (For a detailed list of issues, see appendix).
- Of these again, the proportion related to Dalits and to the entire village is also similar – about 20-25% points related to Dalits and 75-80% points related to issues relevant to the entire village.

All in all the pattern emerging from both the districts is by and large similar: a larger proportion of the total agenda items relates to all-village issues, but Dalits' exclusive participation is more visible in the smaller portion i.e. in those issues that related to Dalits alone. Where non-Dalit members also participate, the issues are more likely to be relevant to the entire village than to Dalits alone. Thus all-village issues, where Dalits' exclusive participation is relatively low, dominate Panchayat meetings.

j. Does the presence of Dalit Sarpanch have an impact on participation of Dalit members in meetings?

We have so far looked at the proportion of Dalit members in the Panchayat to look at the impact of this on the participation of Dalits. In this section, we will analyse what happens to participation of Dalit members when the Sarpanch is a Dalit and when the Sarpanch is a non-Dalit.

Table 16

Caste Category of Sarpanch and Type of Issues taken up in Panchayats by Dalits Alone⁷

District	Caste of Sarpanch	No. of panchayats with Sarpanch of category	Types and number of issues participated in by Dalits		
			Related to Dalits	Related to all	Total
Sabar kantha	Dalit	13	5	3	8
	Non-Dalit	4	2	1	3
	TOTAL	17	7	4	11
Banas kantha	Dalit	12	5	4	9
	Non-Dalit	4	2		2
	TOTAL	16	7	4	11
Total	Dalit	25	10	7	17
	Non-Dalit	8	4	1	5
	TOTAL	33	14	8	22

Overall

- Of the total 22 issues, 17 have been taken up by Dalit Sarpanches and 5 by non-Dalit Sarpanches. Looking at the number of Dalit and non-Dalit Sarpanches in the sample there is not much relative difference in the proportion of Dalits and non-Dalits taking up issues. There are 26 Dalit Sarpanches selected in the sample in both the districts together and 5 non-Dalit Sarpanches. Therefore, the ratio is $17/26 = 0.65$ for Dalits and $5/5 = 1$ for non-Dalits.
- Now we look at Dalit-related and all-village issues. Of the 17 Dalit-related issues, 10 are taken up by Dalits exclusively in panchayats with Dalit Sarpanches and 7 in non-Dalit panchayats. The proportion of Dalit issues taken up in panchayats with Dalit Sarpanches is $10/26 = 0.38$. What is more surprising is that 7 Dalit-related issues are taken up in panchayats with non-Dalit Sarpanches so that the proportion is $7/5 = 1.4$. **The proportion of Dalit issues taken up by Dalit members in panchayats with Dalit Sarpanch is less than that in panchayats with non-Dalit Sarpanch. The hypothesis that Dalits take up their own issues more actively when the Sarpanch is a Dalit, is therefore not valid in this case.**

In Sabarkantha

- In all exclusively Dalits have participated in 11 issues in Sabarkantha. Of these 8 issues have been raised in the panchayats of Dalit Sarpanches. Of the 11 issues, 7 are related to Dalits while the other 4 are all-village issues. Most of the Dalit related and village related issues are much the same as described earlier. **It appears that Dalits across villages and districts face similar issues, and also that issues related to the entire village are generally the same in all villages and both the districts.**
- In the 13 panchayats where the Sarpanches are Dalits, the other Dalit members have taken up totally 5 Dalit related issues (the ratio is $5/13 = 0.38$) while the panchayats of the 3 non-Dalit Sarpanches have taken up 2 Dalit issues (the ratio is $2/3 = 0.67$). Again, the same result emerges – **Dalit issues have been taken up by Dalit members in a higher proportion in panchayats with non-Dalit Sarpanch rather than those with Dalit Sarpanch.**

⁷ Only those issues where only Dalits have participated are included.

In Banaskantha

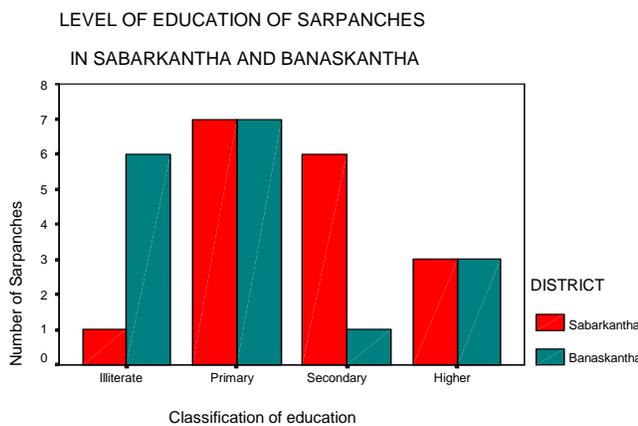
- There are 11 issues in all taken up by Dalits. Seven of them related to Dalits and 4 to the entire village. Of the seven related to Dalits there are 5 taken up in Dalit Sarpanch-headed panchayats (ratio is $5/13 = 0.38$) and 2 in non-Dalit Sarpanch headed panchayats (ratio is $2/2 = 1$). In Banaskantha too there appears **more activity on the part of Dalits in non-Dalit Sarpanch headed panchayats in voicing their issues while it is less in Dalit Sarpanch headed panchayats.**

Comparing the situation in the two districts there appears to be a surprising level of commonality in the situation. The participation of Dalits in Dalit-related issues in both the districts is greater where the Sarpanch is a non-Dalit rather than where the Sarpanch is a Dalit.

k. Effective participation due to better education level of the Sarpanch?

In this section, we deal with the level of education of the Sarpanch and its likely impact on participation of the Dalit Panchayat members in discussions in panchayat meetings. We are working with the hypothesis that as the Sarpanch is more educated, and especially if it is a Dalit Sarpanch, it is likely that he/she will initiate discussion of more Dalit-related issues in the Panchayat meetings. This will also enable the Panchayat members to participate more actively in issues related to the welfare of their own community.

FIGURE 1



The level of education of Sarpanches is quite similar in the two districts. Seven Sarpanches in each of the two districts are educated upto primary school level. In Banaskantha, the number of illiterate Sarpanches is quite high (6) while in Sabarkantha there is only one illiterate Sarpanch. On the other hand in Sabarkantha there are six Sarpanches who have studied upto the secondary level. This number in Banaskantha is quite low (only 1). The average level of education overall is 8.85 years. In Sabarkantha it is 10.71 years while in Banaskantha it is 6.88 years.

Table 17
Education of Sarpanches⁸ and Type of Issues taken up
in Panchayats by Sarpanches Alone

District	Education of Sarpanches (no. of years)	Types and number of issues participated in by Sarpanches		
		Related to Sarpanches	Related to all	Total
Sabar kantha	Illiterate (0 years)	0	0	0
	Primary (1-7 years)	3	0	3
	Secondary (8-12 years)	4	4	8
	Higher (> 12 years)	1	0	1
	TOTAL	8	4	12
Banas kantha	Illiterate (0 years)	1	4	5
	Primary (1-7 years)	3	0	3
	Secondary (8-12 years)	2	0	2
	Higher (> 12 years)	1	0	1
	TOTAL	7	4	11
Total	Illiterate (0 years)	1	4	5
	Primary (1-7 years)	6	0	6
	Secondary (8-12 years)	6	4	10
	Higher (> 12 years)	2	0	2
	TOTAL	15	8	23

Overall

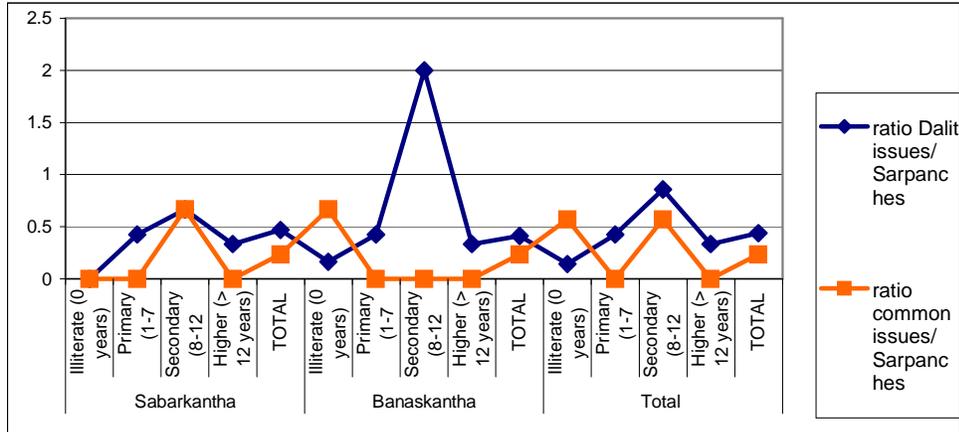
- Out of the 23 issues in which Sarpanches have participated, 10 have been presented in panchayats with Sarpanches having upto secondary level (8-12 years) education.
- Of the 15 Sarpanches-related issues, 6 have been raised in panchayats where Sarpanches have had primary education, and another 6 where Sarpanches have had secondary level education. It should be noted that while there are 14 Sarpanches who have had primary education, there are only 7 Sarpanches who have received secondary education in the two districts together.
- All-village issues occur in panchayats with illiterate Sarpanches as well those with Sarpanches having secondary-level education, in equal numbers (4 each).

The same trend is seen in the graph below.

