In India today, in each sphere of social, economic and political life, we are experiencing the strains and stresses inherent in the process of directed social change and economic development. It is therefore natural that such strains and stresses are reflected in the patterning of leadership in general and in the villages in particular. It is true that largely leadership pattern is a function of the socio-economic structure of a given society, but it has to play a positive and dynamic role in any programme of directed change. Today it is strongly felt that 'the soundness of community development programmes depend on the extent to which the community, as a whole is activated and assumes responsibility in the planning and implementation of projects. While education helps to speed up this process, illiterate communities are not incapable of learning to help themselves through concerted action, given the right type of leadership and stimulation.'

Then what is the right type of leadership? the U.N.O. report goes on to point out that "the question is in fact more than that of class or occupational representation. It is one of developing democratic concepts of leadership so that there comes about a cohesiveness between leader and group, and consequently a more real sense of responsibility and participation by the group in the programme undertaken. It is therefore significant that while new methods for the training and utilisation of prestige leaders are being explored, the training of incipient or potential leaders is receiving increasing attention". Hence it will not be an exaggeration to say that locating and training of democratic leaders at the grassroot level is one of the important problems of community development of all the emerging nations.

Research studies of tradition-bound, authoritarian communities like those of India where leadership has been long established, reveal the fact that the 'social distance' between status groups (as between castes and classes) makes the leaders of different status groups hesitant to join hands, with the consequence that community mobilisation becomes difficult. In the context of directed social change in a society such as ours where 'equalisation' process is at work, one would expect that in a normal course of time progressive democratic leadership would emerge in the rural areas. This has become an urgent necessity in our country in view of the fact that authority is devolved and the leaders at the local level are expected to take important role in problems or rural reconstruction. But it is often observed that leadership in the villages is still largely authoritative and conservative being unable to mobilise the community for concerted action. This condition exists because either the
so-called leader is nothing more than a 'prestige leader' and as such the people do not have confidence in him, and therefore, his advice is not paid heed to; or that the leader himself stands against any change as such, for, it is in the status-quo and continuation of the existing social order and values that his own existence lies. Because of the latter, usually wherever leadership from among the lower castes is emerging there is a conflict between the established leaders and the emerging ones. It should not, however, mean that a democratic leader (to take the real sense of the term) will always be successful in leading the group or community towards constructive action. It has to be borne in mind that the leader, even if he is elected democratically, is not expected to write anything on the clean slate. He is, on the other hand, expected to strengthen the mores and norms of his group even if they appear queer ones and therefore can bring about change only stage-by-stage keeping the essential 'moving equilibrium'. If resistance to change is high then naturally the rate of change will be slow. But if he is imaginative and skilful, the democratic leader will undoubtedly be more effective than any one else.

In our society, more often than not, it so happens that political, caste and economic factors get merged together and a type of a 'neo-traditional' leadership restricted to the 'dominant castes' of the village comes to the forefront. In fact, this is reported by a number of researches to be the order of the day. It is found that the "establishment of statutory panchayats through adult franchise has given a new role to the dominant caste. Where a caste is economically and numerically dominant, and ritually higher up, its sway in the election is decisive and its political power more secure. Even in cases where an economically dominant caste is not numerically preponderant its political sway in the Panchayat may not be obviated because the patron-client relationship develop loyalties across caste lines. The clients of lower castes are attached to the patrons of dominant castes in various ways: as tenants, debtors and servants." In a recent Seminar on Community Development held in January, at Waltair, some of the participants pointed out the fact that while most of the educated youth from among the minority and backward classes are moving to urban areas some of the educated youth of the dominant castes are now-a-days going back to the rural areas with a view to holding positions in the panchayat* instead of securing ordinary government jobs in the towns as before. This trend again goes only to strengthen the position of the dominant caste in the village despite the fact that educated youth is gradually taking up the leadership.

It is a fact that mere superficial observation of any community does not give us the clue to group dynamics and leadership pattern. Except in a very remote and authoritarian village, leadership will not be symbolised by one or two individuals. It is symbolised by groups in the form of factions having their own leadership. Most often membership in a faction is on family, kinship and caste basis. There are, of course, cases where brothers or relatives belong to different factions, but while seeking support of members belonging to other castes each one of them would primarily try to maintain strong affiliations with his kinsmen and members of his caste.

In recent years, particularly with the introduction of Panchayati Raj and the con-

\[3^3\text{M. S. A. Rao, "Rural Development Programmes" in 'Problems of Rural Change', Ed. M. S. Gore, 1963, pp. 8-9.}\]
\[\text{*because of the possibilities of holding positions of power such as Panchayat Presidents, Samiti and Zilla Parishad Chairmen.}\]
sequent unleashing of power politics at the local level, factions in the villages are increasing in number. In order to keep hold in the local area the political parties take interest in each dispute between any two members of the village. The leaders above village level, instead of trying to suppress such activities seem to encourage the same with a view to using such village rivalries to their own advantage in the elections. This is quite an undesirable situation from the point of view of developing a proper democratic social order. For the successful working of democracy 'the whole political process must be under-pinned by a widespread of loyalty to democratic values and to the continuity of the democratic process itself, notably among those who lead the society's major groups. Individual citizens and substantial groups in the society must be prepared, from time to time, to accept some short-turn damage to their interests on behalf of a larger communal interest in maintaining a stable competitive political system. There must be in short, an important element of loyalty to the constitutional arrangements transcending special interests." It is, therefore, unfortunate that individuals join political parties not because of any specific interest in this or that party, but only because of individual rivalries and self-interests. This kind of unchecked membership and admission into any party undermines its own popularity in the long run. Constant shift on the part of the leaders from one faction to the other demoralises the followers and the public at large: with the result the public cease to take active interest in any activity or movement initiated by the leaders.

