

# **DECENTRALISATION AND PANCHAYATS IN UTTAR PRADESH**

*A Study*

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## **FOREWORD**

One of the underlying principles of governance is that it has to be operated in a decentralised fashion to meet aspirations of the people. Panchayati Raj regime is an effort in this direction for it takes power to the hands of vast rural populace of the State (and the country). The Constitution (Seventy-Third) Amendment Act 1992 while according a constitutional status of Panchayats has also given wide instructions to the State Governments regarding devolution of their powers (and finances) to the Panchayats so as to make them a vehicle of development. It put forth before the State deadline towards this decentralisation.

Nearly all the States followed the suit. In Uttar Pradesh the process started way back in 1994 by appointing a State Finance Commission and an Administrative Reforms and Decentralisation Commission. The reports of these two commissions were ready by 1995. While financial devolution was quick, the journey of decentralisation was quite bumpy because of political situation prevailing in the State at that time. Because of this decentralisation in real terms could take place in 1999 only.

Six months after the decentralisation process was set in motion, Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra decided to carry on a study on decentralisation and Panchayats. The report of the study is before you now.

I hope that the report will give valuable insights into decentralisation for as someone said if India has to govern itself, it has to decentralise. Your feedback on the report will be vital for us in carrying forward the work on Panchayats.

**Ashok Singh**

**Director**

August 20, 2000

## THE STUDY TEAM

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# CHAPTER 1: ABOUT THE STUDY

## 1.1. CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

While according constitutional status to Panchayats the Constitution (Seventy-Third) Amendment Act, 1992, itself sets tone of decentralisation of powers, responsibilities and finances to Panchayats by the States. The Article 243-G of the Act says that the legislature of a State may endow the Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government. It further says that such law may contain provisions for devolution of powers and responsibilities upon Panchayats with respect to the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice and the implementation of plans for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them in relation to the matters listed in the 11th Schedule (the 29 item list)

Since the devolution of functions and responsibility has to move together with the devolution of finances, the aforementioned Amendment has adequate financial provisions. The Article 243-H of the Act says that the legislature of a State may authorise a Panchayat to levy, collect and appropriate such taxes, duties, tolls and fees within set limits; assign to a Panchayat such taxes, duties, tolls and fees collected by the State Government for such purposes and subject to such conditions and limits; provide for making such grants-in-aid to the Panchayats from the Consolidated Fund of the State; and provide for constitution of such Funds for crediting all money received by the Panchayats and also for withdrawal of such money.

The Article 243-I says the Governor of a State shall constitute within one year from the date of commencement of the Act and then after every fifth year a Finance Commission to review the financial position of the Panchayats and to make recommendations to the Governor as to the principles which should govern the distribution between the State and the Panchayats of the net proceeds of taxes, duties, tolls and fees leviable by the State; the determination of the taxes, duties, tolls and fees which may be assigned to the Panchayats; and the grants-in-aid to the Panchayats from the Consolidated Fund of the State; and the measures needed to improve the financial position of the Panchayats.

The State Government made elaborate provisions regarding the above provisions in the Conformity Acts passed. In addition it constituted two commissions, one, the Administrative Reforms and Decentralisation Commission on August 9, 1994, and, two, the State Finance Commission on October 22, 1994. The two commissions submitted their reports on August 31, 1995 and December 26, 1996, respectively. Details of the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms and Decentralisation Commission and follow-up action on the part of the State Government are given in the Chapter 2. As far as

financial aspects are concerned, they are not being covered in this study for they have been covered in a study 'Functions and Finances of Panchayats in UP' carried out by SSK earlier.

## **1.2. THE PRESENT STUDY**

The fourth year after the report of the Administrative Reforms and Decentralisation Commission, that is, 1999, was quite important in the annals of Panchayats in UP. While presenting the budget for the year 1999–2000 the then Chief Minister of the State announced that this financial year would be observed as the year of decentralisation and people's participation. Accordingly, the State Government handed over functions of 11 departments to the Panchayats and issued orders to the district level officials to make the decentralised system effective and successful.