⁸ In this category we have included Dalit as well as non-Dalit Sarpanches

FIGURE 2

Ratio of literacy of Sarpanches by number of issues taken



The following table relates the number of issues taken up for discussion in various panchayats – where the Sarpanch is less educated and more educated, and where the Sarpanch is a Dalit or a non-Dalit. We try to analyse the following:

- ✘ What happens to Dalit participation when the Sarpanch is a Dalit, and is less educated?
- ✘ What happens to Dalit participation when the Sarpanch is a Dalit, and is well educated?
- ✘ What happens to Dalit participation when the Sarpanch is a non-Dalit, and is less educated?
- ✘ What happens to Dalit participation when the Sarpanch is a non-Dalit, and is well educated?

In the table below we have looked at the caste category and the education category of the Sarpanch in the two districts i.e. Banaskantha and Sabarkantha, as well as over both the districts taken together. We have then tried to look at the average number of Dalit-related and village-related issues taken up in the panchayats, for each category and subcategory e.g. we can see that **Dalit Panchayat members of Banaskantha, where the Sarpanch is a Dalit and is illiterate, have taken up on an average 0.25 Dalit related issues and 0.17 general or village related issues.** The average has been calculated by counting the issues in each village that falls under the given category/ subcategory, and then dividing them by the number of villages in that subcategory⁹.

⁹ To take a hypothetical example, if there are 2 villages in Sabarkantha where the Sarpanch is a Dalit and is illiterate and the number of Dalit related issues taken up for discussion by the Dalit members of the Panchayat are 1 and 2 respectively, then the average will be $(1+2)/2 = 1.5$ Dalit-related issues taken by Dalit members in panchayats in Sabarkantha where there is an illiterate Dalit Sarpanch.

Table 18
Dalit Participation Related to the Caste Category and Education Level of the Sarpanch

Dalit/non-Dalit Sarpanch	Education of Sarpanch	Average no. of issues raised in Panchayats	
		Related to all	Related to Dalits
Entire sample			
Non-Dalit	Primary	0	0
	Secondary	.33	1.33
	Higher	0	1.0
	Total	.14	.71
Dalit	Illiterate	.57	.14
	Primary	0	.55
	Secondary	.75	.5
	Higher	0	.25
	Total	.27	.38
Total	Illiterate	.57	.14
	Primary	0	.43
	Secondary	.57	.85
	Higher	0	.4
	Total	.24	.45
Banaskantha			
Non-Dalit	Primary	0	0
	Higher	0	1.0
	Total	0	.33
Dalit	Illiterate	.67	.17
	Primary	0	.6
	Secondary	0	1.0
	Higher	0	0
	Total	.31	.38
Total	Illiterate	.67	.17
	Primary	0	.43
	Secondary	0	1.0
	Higher	0	.5
	Total	.25	.38
Sabarkantha			
Non-Dalit	Primary	0	0
	Secondary	.33	1.3
	Total	.25	1.0
Dalit	Illiterate	0	0
	Primary	0	.5
	Secondary	1.0	.33
	Higher	0	.33
	Total	.23	.38
Total	Illiterate	0	0
	Primary	0	.42
	Secondary	.67	.83
	Higher	0	.33
	Total	.23	.52

Overall

- **In general across both categories (Dalit and non-Dalit) of Sarpanches, we find that when the Sarpanch is more educated the Dalit members in the Panchayat take up more issues related to Dalits.** We can see the average number of Dalit related issues increase from 0.14 to 0.43 to 0.85 for Sarpanches who are illiterate, primary educated and secondary educated. This is the trend for the total of all Sarpanches (Dalit and non-Dalit).
- However **there is no such clear trend for non-Dalit Sarpanches** with regard to education. For Dalit Sarpanches the illiterate Sarpanches do not take many issues related to Dalits (only 0.14) while some level of education raises the number of Dalit issues taken up. In panchayats where the Dalit Sarpanch is educated upto primary or secondary level the proportion of issues taken up is higher (0.54 and 0.5 respectively).
- Non-Dalit Sarpanches take up a higher average number (0.71) of Dalit issues than Dalit Sarpanches (0.38). This may be an indication of individual initiative by particular non-Dalit Sarpanches.

Banaskantha and Sabarkantha

- There is no clear trend apparent in Sabarkantha. However in Banaskantha we do see that the level of education of the Dalit Sarpanch is very much related to the number of Dalit-related issues taken up by Dalits in the Panchayat. **Therefore, in Banaskantha, when the Sarpanch is a Dalit, and he/she is educated, Dalit members do find it more comfortable to take up Dalit-related issues for discussion.**

The question then arises – what are the qualitative differences in the villages of Banaskantha and Sabarkantha which lead to the greater value of educated Dalit Sarpanches in Banaskantha? On the face of it there are not any obvious differences. In all the villages studied, there are dominant communities who are the majority in numbers as well as in land ownership in the villages. Patel, Darbar, and in very few cases, Dalits themselves are the majority population in the village. **However, there are some villages in Banaskantha where Dalits have good political connections. This is not the case in Sabarkantha villages. This is the only factor that is different between the two districts. This may perhaps be the reason for educated Dalits to be a source of leadership in Banaskantha villages.**

SECTION 3 FOLLOW-UP OF ISSUES – DALIT-SPECIFIC AND VILLAGE-SPECIFIC

a. Meaning of ‘follow-up’

In the context of ‘participation of Dalit’, till now we have covered caste-composition of Panchayat, attributes of Sarpanch and support of Talati as well as panchayat members. In continuation of this, we have tried in this section to pursue ‘follow-up of various issues’ as a logical extension.

The way an issue is followed up means – whether it is taken to the higher (taluka or district) level, whether it is simply dropped and not mentioned again, or whether Dalit-related issues are not raised at all, and so on. Thus, the comparison between Dalit related issue and non-Dalit related issue by Dalit Sarpanch, in panchayats where there are more Dalit members, in

panchayats where the Sarpanch is educated or uneducated become integral part of 'participation of Dalits'.

Based on our observation and analysis of primary data, there are 4 aspects of 'follow-up' of issue:

- * One time mention - an issue is mentioned just once during a Panchayat meeting, and there is no other mention of it at any later date. This indicates that an issue has been sidelined or treated as unimportant by the majority or a dominant few in the Panchayat.
- * Resolution passed - an issue is mentioned and a resolution is passed regarding it in a Panchayat meeting. It indicates that the Panchayat has arrived to a decision regarding the issue after discussion.
- * Recurring discussion – an issue is mentioned and repeated discussion of the issue occurs before and during later Panchayat meetings, by people of the village who may or may not be position holders in the Panchayat. It indicates that the issue is considered to be important by the village residents and is not allowed to die down.
- * Action taken/ authority approached – an issue is mentioned, a resolution is passed and the Sarpanch or other members of the Panchayat approach some authority (at the taluka/ district/ state level) for resolving the same. This shows that the Panchayat members have really followed up the issue and intend to resolve it.

All these categories are not mutually exclusive i.e. an issue may be mentioned only once in a Panchayat, but a resolution may be passed and the authorities may be contacted about the same issue. In this case, the issue would have to be considered under all these categories. In the table below, we have put each issue in as many categories as it falls into, and therefore the same issue may be repeated.

b. Types of issues followed up

There are various issues that are relevant in the administration of a village and the lives of its residents, such as, building of roads, water supply, education, clearing of encroachments, provision of benefits of welfare activities, etc. These various issues are broadly classified as below, based on our recording of panchayat meetings. Moreover, they are categorised as 'transformative' and 'non-transformative' in light of participation of Dalits, to see whether taking up issues of this sort contribute to participation of Dalits or not, or whether they provide avenue to strengthen participation of Dalits or not and/or whether it has any impact on life of Dalits in the village or not.

This classification listed in the following table lists the various issues discussed in Panchayat meetings in the sample villages. The issues are classified into those related to Dalits, those related to the entire village in general, and on the basis of being transformative or non-transformative for the Dalit community.

All these issues can be classified into 4 types; they are –

- * Infrastructure related
- * Basic amenities related
- * Common property resource related
- * Administrative

Table 19
Types of issues classified by impact on Dalit community

Type of issue	Impact on Dalit community		
	Transformative	Non-transformative	
Related to Dalits	Road in Dalit vas	Boundary wall for Chamars	
	School for Dalits	Protection wall for Dalits	
	Encroachment by Dalits	Levelling of housing land for Dalits	
	Water supply for Dalit vas	Cemetery land for Dalits	
	Use of grants for Dalits	Scholarship for Dalits	
	Formation of SNS		
	Housing for Dalits		
	Pull carts for Chamars		
	Insult of Dalit Sarpanch		
	Untouchability		
Related to entire village	Road in the village/ between villages	Street lights	Watershed/ dam
	Hygiene/ prevention of disease	Drinking water vessel for cattle	Identification of land for pickup stand
	Pond deepening	Flood protection wall	Restarting flour mill
	Borewell	Deepening of well	Pipeline/ water stand
	Water connection in houses	Gutter line/ sewage disposal system	Fodder depot/ provision of fodder
Related to entire village	BPL list/ BPL benefits	Fodder depot/ supply of fodder	Swajaldhara scheme
	IRDP list	Community hall	Relief work/ employment
	SGRY scheme	Grazing land	Payment for relief work
	Ration cards/ fair price shop	Encroachment	Supervising donations received
	Electricity connection and meters	Housing plots	Old age home
	Gram vikas samruddhi yojana	Balika samruddhi yojana	Listing of poor
	Water source for village	Levelling of land for housing	Audit inquiries
		Raen Basera – shelter for travellers	Survey of houses
		Allotment of new school/ additional teachers	Collection of taxes/ deposit
		Water supply	Fixing crop estimate
		Clearing of ganda baval	Panchayat office building/ repair
		School wall/ fencing/rooms/ building	Salary to panchayat/ other staff
		Plots for BPL/ Indira Avas/ Sardar Avas	Land records registration
	Water tank new/repair		

The variety of village related issues is much more than that of Dalit related issues. The classification of these issues shows that most of them are not likely to be of a transformative nature for Dalits.