As a consequence of factions secondary and tertiary leaders undermine the importance of the primary leader who has village-wide fame. Therefore, the primary leader, even if he is of authoritative type, feels unable to direct the people to work for a common purpose and for the welfare of the community at large. Sometimes there may not at all be a primary leader as such; with the result inter-group co-operation which is so essential for community organisation becomes difficult. In its anxiety to get over this difficulty government has announced cash awards for the unanimously elected panchayats hoping thereby that this would induce cooperation among the factions. It is also reported that this inducement worked out its purpose successfully. But research has revealed the fact that the so-called unanimity, more often than not, either again strengthened the dominant caste or helped develop inactive leadership emerging out of compromise between the rival factions. The remedy appears to be worse than the disease.

Certain of the above disquieting trends could have been avoided had we given enough care to the principles of social engineering and community development. Inspite of the fact that time and again we have declared 'building up of human beings' and 'developing a spirit of self-reliance and cooperative endeavour' among the people as the main objectives of community development, we seem to have largely failed to have given serious thought and trial to these aspects. There are ample cases to show how the social scientists and social workers with their 'social skills' could turn factions in the village to the advantage of the community at large. In a very revealing article Sri Gangrade has shown how individuals trained in 'social skills' could help develop collective leadership in a notoriously faction-ridden village near Delhi and could actively associate the same with community develop-

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ment activities. Surprisingly our agents of extension are either not properly trained in 'social skills' or the bureaucratic administrative structure under the spell of targets did not allow them enough time to make sincere use of such skills. Thus obviously we have not as yet transformed public administration into social administration the distinctive feature of which is 'the development of collective action for the advancement of social welfare'.

Let alone the 'social skills' and the principles of group work and community organisation. Even the bare social educational activities are not given a fair trial. In fact, the social education functions are so important and fundamental that if properly executed they would help develop proper social institutions and leadership. As envisaged in the beginning of the community development programme, it was important and basic to all activities to create a new outlook on the part of the village elite and people through social education programmes such as youth clubs, Mahilamandalis, Farm Associations, Recreation Associations and the like. But today in most of the places such voluntary organisations are not effectively functioning. It is important to note that experience in such voluntary organisations are not effectively functioning. It is important to note that experience in such voluntary organisations tantamounts largely to experience in the democratic process of leadership and also that such associations form the very basis of a democratic society. It is true that provision has been made for village leader training camps with a view to orienting the leaders for community welfare. Nevertheless such programmes have only a very limited value. Training of leaders is different from training for leadership, and the latter is definitely more important from the point of view of developing democratic leadership. Such a training and experience is good for both the potential leaders and for the public. While the potential leaders gain experience in the art of democratic leadership, the public would have an opportunity to evaluate the work of the individual leaders and then choose the best for the important positions in the panchayat. Thus the voluntary organisations virtually become feeding channels for the panchayat besides being responsible for 'certain types of action important for balanced village development'. It has been always pointed out by experts in group dynamics and leadership that "natural leaders arise naturally out of group activities. They come from the group and from no other source.... Nothing is more important than to recognise that the greatest underdeveloped potential, for both local community development and national development, is the willing and effective participation of the millions of followers of group-chosen, natural leaders." It is therefore these voluntary organisations as against the panchayat that provide such natural leadership. Many a panchayat is functioning badly because of lack of support and guidance from such associate organisations.

It is again disheartening to note that the co-operative society and the school, the supposed two basic institutions of a village community (panchayat being the third one), are not effective. The school of course, is in a very bad state everywhere and as such it is out of question to expect any impact of the same on the village community. In the case of the co-operative society it is often forgotten that it ought to be out and out a voluntary association of a group of people with a common purpose. To be successful the members shall have to be more or less of the same socio-economic group. Otherwise

6C. C. Taylor, 'Community Mobilisation and Group Formation.' New Delhi: Government of India, p. 44.
the dominant caste or group would again exploit the association for its own ends and would make use of the same as a stepping stone for controlling the panchayat. Perhaps it was the fear of the dominant caste spreading its tentacles all over the community that made Dr. Ambedkar express strong doubts against the merits of village panchayats. Once socio-economic homogeneity (if necessary on a regional basis) is also accepted as a guiding principle for the formation of any association, the backward classes will have their own associations which serve their needs and help leadership grow from among their own ranks as well.

Therefore, in the interest of developing democratic leadership in the villages in the place of the present authoritative one it seems essential to (a) strengthen local voluntary organisations, (b) provide more and more opportunities for potential leaders at all socio-economic levels to take part in various group activities, (c) help the extension agents use more and more 'social skills' in dealing with the people and solving their problems, (d) strengthen the social education department and its activities, (e) reduce the interference of the political parties in the day-to-day inter-personal problems of the ruralite, and lastly (f) equalise, at a rapid rate, economic opportunities for all categories of people and make special efforts for the economic well-being of the backward classes. Until and unless such important measures are undertaken for developing democratic leadership in the villages it would certainly be very difficult to "overcome local inertia or apathy, resolve obstructive differences and suspicions, and build up in the community a new attitude towards its problems and a faith in the own potentialities for self-help."