On the other hand, most of the issues that are related to the Dalit community specifically are more of a transformative than of a non-transformative nature. They relate to infrastructural facilities for Dalits, water supply, as well as a number of controversial issues like untouchability, etc. However, Dalits are also influenced by issues that relate to the entire village. Examples of such issues are - BPL list/ BPL benefits, Ration cards/ fair price shop, deepening of village pond etc.

c. The way an issue is followed up

We have listed the various ways in which an issue may be followed up. In that context, this section makes it clear how various types of issues are dealt with in the panchayats.

Table 20
Types of issues and their follow-up

Issues related to	IMPACT ON DALIT COMMUNITY									
	Transformative					Non transformative				
	One time mention	Resolution passed	Recurring discussion	Action taken	Total	One time mention	Resolution passed	Recurring discussion	Action taken	Total
Dalits	23	15	12	14	35	14	10	5	4	23
Entire village	44	24	14	19	61	76	53	50	45	82
Total	57	39	26	33	96	90	63	55	49	105

The table deals with a total of **69 types of issues** dealt with in panchayats of 33 villages in two districts of Banaskantha and Sabarkantha. These 69 issues were discussed in the Panchayats during the 34 Panchayat meetings that have been analysed as part of this study.

- The columns in the table that are labelled ‘total’ indicate how many times those issues have occurred, and in that context we can understand the break-up in terms of one time mention, passing of resolution, recurring discussion and action taken.
- Transformative issues have come to be discussed in panchayats 96 times in all in the 33 villages in the period under study.
- Similarly, non-transformative issues have been discussed 105 times in all the villages together in the period of the study.
- In all Dalit related issues have been discussed 58 times and general village issues have been discussed 143 times.

As the table shows,

- The maximum mention has been of non-transformative issues related to the entire village. We can see an interesting trend: **most issues related to the entire village are non-transformative for the Dalit community while most issues related to Dalits are transformative.**

- The specific programmes related only to the Dalit community are meant to empower the community and are therefore definitely transformative for them. However **very few of the village-related items are transformative for Dalits. This definitely means that there is a need to have such specific programmes aimed at Dalits alone, since Dalits' needs are not covered by the general programmes of the village.**
- The government has provided special facilities for the Dalit communities and Dalits can definitely transform their lives through taking up issues related to their communities in the Panchayat. On the other hand, issues related to the entire village are routine and relate to welfare rather than having a long-term transformative effect.

In most cases, issues are simply mentioned once and then allowed to lapse. The other most commonly occurring factor is that resolution may be passed regarding an issue in the Panchayat meeting. In 39 transformative issues and 63 non-transformative issues we can see that resolutions have been passed.

d. Caste composition of the Panchayat and its impact on follow up of issues

In what follows, we try to link up the existence of a Sarpanch who is a Dalit or a non-Dalit with the types of issues that are followed up in the village. The table classifies issues into 'transformative' and 'non-transformative' and also into 'Dalit-related' and 'village related' issues. Along with this, we have listed the villages that have a Dalit and a non-Dalit Sarpanch. We have then tried to see how each of these respective types of issues is followed up (classifying follow-up into the ways listed at the beginning of section (b) above).

Table 21

District wise methods of follow up of issues (a) Sabarkantha district

Sarp anch caste	Nature of issue		Nature of follow up					Total
	Trans./ non- trans.	Dalit related/ village related	1 time mention	Resolution passed	Repeated discussion	Authority approached	Action taken	
Sabarkantha								
Dalit	Transfor mative	<i>Dalit related</i>	1	2	4	8	1	16
		<i>Village related</i>	4	4	3	5		16
		Total	5	6	7	13	1	32
	Non- trans formative	<i>Dalit related</i>						
		<i>Village related</i>	2	7	2	4	2	15
		Total	2	7	2	4	2	15
Non-Dalit	Transfor mative	<i>Dalit related</i>	1	2	1	2		6
		<i>Village related</i>		2		2	2	6
		Total	1	2	1	4	2	12
	Non- trans formative	<i>Dalit related</i>						
		<i>Village related</i>	1	3		1	1	6
		Total	1	3		1	1	6
Total	Transfor mative	<i>Dalit related</i>	2	4	5	10	1	22
		<i>Village related</i>	4	6	3	7	2	22
		Total	6	10	8	17	3	44
	Non- trans formative	<i>Dalit related</i>						
		<i>Village related</i>	3	10	2	5	3	23
		Total	3	10	2	5	3	23

In Sabarkantha

- A total of 44 transformative and 23 non-transformative issues have been taken up in various panchayats. **Thus, most of the issues taken have the potential of influencing the lives and welfare of the Dalit community.**
- There are a total of 22 Dalit related issues and 45 village related issues. Therefore, we find that issues specifically related to Dalits only are fewer in number. However all Dalit-related issues are transformative i.e. they have the potential of influencing the Dalit community since we find that there are no Dalit related issues that are non-transformative in nature.
- **It appears from the data that in villages with Dalit Sarpanch, most of the transformative issues are followed up quite well. Most clearly, in 13 out of the 32 transformative issues (40%), the Sarpanch and/ or other Panchayat members have approached the relevant authorities for the purpose of resolving the issue.**
- In seven other cases, issues have come for repeated discussion i.e. they have been kept alive and not brushed under the carpet. On the other hand, in most of the non-transformative issues, resolutions have been passed in the Panchayat (in seven cases) but only in 4 cases, the relevant authorities have been approached. In only 2 cases, the issue has come for repeated discussion.

It means that in these villages, Sarpanch/ Panchayat members are more interested in issues that have a potential to raise their standard of living rather than those that simply give them some temporary benefit.

- In considering villages with non-Dalit Sarpanch, we find that in 4 of the 12 transformative issues taken up in villages with non-Dalit Sarpanch, 4 (33%) are followed up by approaching the authorities. This proportion is slightly smaller than that in the villages with Dalit Sarpanch. It appears that Dalit Sarpanches are more active in following up issues that are of transformative potential to Dalits. **Again, in villages with non-Dalit Sarpanch, fully half of the non-transformative issues are not followed up but only resolutions related to them are passed in the Panchayat.**

Therefore, in both types of villages in Sabarkantha – those with Dalit Sarpanches and those with non-Dalit Sarpanches – most transformative issues are followed up well and most non-transformative issues are simply decided in the Panchayat meeting and then left without being followed up.

(b) Banaskantha district

Sarpanch caste	Nature of issue		Nature of follow up					
	Trans./ non-trans.	Dalit related/ village related	1 time mention	Resolution passed	Repeated discussion	Authority approached	Action taken	Total
Banaskantha								
Dalit	Transformative	<i>Dalit related</i>	2	1	3	1	1	8
		<i>Village related</i>	11	3	7	2	2	25
		Total	13	4	10	3	3	33
	Non-transformative	<i>Dalit related</i>	5	4	5			14
		<i>Village related</i>	29	9	15	13	1	67
		Total	34	13	20	13	1	81
non-Dalit	Transformative	<i>Dalit related</i>	2			1	1	4
		<i>Village related</i>	1	1	2	1		5

		Total	3	1	2	2	1	9
	Non-transformative	<i>Dalit related</i>	4		2			6
		<i>Village related</i>	8	3	2	2	1	18
		Total	12	3	4	2	1	24
Total	Transformative	<i>Dalit related</i>	4	1	3	2	2	12
		<i>Village related</i>	12	4	9	3	2	30
		Total	47	17	30	16	4	42
	Non-transformative	<i>Dalit related</i>	9	4	7			20
		<i>Village related</i>	37	12	17	15	2	85
		Total	46	16	24	15	2	105

In Banaskantha

- There are 42 transformative and 103 non-transformative issues taken up for discussion. **It appears that Banaskantha panchayats are much more active than Sabarkantha, judging simply from the number of issues taken up.** Secondly, the majority of the issues are non-transformative in nature, and most of the non-transformative issues are related to the entire village and not specifically to the Dalit community. This is different from the issues taken up in Sabarkantha, which are mostly transformative i.e. have the potential of empowering the Dalit community on a sustainable basis. **Here in Banaskantha most of the issues taken up are welfare oriented and have no sustained impact on the lives of the Dalit community.**

In Banaskantha villages where there are Dalit Sarpanches, we find that the majority of issues taken up are village related rather than Dalit related.

- There are 92 village related issues whereas there are only 18 Dalit related issues – the difference is very vast. **More of the Dalit issues are welfare oriented rather than transformational – issues such as cemetery land, protection wall, etc (see table 9) dominate, rather than transformative issues such as roads, water connection etc.**
- The way these issues are dealt with is also quite different from that in Sabarkantha – **there are very few Dalit issues that are taken to the logical conclusion of a proper approach to the authorities** or the required action being taken. The same is the case with general village related issues – **most issues are mentioned once and then forgotten**, while in some cases (13 cases) general issues that have no transformative potential for Dalits are followed up by approaching the authorities.
- The stress seems to be on issues that are either non-controversial or welfare oriented (i.e. of short term/ individual benefit) to Dalits.

We now take a look at those villages where the Sarpanch is a non-Dalit. These villages have taken up 9 transformative and 24 non-transformative issues i.e. a total of 33 issues. Of them 23 are village related and only 10 are Dalit related. **The fate of most of the issues is the same – they are discussed once in the Panchayat and then not mentioned again.**

Comparing the two districts, we find a very vast difference between the types of issues and their handling in the panchayats of Sabarkantha and Banaskantha. **The Sabarkantha panchayats deal more with issues that have the potential of influencing the life and empowerment of the Dalit community. Banaskantha panchayats have the tendency to pay more attention to issues that provide temporary help or (in case of cemetery land) deal with the status of Dalits in the village rather than with their living standards.** Areas of administration that create assets or basic necessities (like drinking water, roads etc.) i.e. strictly *economic issues* are not given priority.

Secondly, **Sarpanches in Sabarkantha show the tendency to follow up an issue as far as possible to its resolution.** This is especially the case with those issues that have a transformative potential for the Dalit community. The trend is similar in villages with Dalit and non-Dalit Sarpanch, though we do find that Dalit Sarpanches are somewhat more active in following up various issues rather than non-Dalit Sarpanches, which is most natural.

In Banaskantha, mainly issues are brought out but rarely resolved or followed up. This applies equally to transformative and non-transformative issues as well as to panchayats with Dalit and non-Dalit Sarpanches equally. Certain villages are exceptions, however (e.g. Vavdi in Wav taluka) where the Sarpanch has taken up the issue of water for Dalits as well as the issue of cemetery land for Dalits. This may be attributable to one of the following two factors:

- Which issues are taken up and how they are dealt with is more a function of personal interest and activeness or passiveness of the Sarpanch, rather than caste of the Sarpanch.
- There is a difference in the average level of education of the Sarpanches in the two districts; Banaskantha Sarpanches being relatively less educated than Sabarkantha. This may lead to greater activeness in Sabarkantha while Banaskantha Sarpanches are relatively passive.

In both the districts, a significant point is that **there is no major difference in the way Dalit and non-Dalit Sarpanches deal with the issues.** In Sabarkantha Dalit and non-Dalit Sarpanches follow up transformative issues quite well (though Dalit Sarpanches follow up better than non-Dalit Sarpanches), while in case of non-transformative issues resolutions are made but follow-up rarely done. In Banaskantha all types of issues – transformative and non-transformative – are generally discussed once in the Panchayat – in some cases resolution is passed, but they are not followed up and no action taken.

Chapter 3

Internal dynamics of the Panchayat – data from case studies

The previous chapter gave a quantitative analysis of Dalit participation in Panchayati Raj. In that chapter, we looked at the indicators of participation as well as the characteristics of the Panchayat and/or the Sarpanch that make Dalit participation more active. Participation was understood in two ways: taking active part in the discussion of an issue when it was discussed in a Panchayat and the way an issue was followed up after it was once raised in a Panchayat meeting. Issues were divided into Dalit-related and village-related, and into transformative and non-transformative.

From the previous analysis, we had concluded that in general Dalit participation is greater when more Dalits are Panchayat members. We had also found that there is no direct and simple relation between the caste category of the Sarpanch (i.e. whether the Sarpanch is a Dalit or a non-Dalit) and the proportion of Dalit participation. A number of other factors – attributes of the Sarpanch – play a very great role in enhancing or limiting Dalit participation, and determining which issues are taken up and which are not taken up in the Panchayat.

In this chapter, we will look at the various dynamics of Dalit participation through two case studies. The aim of the chapter is not so much to draw generalisations as to deal in depth with the various micro-level factors that influence the functioning of the Panchayat with a Dalit Sarpanch. The cases that we deal with here highlight the internal dynamics and politics of the village, inter-caste as well as intra-caste, and their impact on the effective functioning of the Panchayat, and the empowerment of the Dalit community. However, before going into the cases, a brief explanation of the selection of the villages is essential.

Selection of villages

In order to draw any conclusions about the factors influencing the functioning of the Panchayat, it was necessary to study villages that had panchayats with sufficiently different characteristics that they could be compared. We selected villages on the basis of the following criteria:

- One village from each district – Sabarkantha and Banaskantha;
- One which is a Single Village Panchayat and one which is a Group Village Panchayat;
- One that has a female Sarpanch, who is less educated and who has received very little exposure outside the family; and one that has a male Sarpanch, who is relatively well educated and has a lot of exposure.

The names of the villages as well as of all the persons mentioned within the cases have been changed. However, the taluka and district to which the village belongs, as well as the physical and socio-political characteristics of the village, the composition of the Panchayat remain factual.

We now look at the two cases, followed by the analysis of facts regarding Dalit participation and its influencing factors, as it emerges from the cases.

Case study: A village Panchayat of Sabarkantha

This is a study of Vani & Sila villages of Bhiloda taluka of Sabarkantha district. Vani village is 4 kms. away from the taluka headquarter (Bhiloda) while Sila is 6 kms. away on the Vijaynagar highway. This is a Group Village Panchayat (GVP) and the village panchayat office is located at Vani village.

These villages are located on Aravalli hills, rocky land and so the density of the population is thin. This area is comparatively less explored by the industries and has remained industrially underdeveloped. However, it is close to Bhiloda, which is also a market place for agriculture produce and other daily requirements.

The total population of two villages is about 2,500 with different castes and tribes. The social composition is – Adivasi / ST (130), Dalits / SC (600), OBCs (520), artisans (284) and ‘upper castes’ (625) - including Darbar (30), Patel (470), and Brahmin (125). The Vankar (SC) families are the followers of Pranami sect, the rest follow Hindu religion. The Dalits are discriminated by the other castes, and among Dalits, a hierarchy is observed where Vankars are the highest, followed by Chamars, and Chenvas are the lowest.

Agriculture, agricultural labour, and casual labour are the main income generation activities and sources of livelihood. The village has 3 anganwaadis and educational facilities with primary and high school (upto 10th standard). It has infrastructure facilities like electricity, post office, RCC road for transportation, telecommunication, Gramin Bank and Milk Dairy. The village residents get water through pipeline. The State Transport bus and jeeps are available for travel and transportation.

The families of Patel, Brahmin and Panchal castes are comparatively well-off and wealthy due to large land holding and jobs in Defence. Some of the Brahmin families had migrated to Mumbai in the beginning of the century and now have good business linkages between Mumbai and the village. The families of Panchal castes own shops at Bhiloda for business; some families of Suthar (carpenter) and Luhar are also engaged in business at Bhiloda. The families of Soni (goldsmith), Darji (tailor), Prajapati (potter) are engaged in traditional business. There are a few families of SCs and STs who have land to cultivate; however, it is without irrigation facility.

Among different castes, Brahmin and Patel have the highest numbers of literates, while the lowest numbers are of Thakarada, as they are socially and economically backward. The rest of castes have about 30-50 percent literates. The families of Patel have the largest numbers of jobs (service). The Dalit community has a fair level of education – there is at least one member per household who is educated upto the 10th class.

The political leaders of the village mainly belong to Brahmin, Patel and Panchal castes. Vikrambhai Joshi, Jivabhai Patel and Keshavbhai Panchal are the leaders, having good relations with the political parties like Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) and Congress – I (Cong-I). The inclination of ‘upper castes’ is towards BJP while the ‘lower castes’ inclines towards Cong – I. These leaders are also the trustees or office bearers of the other institutions like the Educational Trust that runs the High school in the village. There is not a consensus leader from SC or ST or OBC; their political participation is restricted to voting. The other castes and tribes vote for Cong-I. The present MLA, Anilbhai Joshiyara is ST and a member of Cong-I.

Historically, the elected leaders, mainly Sarpanch of the village panchayat belonged to 'upper castes' until the year 2000. In the year 2001, the seat for the Sarpanch was declared reserved for Dalit women and the election took place in December. In all 6 women candidates contested for the post of Sarpanch. Of them 2 belonged to Vankar, 2 to Chamar and 2 to Chenva castes. One of the Chenva women was supported by Jivabhai Patel while the rest were supported by the caste leader or the village leader.

Finally, Sevaliben Khemjibhai Vankar was elected with the margin of 36 votes on 23rd December 2001. Her nearest competitor was Savitaben, a Chamar woman from Sila village who was supported by all the people of Sila village. The reason that Savitaben received so much support was that the people of Sila village wanted the Panchayat to be shifted from Vani to Sila, so that if the Sarpanch was from Sila, the Panchayat would have to be shifted there.

It is interesting to note that mainly the tribal families supported Sevaliben in the election, followed by Thakarada and least support from the Dalits, since the Dalit loyalty was divided between the various (five) candidates. Sevaliben had no support either by any of the village leaders or the political party.

Her family is well educated among all the Dalit families and supported her for the election. Her husband is a graduate and unemployed; engaged in agriculture. Her husband provided constant guidance to her and she took his advice during her term as Sarpanch. They live in a joint family of 8 members: parents-in-law, a brother-in-law, 2 daughters, and a son. She is engaged in household work as well as agriculture related activities.

Sevaliben took over the charge as a Sarpanch of the village on 10th January 2002. This was her first experience as a holder of a public post, and also the village's first experience of a Dalit Sarpanch.

Among Sevaliben's supporters during the election, 4 were elected to the panchayat. They are – Lakhbhai Vankar, Nirmaben Panchal, Navinbhai Pador and Shamajibhai Tambiyar. Three out of four have very little knowledge about the Panchayati Raj Act or its functioning. Lakhbhai has studied upto 5th class and has been a member of village panchayat once. Shamajibhai Tambiyar has been elected for the reserved seat of ST for the first time; has studied upto 12th class and has very little knowledge about functioning and role of Panchayat. Navinbhai has studied upto 7th class and has been elected for the first time; his participation in panchayat is restricted to 'yes' or 'no' for the resolution to be passed in the panchayat. Nirmaben has studied upto 10th class and her participation is very limited in the panchayat functioning.

The Talati is an Adivasi. He has good relations with the leaders of the village, such as Jivabhai Patel, Keshavbhai Panchal and Vikrambhai Joshi, all non-Dalits, and all of whom are opposed to Sevaliben as the Sarpanch.

After the election, appointing Deputy Sarpanch created whirls. The Sarpanch wished to appoint Karamashibhai Patel but Talati-cum-Mantri intervened and suggested Somabhai Thakarada. The Talati was of the opinion that, if Sevaliben appoints Karamashibhai, he being a Patel and having better knowledge of Panchayat, may dominate the panchayat, bring a 'no confidence motion', or may play games against Sevaliben, resulting in resignation.

Since Sevaliben's knowledge about Panchayat and its functioning was minimal, she respected Talati's opinion and appointed Somabhai as deputy Sarpanch.

In all 4 committees have been formed in the panchayat - Social Justice Committee (SJC), Water committee, Health committee and Education committee. Shamjibhai is the chairperson of SJC; Nirmaben Panchal is the chairperson of Water Committee, Sevaliben is the chairperson of Education Committee and Revatiben Patel is the chairperson of Health Committee. None of the committee could provide details about its role or functioning after formation.

Sevaliben was facing opposition by the traditional leaders right from the beginning. The traditional leaders and former Sarpanch, being upper caste members did not wish to hand over the panchayat to a Dalit woman. Her husband was a source of support to her and sometimes went with her to the meetings when he was present, but generally she went alone and handled the opposition alone.

As such, all of them, Jivabhai, Vikrambhai, Keshavbhai had once elected and worked as Sarpanch of the village and had good knowledge about panchayat and its functioning. Jivabhai was working as a head clerk at Taluka Panchayat Office; he resigned after being elected as a Sarpanch. As a Sarpanch, he brought some development schemes under 'Gokul Gram Yojana' like RCC road, water tank for the village. Keshavbhai as former Sarpanch did not implement any development scheme. Vikrambhai is the brother of a former Sarpanch who did not implement any development scheme, but having good influence on the villagers. Vikrambhai himself works as a contractor and was in charge of the construction going on under various schemes in the village when his brother was the Sarpanch. All these leaders have good relations with each other and good contacts with political parties and Taluka Panchayat Office. They have been instigating people for not supporting Sevaliben. There are some instances where their efforts bore fruits.

After being elected as Sarpanch, Sevaliben was invited as a chief guest to the school on 26th January 2002. Before hoisting the flag on Republic Day of India, she was asked to get up from her chair and humiliated by the school principal. However, the principal later realised that the issue could be turned into a case of Atrocity against a Dalit and so he apologized later. The point is, the leaders did not miss single opportunity to show their hostility towards Sevaliben, a Dalit woman Sarpanch.

Sevaliben was active as a Sarpanch initially, but later it became difficult for her to face such hostility and games behind her back. In almost 18 months of her being Sarpanch, 15 meetings took place of Gram Panchayat. The major decisions in the Panchayat taken were - underground water bore for Sila village; a water hand pump in the Dalit locality; a water hand pump at Adivasi school; compound wall for Adivasi school; RCC road at Dalit locality under MLA grant; 3 houses under the Sardar Avas and Indira Avas schemes for the poor in the village. These however were only a few of the resolutions that were passed in the Panchayat: there were other resolutions which remained only resolutions and were not put into practice. She was able to get these schemes implemented through the initial support of the Talati.

In all 4 Gram sabha were organized in last 2 years, 2 each in the year 2001 and 2002. A Gram sabha organized on 12th May 2003 was a non-quorum, as the village residents were out to attend social occasions like marriages, inauguration of shops or housewarming ceremonies. Later a Gram sabha was organized on 22nd May 2003, which was successful. Overall, not

much enthusiasm was witnessed in Gram sabha, as people have little faith in it; despite presenting problems, very few problems are solved through Gram sabha.

Initially, Sevaliben used to get support from Talati-cum-Mantri and other panchayat members, but gradually, a number of differences between Sevaliben and Talati started surfacing. The Talati wished to hold more powers, keeping the Sarpanch under his control, which did not work effectively with Sevaliben. Simultaneously, the Talati started getting support from the traditional village leaders, who did not want Sevaliben as a Sarpanch. The Talati started passing resolutions on his own, without consulting the Sarpanch; justifying his act with vague reasoning when enquired. When Sevaliben started asking questions for such behaviour on concerned matters, the Talati responded saying that “if you want to ask any question, ask me in writing, not orally”. It was at this point of time that Sevaliben started to ask for more support from her husband. In spite of not being a member, her husband started attending the meetings.

Sevaliben was been actively working as a Sarpanch for betterment of the villages despite such opposition and hostility until March 2003. One of the major setbacks came in February 2003, in a village panchayat meeting. On 27th February 2003, in a village panchayat meeting, a bill put forward to the panchayat by Sevaliben for the water bore was rejected by deputy Sarpanch, Karamashibhai Patel (a member), Navinbhai Pador (a member) and Shamjibhai (chairperson of SJC). Among these three, Karamashibhai was feeling hurt because he as a senior and known person in the village had not been selected as deputy Sarpanch. Somabhai the deputy Sarpanch was instigated by the Talati saying that Sevaliben had taken a commission in sanctioning the pipeline. Navinbhai in fact did not realise what he was signing when he signed the resolution against Sevaliben.

The reason given for rejecting the bill was – higher cost of the bore and corruption by Sevaliben. However, this bill was later approved in Gramsabha held on 22nd May 2003.

In the same meeting another incident occurred. The government had sent a circular to estimate that amount of crop production in the village, based on the rainfall (*aanavari*). The estimate of the crop production that had been made by the government was quite high compared to the reality, and it was decided in the gram Panchayat meeting that the proportion should be reduced from the government figures. But this required the signatures of not only the Panchayat members but also the large farmers of the village. Sevaliben therefore told the Panchayat peon to get their signatures. But the Talati opposed this saying “This is my peon, not yours, so you cannot tell him what to do. I will not send him to the village.”

After these two incidents, Sevaliben was very frustrated and depressed and had become less frequent in attending the Panchayat meetings because of the opposition.

Sevaliben needed somebody’s guidance to solve such problems and effective functioning of Panchayat. Meanwhile a *prashikshak* (Hemabhai) of BSC approached her in April 2003 and she discussed her problems with him. Hemabhai invited Sevaliben to attend a meeting of *prashikshaks* organized at district level, in which *prashikshak* working in different taluka were to participate. Sevaliben and her husband Kanjibhai attended this meeting and discussed the problems of their village panchayat. They jointly decided to write a complaint against Talati to be submitted to District Development Officer (DDO) and the chairperson (Mahendrabhai Rahevar) of District Panchayat.

Sevaliben submitted the letter of complaint to DDO and Mahendrabhai, and also attended meetings and training programmes organized by BSC. With greater help and guidance, she started getting more knowledge about functioning of panchayat, her powers and rights. She then decided to write a confidential report of Talati for Taluka Office and submitted it during April 2003. She also attended a Mahila Mahotsav of Panchayati Raj in March 2003 and submitted her complaints to Development Commissioner Mr. Vaghela.

Sevaliben informed in June 2003 that Talati was transferred and a new Talati (Lilaben Rathod) has been appointed. She is now motivated to be an effective Sarpanch for development work in the village.

Case study: A village panchayat of Banaskantha

This is a study of Vadi village of Vav taluka of Banaskantha district. Vadi village is 4 kms. away from the taluka headquarter (Vav). Vav taluka is on the border of Rajasthan state that shared border with Pakistan. This village has its independent village panchayat.

Geographically, it is very close to small desert of Kachchh and thus sandy soil and lack of sweet drinking water are the main features. This area is almost neglected by the industries and has remained industrially undeveloped. There is not a single industrial unit – small or large – near the Vadi village, due to desert-like environment - lack of water and sandy soil.

The total population of the village is about 2,600 with different castes and tribes. The social composition is – Adivasi Bhil / ST (240), Dalits – Chamar - (480), OBCs (520), artisans (145) and 'upper castes' (1110) consisting of Brahmins (550), Patel (300), Rajput (310) and Darbars (40) and others (Jain - 40). Except Jains, the rest follow Hindu religion. Discrimination against Dalits and discrimination between men and women are observed in the village.

Agriculture, agriculture labour and casual labour are the main income generation activities and sources of livelihood. The village has educational facilities with primary school (upto 7th standard). It has infrastructure facilities like electricity, post office, RCC road for transportation, telecommunication, and Milk Dairy. The village residents get water through pipeline. The State Transport bus and jeeps are available for travel and transportation.

The families of Brahmin, Rajput – Darbar, Patel castes and Jain are comparatively well-off due to large land holding with irrigation facility; among them Brahmins have the largest share. One Rajput family is the largest landowner, while one Rajput family has a factory. Some of the Patel and Jain families own shops. Some families of Suthar (carpenter), Vajir (barbers), Gauswami Bawa (a beggar community), and Rabari are engaged their traditional occupation. There are a very few families of SCs who have land to cultivate; however, it is without irrigation facility; STs and OBCs are mainly engaged in agriculture labour for survival. Among dalits, Kailashbhai and his elder brother are comparatively well-off.

Among different castes, Brahmin, Patel and Dalits (Chamars) have the highest numbers of literates, the rest of the castes have little education. The lowest numbers of literates belong to Bhangi (SC) and Rabari (OBC). The Adivasi community is also almost fully illiterate, with

only one educated youth Kanjibhai who works as a peon on a temporary post in the Tharad taluka Panchayat.

The political leaders of the village mainly belong to Brahmin, Patel and Rajput castes. Ranabhai Rajput has warm relation with the present MLA from Congress-I, Hemabhai Rajput. Ranvirbhai Darbar and Shankarnath Pandya are also the village leaders. Both the political parties, BJP and Cong – I have good hold on the village. The ‘upper castes’ support BJP while the rest of the castes support Cong – I. The present Sarpanch, Kailashbhai Shivabhai Selvar is Dalit. Kailashbhai works as building contractor and hence is well exposed, visits various government offices for his business and is also a follower of Dr. Ambedkar’s ideology.

Historically, the elected leaders, mainly Sarpanch of the village panchayat belonged to ‘upper castes’ till the year 2001. In the year 2002, the seat for Sarpanch was declared reserved for Dalits and the election took place in April. In all, 3 Dalit candidates contested for the post of Sarpanch. Actually, a meeting was organized among dalits to select a candidate with consensus for Sarpanch (on the basis of the *samras* method advocated by the Gujarat government) but the other two candidates – Polabhai, a cousin of Kailashbhai (present Sarpanch) and Fariyabhai Jerambhai – wanted election. Polabhai was supported by a village leader Ranabhai Rajput, thinking, to quote a saying in Gujarati “*Be ni ladaai ma trijo faave*” (when two fight, the third one wins).

Finally, Kailashbhai won with 100 votes, mainly those of the Adivasis and Rabaris. The Dalit votes had been divided between the two candidates. The Rajputs were supporting his rival candidate (Polabhai) and therefore he lost the Rajput votes, however the Darbars did support him.

Rajabhai Rajput was selected as deputy Sarpanch with consensus of all panchayat members except Nagarabhai, a Dalit member, who was not present in this meeting. Later Kailashbhai said that his motivation in electing Nagarabhai as deputy Sarpanch was that the Rajput community would remain appeased and support the panchayat body. Nagarabhai was inclined to be deputy Sarpanch or treasurer, but Nathiben was appointed as treasurer. Thus Nagarabhai was deprived of both the posts with power in the panchayat, though he was made the member of the Social Justice Committee. All other members were willing to work together for the development of the village.

Only Social Justice Committee (SJC) has been formed in the panchayat; Revabhai Bhil is the chairperson of SJC. Not a single meeting of the SJC has been organized so far. Revabhai has very little knowledge about importance of SJC and its functions.

There are in all 3 dalits and one adivasi in the panchayat, of them, one is Sarpanch, two dalits are members and the adivasi is the chairperson of SJC. Till now, the panchayat has not faced any difficulty in functioning, as every member provides support to Sarpanch and Sarpanch is knowledgeable as well as warm hearted, having warm relations with all the members.

Kailashbhai has to face some difficulties due to hidden enemies and their vested interests, (mainly Ranabhai Rajput, who acts stealthily behind the scenes to spoil the good name of the Sarpanch) but being a male, he does not face social discrimination like a female Sarpanch. Being Dalit he has good relations with Rajput and other castes and due to his knowledge about Panchayat, and so he is rarely challenged while functioning. He meets taluka and district level government officials regularly, as part of his business and responsibility as a

Sarpanch. He has studied upto 11th class and as he meets taluka and district level officials regularly, he is updated with required information about different development schemes, and thus able to manage Panchayat related work efficiently.

Among the panel of Kailashbhai, in all 4 members were elected of total 8 in village panchayat. They are – Ramanbhai Rajput, Ramilaben Suthar, Revabhai Bhil, and Nagrabhai Sengal. Among the supporters of the rival candidates, there are Nathiben, who is the daughter in law of Ranabhai Rajput's brother, Nagmabhai Parmar, who is a Dalit, and Hamirbhai Rabari who was previously a supporter of the rival candidate.

Hamirbhai now supports the Sarpanch, because he has now realised that the power centre is with the Sarpanch and therefore it would not be wise to oppose him. He has studied upto 7th class and has been elected for the first time; his participation in panchayat is restricted to 'yes' or 'no' for the resolution to be passed in the panchayat, as he is busy with his business and has little knowledge about panchayat. Nathiben and Ramilaben being female members, do not participate actively in Panchayat's meetings. Ramilaben follows her son's advise while Nathiben follows her husband's advise. Deputy Sarpanch Ramanbhai has studied upto 4th class and always supports Sarpanch. Revabhai has been elected for the reserved seat of ST for the first time; has not studied at all and appointed as a chairperson of SJC. He has very little knowledge about functioning and role of Panchayat.

Like Hamirbhai, Nagmabhai Parmar is also a member belong to other panel but supports the Sarpanch. He is Dalit and interested in development of Dalit, so whenever required, he mediates with the people who oppose Sarpanch or his agenda for development of poor and Dalit in the village.

Nagarabhai is cousin brother of the Sarpanch and has some knowledge about Panchayati Raj Act and its implementation. He was initially a supporter of the Sarpanch. However, he felt discriminated against on two occasions. The first was when he was not given the post of Deputy Sarpanch or Treasurer, which he wanted. In the second case, there was a resolution passed for the installation of a water pipeline in the Adivasi area of the village. This resolution was passed on January 2003. However, when the project was sanctioned in May 2003, the Sarpanch got the pipeline installed all over the village. However, since this work was done unofficially, it was not possible to cover the entire village completely. By chance, it was the ward from which Nagarabhai had won, that remained without the pipeline. This was a source of great dissatisfaction to Nagarabhai. He found it difficult to answer the queries of the residents of his ward regarding the pipeline.

With this event, he started telling panchayat members that the Sarpanch did not take him seriously and it was getting difficult for him to answer people's queries as a member, and so he thought that it would be better if he resigned. He simultaneously started intimating people that he would be resigning as a panchayat member. However, at that point of time Nagmabhai persuaded him that such a step would not be in favour of the Dalit community and if the Sarpanch lost his majority the Dalit community would never come to power again. In this way Nagarabhai was prevented from resigning.

The work done by Sarpanch till now is – 5 acres of land allotted for graveyard of dalits in the village; however, the compound wall and the roof for the burning of the dead body is not been completed due to lack of finance – the MLA grant. He very actively advocated for relief work during drought, for income generation and water pipeline in the village, which

were successfully implemented during November 2002 to May 2003. He also collected funds during drought year (2002-03) with the help of Red Cross, an international organisation. This money was invested in deepening the village pond. He also got installed some hand pumps in the Dalit and Adivasi areas.

Other activities under consideration and resolutions are passed in the panchayat; they are – to make water tank for storage, to make separate shed and water facility for the cattle of pastoral families of the village, road construction, increase in employment, and so on. Financial assistance for these activities is the major hurdle that they have to overcome. Thus despite good knowledge and relations with taluka and district level government officials, Sarpanch is not able to bring development schemes to the village.

Talati-cum-Mantri, Ahmedbhai Mansuri, supports the Sarpanch along with the panchayat members. In all 15 meetings have been organized in the year 2002-03. In all 3 Gramsabha have been organized, in which, officials of Health Department, Water and Sanitation Department, Gramsevak, Talati were present. The Gramsabha in this village may be considered to be 'better' than in other villages, from one perspective – that there were no hitches and no undue opposition to the issues put on the agenda by the Sarpanch and Talati. Though the number of people who attended were quite few (as it happens in all villages), participation and support to the panchayat's decisions was good. People presented their problems and meaningful discussions took place on these problems and taluka level officials promised to do their best to solve these problems. Dalit participation has been proportionately high in the Gram sabha as well as functioning of Panchayat, as the Dalit Sarpanch is effective.

Some village residents did try to harm Sarpanch's image and prestige through undue demands and allegations. Take an instance of a complaint registered on 20th May 2003 against Sarpanch and his brother about wasting water through pipeline. Ranabhai Rajput, whose supporter had lost the election to Kailashbhai, took advantage of the fact that a pipeline was punctured in the field of Kailashbhai's brother. This pipeline was supposed to provide irrigation water to the fields to the entire village, and had been punctured even before Kailashbhai became the Sarpanch. But Ranabhai took advantage of it to make allegations that the Sarpanch was providing additional water to his brother at the cost of the village's water supply.

At this point Ranabhai made use of the educated Adivasi youth Kanjibhai. He instigated him to file a complaint against the sarpanch saying that though the funds for the pipeline were meant for the adivasi area, the sarpanch had used this money to lay pipelines in the entire village.

He took a lineman (who looks after maintenance of water pipeline) into confidence and sent him to check the pipeline of Sarpanch's brother based on the complaint registered by the villagers. The internal story in this regard was that the miscreant wished to mobilize tribal families of the village against Sarpanch. Nagmabhai, a Dalit panchayat member mediated and the problem was resolved.

The Sarpanch gives due credit to BSC's efforts to explain Panchayati raj Act and its implementation as well as to increase participation of dalits in Panchayat. While he himself is quite knowledgeable about Panchayati Raj, he feels that the main contribution of the organisation is that it had the potential to provide support to him when he is in

difficulty. while his own connections are limited, the organisation can provide support through government connections at a higher level and give the necessary support to him in difficult issues.

Comparative aspects of the panchayats of Sila-Vani and Vadi villages

Sila and Vani GVP

This case reflects the situation of a Dalit woman Sarpanch in a village that is dominated by the 'upper caste' communities.

Firstly, Dalits and 'upper castes' are almost equal in population, but in terms of economic as well as political power, Brahmins, Patels, and Panchals dominate the village. This village is governed by a Dalit Sarpanch for the first time in its history. For these two reasons it is realistic to believe that the 'upper castes' are resentful that a Dalit, and that too, a woman, has come to power. While it is not possible to oppose the government policy of reservation in Sarpanch/ Panchayat posts, they do their best to undermine the effectiveness of the Sarpanch by getting 'their' candidates elected to the post.

Secondly intra-Dalit factionalism becomes obvious from the fact that each of the five remaining candidates was supported by their own caste group, and therefore Sevaliben did not win the unanimous support of the Dalit community, instead she owed her victory (by a very narrow margin) to the Thakardas and the Adivasis.

Thirdly, the role of the Talati-cum-mantri and his relation with the Sarpanch is important. He initially opposed Sevaliben's choice of Deputy Sarpanch (a Patel member who was quite senior and respected), and put forward the name of another candidate who was very little educated and had no experience of Panchayat functioning. This, not unnaturally, became an ego issue for Karamshibhai Patel, who then opposed her during the issue of the borewell. The Talati then took the opportunity of playing upon the lack of knowledge of the other members and got their signatures on the resolution opposing the borewell expenditure. Inter-Dalit politics shown by the fact that Shamjibhai and Navinbhai who were in her 'panel' – her supporters during the election turn against her during the issue of the borewell, though later they changed their position.

The reason behind this entire scheme appears to be the resentment of the Talati when Sevaliben did not 'consult' him (and offer him some money to get the borewell sanctioned) regarding the expenses on the borewell. If the opposition to Sevaliben's decision regarding the borewell had escalated into a no-confidence motion against her, the Talati and the 'upper castes' together would have seen to it that the next Sarpanch was a more pliable one.

Fourthly, Sevaliben was not a typical 'woman' Sarpanch whose husband becomes the de facto Sarpanch. In fact, she did receive support from her husband when she required, but made most decisions on her own. It is important to note that it was she who initially enabled the village and the Dalit community to benefit by a number of government schemes, and also her position as a Sarpanch and as a Dalit frightened the school principal enough that he had to apologise for insulting her.

Fifthly, the role of the CBO becomes evident in this Panchayat. Initial contact was established through training programmes, in which Sevaliben became aware of the role of the Talati and his responsibility to the Panchayat and the Sarpanch. Sevaliben took the benefit of

the contact and asked for support to resolve her issue with the Talati, where help and support were readily provided. This enabled Sevaliben to register a complaint against the Talati and send a Confidential Report against him to the taluka. Thus, with the help of the CBO, she took a stand where the Panchayati Raj Act was implemented as it was meant to be – in favour of people's governance and not governance by the bureaucracy.

Vadi Village Panchayat

This is a case where the Sarpanch is a Dalit but a man, and fairly well educated (11 classes) as well as well exposed to the outside world through his construction business. Secondly, his family is one of the economically better off families within the Dalits. The Sarpanch himself is involved in the contracting business. Therefore he is economically well off and not dependent on the non-Dalits of the village in any way. The other factor in his favour is that he has seven brothers all of whom live in the same village and so he has a lot of support.

The village itself consists of only 1 major dalit community viz. the Chamars. There are a very few families of Valmikis but they are few enough to be neglected. Therefore unlike the Vani-Sila group Panchayat, there is strong dalit support in Vadi village, and no question of intra-dalit factionalism. There are more than 200 Adivasi members in the village, but their level of awareness and exposure is very low. The Dalits have made it a point to maintain good relations with the Adivasis through the appointment of Revabhai as the Chairman of the Social Justice Committee.

There is also a probability that the Sarpanch seat in this village will be declared reserved for ST in the next election. The attempt of the Dalits at this point is therefore to ensure the support of the tribals when the village has a tribal Sarpanch. This they have done through the appointment of Revabhai.

Therefore they have the assured support of both the dalit and the tribal communities.

As far as the non-dalit communities are concerned, the strongest caste is of the Rajputs. The Patels are also a force to reckon with, though not so numerous as the Rajputs. There is strong rivalry between these two communities. Therefore for each of them, winning the dalit votes is essential. This is also one reason why each of these communities tries to keep the Dalits pleased.

The village also has a history of a strong dalit presence. Shantabhai, the elder brother of Kailashbhai, was a member in the Panchayat in the earlier period when the 73rd Amendment had not come into force. At that time he had the support of the entire dalit community because he was competent to raise the cause of the Dalits in the Panchayat. Therefore for Kailashbhai the task of heading the Panchayat becomes much easier.

There are a number of 'political appointments': the Rajput deputy Sarpanch, the Social Justice Committee chairman, that are made to keep the respective communities in favour of the Sarpanch. It appears that the Sarpanch succeeds on the basis of his knowledge, contacts and diplomacy.

It is important to understand, however, that even when so many of the economic and political factors are in favour of dalit participation and self-governance, there is still a possibility of caste politics being used to deprive the Dalits of their power. The incident of the pipeline,

raised by Ranabhai Rajput, is an indicator of this, where he made use of the disgruntled Adivasi youth Kanjibhai to oust the Dalits from power. Definitely this would have resulted in a no-confidence motion against the Sarpanch if it had not been for the intervention of Nagmabhai. Nagmabhai emerges in this case as a true supporter of the dalit cause and disinterested person who puts the community interests above his own. He is a true dalit leader.

Comparison between the cases of Vani-Sila and Vadi Panchayats – emerging generalisations

We have taken two cases of panchayats headed by dalit Sarpanches. In both the cases it is the first time in the history of the village that a dalit has become the Sarpanch. However, it is the personal status of the Sarpanch as well as the internal caste dynamics of the village that make all the difference in the level of empowerment that the Dalits are able to attain.

In the Panchayat of Vani-Sila villages, the subcastes among the Dalits are numerous and all of them have their own leaders. Because of this most non-Dalit castes have captured the support of one or the other Dalit castes, and this has resulted in a lot of infighting among the various dalit castes. Apart from this, the issue of the group gram Panchayat also makes some complications, because one of the dalit candidates in the election was from the other village (Sila) and had the support of that entire village. Issues like this do not arise in Vadi, where there is only one dalit caste and since a lot of families are inter-related, there is a very strong unity among the Dalits. **Therefore dalit unity is one of the determining factors in the sustainability of the Panchayat.**

Apart from this, of course, Sevaliben faces more problems as a woman, than Kailashbhai faces as a man. However it is important to recognise that she is able to take a number of stands despite all these obstacles. Exposure and political awareness are, however Kailashbhai's assets, which Sevaliben does not have. **A second important factor is therefore the level of political awareness of the Sarpanch and his/ her economic position.**

Another factor is the attitude of the Talati. The Talati plays a crucial role in the village administration, and has the de facto power to make things easy or difficult for the Sarpanch. Sevaliben's own lack of knowledge was already a hindrance for her; the attitude of the Talati added to her obstacles. On the other hand the Talati in Vadi is quite supportive and enables the Sarpanch to work well. **The Talati's own attitudes as well as the Sarpanch's knowledge of the duties and powers of the Talati act in combination to make the Talati a functional or dysfunctional factor in the functioning of the Panchayat. In the case of a dalit Sarpanch, a dysfunctional or dissatisfied Talati generally gets the support of some or the other non-dalit community to act against and displace the Talati.**

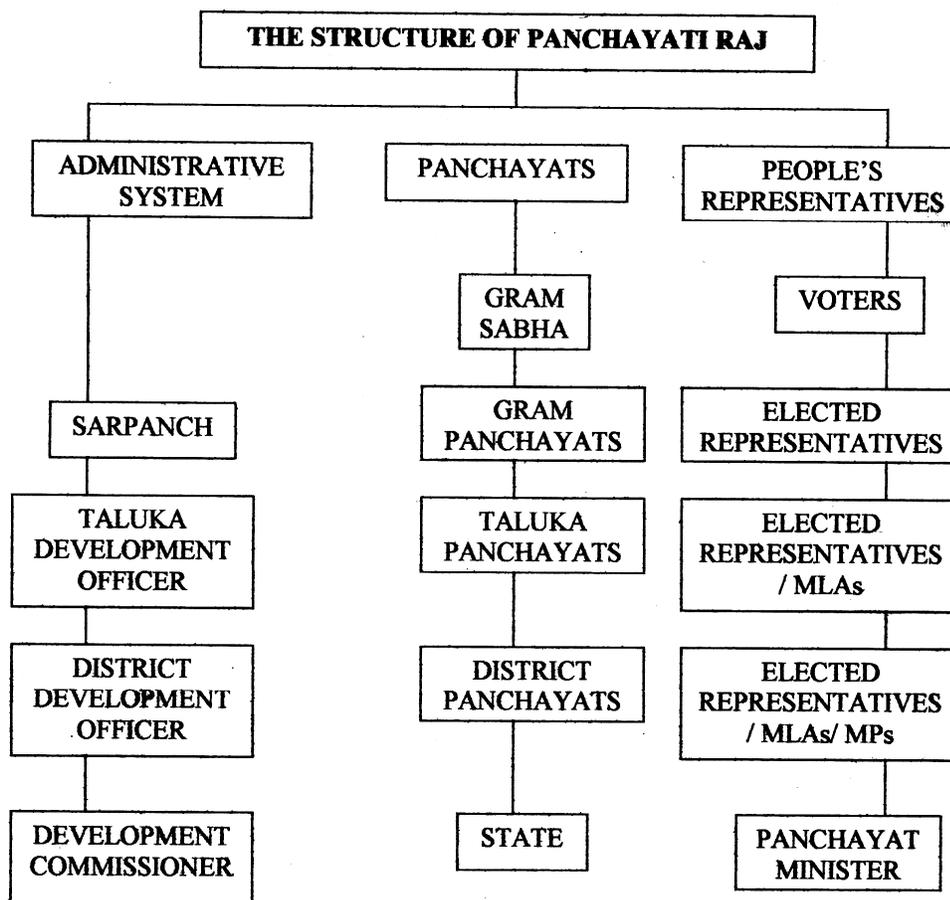
Appendix 1
List of Sarpanches, villages, talukas, and districts

No.	Name of Sarpanch	Village	Taluka	District
1.	Parmar Babubhai Punjabhai	Umedpura	Idar	Sabarkantha
2.	Parmar Bharatkumar Karshanbhai	Bhadresar	“	“
3.	Vankar Laliben Valjibhai	Balundra (Ruvech)	Idar	“
4.	Patel Ramanbhai Kohyabhai	Revas	Idar	“
5.	Parmar Rajendrakumar Muljibhai	Hatharava	Vadali (former Idar)	“
6.	Makwana Dineshbhai Nathabhai	Katvad	Himmatnagar	“
7.	Vankar Kuberbhai Somabhai	Pedhmala	“	“
8.	Parmar Kesharben Ramjibhai	Aagiyol	“	“
9.	Parmar Parbatsinh Gulabsinh	Dhundhar	“	“
10.	Chamar Kacharabhai Nathabhai	Hadmatiya	Prantij	“
11.	Chamar Somabhai Karshanbhai	Ujedia	Talod (former Prantij)	“
12.	Parmar Pasabhai Nathabhai	Poglu	Prantij	“
13.	Baraiya Taraben Ramansinh	Fatepur	“	“
14.	Vankar Vastabhai Maknabhai	Bhetali	Bhiloda	“
15.	Solanki Alakhabhai Virabhai	Lilchha	“	“
16.	Patel Devkaranbhai Kacharabhai	Rajendranagar	“	“
17.	Vankar Kokilaben Khemchandbhai	Dholvani	“	“
18.	Parmar Shivrambhai R.	Dalvana	Vadgam	Banaskantha
19.	Patel Raghavajibhai L.	Pilucha	“	“
20.	Parmar Nathiben Ramabhai	Sisrana	“	“
21.	Trivedi Galbiben Narottambhai	Juni Sendhni	“	“
22.	Patel Ravjibhai Kanabhai	Nagla	Tharad	“
23.	Gohil Keshaji Navaji	Khoda	“	“
24.	Chauhan Mohanbhai Chelabhai	Pavadasan	“	“
25.	Vahon Chaheriben Mohanbhai	Dudhva	“	“
26.	Parmar Rajabhai Ramabhai	Lalavada	Palanpur	“
27.	Nagria Kashiben Dahyabhai	Dhandha	“	“
28.	Chauhan Ramjibhai Bhanabhai	Karjoda	“	“
29.	Foshi Valabhai Chelabhai	Vedancha	“	“
30.	Sengal Kalyanjibhai Madevbhai	Vavdi	Vav	“
31.	Galsar Shankarbhai Kalabhai	Asaravas	“	“
32.	Solanki Roodiben Vihajibhai	Madka	“	“
33.	Patel Roopsibhai Savjibhai	Tadav	“	“

Appendix 2 Systems and functioning of Panchayat

1. The Panchayati Raj System:

The Panchayati Raj system is a three-tier system consisting of units at village, taluka and district levels. The structure of the panchayati raj system consists of 3 areas: the administrative system, the Panchayat system and the system of people's representatives.



2. Rights and duties of the functionaries:

a. Sarpanch:

The Sarpanch is the chairperson of the gram Panchayat. He/she chairs the proceedings of the Panchayat meetings as well as the Gram Sabha. He/she is also responsible for the efficient functioning of the Panchayat employees. The Sarpanch has limited discretionary powers for financial expenditure. He/she is the ultimate authority in planning and making provisions for

the various government schemes for the village, and the ultimate person responsible to administer the funds of the Panchayat.

b. Talati:

The Talati is the administrator of the village Panchayat. He/she acts as the liaison person between the Panchayat and the state administration; it is the duty of the Talati to provide information and make clarifications regarding various grants and funds as well as government circulars being sent from time to time. The Talati is also responsible for the actual drawing up of the budget and getting it sanctioned by the gram sabha, and for maintaining the daily accounts of the Panchayat. In general the Talati's post is merged with that of the secretary of the Panchayat. He/she is therefore also responsible for writing the minutes of the Panchayat meetings, and maintaining all records and registers.

c. Panchayat members:

Only residents of the village (or in the case of group Panchayat, the villages) belonging to the Panchayat may become Panchayat members. Any person who remains absent from the village for a long time loses the membership. The members of the Panchayat are jointly responsible for monitoring the activities of the Panchayat, and for giving a list of their suggestions to the Talati. They should also help the Sarpanch in the effective implementation of the government schemes.

3. Composition of the Gram Panchayat:

The Gram Panchayat may consist of any odd number of members (5,7,9,11...) who are elected as per the wards of the village as defined in the voting list.

4. Reserved seats:

One third of the seats are reserved for women. There are also seats reserved for Dalits and tribals as per the proportion of their population. In each of the SC, ST, and OBC communities also a third of the seats are reserved for women.

5. Panchayat meetings:

Panchayat meetings are called by the Sarpanch. The periodicity of the Panchayat meetings is decided by the gram Panchayat itself. However the Sarpanch can also call emergency/additional meetings as per requirement. The system is that at least one third of the members should be invited to the meeting by written invitation. In case a meeting cannot be held the Sarpanch should circulate the proposals of that meeting in the village and get the resolution passed. Outsiders may remain present in the Panchayat meeting as audience and may participate in discussions but may not vote.

6. Gram sabha:

It has to be held at least twice in a year, but can be held for more than that frequency also. There should be three months gap between gram sabhas. The Sarpanch, or the taluka or district Panchayat can also call extraordinary gram sabhas. In practice gram sabhas are held on a date fixed by the taluka Panchayat office. Taluka or district level government officials may attend the gram sabha but their attendance is not compulsory. They may participate but not vote in the gram sabha.

7. Committees:

Each Panchayat may have an **executive committee** consisting of five persons. Three of them should be from SC or ST communities or women. There is election to this body every two years. The formation of an Executive Committee is not compulsory but is recommended. It consists of five elected members of the gram Panchayat. The chairperson of this committee is the Sarpanch.

The **Social Justice Committee** is compulsory in each gram Panchayat. It has a maximum of five members, of whom one must belong to the Valmiki community. Apart from this, there must be one woman member. All members must belong to the SC. If such members are not available in the Panchayat, they may be co-opted from within the village.

Apart from this, the Panchayat may also appoint **other committees** for other specialised functions, and members of these other committees may be experts drawn from outside the Panchayat if required.

8. Financial systems:

The Sarpanch is ultimately responsible for getting the budget drawn up for each year. The first gram sabha of the year has to be called before 31st May in which the accounts of the previous year as well as the budget of the current year has to be presented by the Sarpanch before the village residents. It has to be approved by the gram sabha before it can be sent to the taluka.

9. The budget:

The budget has to be drawn up and sent to the taluka Panchayat between 31st December and 15th January, where the taluka Panchayat has the right to make suggestions and changes, and the final budget has to be sent back before 31st March. The Panchayat also has to send to the taluka a list of development plans for each year as per a decided format.

10. Sources of Panchayat funds:

The government can give the rights over common lands to the Panchayat. But the government has the right to reclaim it if required for public purpose. The Panchayat has to take the permission from the District Collector in order to make any changes such as leasing out, mortgaging or selling of any landed property vested in it by the government. The gram Panchayat has its own gram fund in which all net income (after expenditure) may be deposited such as that of grants from taluka and districts, income by court order, all forms of production, donation, and public contribution, income from rent and fine for stray cattle. There are various minor sources of Panchayat funds, but apart from all these the Panchayat also has the right to levy surcharge on the land revenue that it collects on behalf of the government.

Appendix 3

List of Issues Taken up in Panchayat Meetings

Dalit related	All-village related
o Water tank for Dalits	o water supply
o residential plots	o street lights
o encroachment	o cleanliness
o levelling of housing land	o pond deepening
o road in Dalit vas	o encroachment
o water pipeline in Indira Avas houses	o BPL list
o Boundary wall for Chamars' work area	o flood protection wall
o Pullcarts for Chamars	o hygiene/prevention of disease
o borewell in Dalit vas	o regularity of Panchayat staff
o protection wall around Dalit vas	o relief work
o pipeline/ water connection in Dalits' houses	o rooms in primary school/ boundary wall for school, anganvadi building
o cemetery land for Dalits	o borewell-pipeline, repairing of water tank.
	o people's contribution to build water tank
	o SGRY scheme
	o watershed programmes
	o grazing land
	o passing of budget and audit inquiries
	o survey of houses
	o drinking water facility for animals
	o collection of taxes
	o Fixing of crop estimate
	o Repairing of panchayat office
	o identification of land for pickup stand
	o electrical connections and meters
	o restarting of flour mill
	o fodder depot
	o plots for BPL
	o road