As a part of its continuing efforts towards strengthening of Panchayats, SSK, which is one of the members of Network of Collaborating Regional Support Organisations (NCRSOs) being co-ordinated by the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi, decided to carry out a study on the decentralisation process six months after it began. It may be mentioned here that SSK has been carrying on studies on various concurrent topics related to Panchayats from time to time.

The objectives of the study were:

1. To know the effect of the process/initiatives of decentralisation on Panchayats
2. To know the feasibility of the initiatives of the State Government
3. To know the co-ordination between Gram Panchayat, Kshetra Panchayat and Zila Panchayat with the District Planning Committee
4. To know the co-ordination among Gram Panchayat and other institutions at the village level

It was decided that the study would be mainly used for advocacy and lobbying purposes to influence the government policy so suitable corrective measures could be undertaken in the next phase of decentralisation.

## **1.3. STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGY**

It was decided to carry out the study in all the five geo-economic regions. It was also decided that two districts would be covered in each region. The districts were:

1. Hill Region: Almora and Dehradun
2. Western Region: Saharanpur and Bijnore
3. Central Region: Khiri and Rae Bareli
4. Eastern Region: Pratapgarh and Ghazipur
5. Bundelkhand: Banda and Jhansi

There were two criteria for selecting districts: one, distance between the two districts selected, and, two, presence of NGOs which could participate in the study for a study of such a magnitude can be done only with a joint effort. At the last moment, however, Dehradun had to be dropped from the study because the NGO concerned over there backed out.

Regarding the study area it was decided that the Zila Panchayat, one Kshetra Panchayat and five Gram Panchayats would be covered. Thus the total number of Panchayats covered was nine Zila Panchayats, nine Kshetra Panchayats and 45 Gram Panchayats. The NGOs did not have any option regarding the selection of the Zila Panchayats. They were suggested to select the Kshetra Panchayat under which their operational area fell. Regarding the Gram Panchayats the NGOs were suggested to keep in mind the present status of reservation. Thus, each of them selected two women headed and three men headed Gram Panchayats. Among the women headed Gram Panchayats, they tried to stick to one Gram Panchayat headed by a Pradhan belonging to Scheduled Castes (SCs) / Scheduled Tribes (STs) / Backward Classes (BCs) and the other headed by a Pradhan belonging to General category. And among the men headed Gram Panchayats, they chose one Gram Panchayat headed by a Pradhan belonging to SCs/STs , another to BCs and the last to the General category. While selecting the members of the Gram Panchayats they made it a point to include two women and three men members.

Along with the Panchayat representatives government officials related to them were also interviewed. The officials at the Zila Panchayat levels were: Apar Mukhya Adhikari of Zila Panchayat, Chief Development Officer and District Panchayati Raj Officer. Being the head of the district, the District Magistrates were also interviewed. At the Kshetra Panchayat level, the Block Development Officer and Assistant Development Officer (Panchayat) were interviewed. At the Gram Panchayat level, the Gram Panchayat Development Officers were interviewed.

The sample size is summarised in Table 1.1.

Uniform questionnaires were used for interviewing representatives of the three tiers of Panchayats, Gram Sabha members and Gram Panchayat Development Officers. Checklists were used for interviewing officials at the district and block development office level.

A broad time frame was also drawn up for the study. An orientation workshop for the investigators from the participating NGOs was held at SSK on January 6 and 7, 2000. Data collection took place by February 15, 2000. But analysis of data and report preparation which were scheduled to be over by April end could not be adhered to. After

long delay owing to engagement in other studies and then elections to the Panchayats, the report could be finalised towards the end of August 2000 only.

**Table 1.1: Sample Size**

Panchayat	One District		State	
	Elected Representatives	Officials	Elected Representatives	Officials
Zila Panchayat	1 Chairperson 5 Members	1 District Magistrate 1 Apar Mukhya Adhikari 1 Chief Development Officer 1 District Panchayati Raj Officer	9 Chairpersons 45 Members	9 District Magistrates 9 Apar Mukhya Adhikari 9 Chief Development Officers 9 District Panchayati Raj Officer
Kshettra Panchayat	1 Kshettra Pramukh 5 Members	1 Block Development Officer 1 Assistant Development Officer (Panchayat)	9 Kshettra Pramukhs 45 Members	9 Block Development Officers 9 Assistant Development Officer
Gram Panchayat	5 Gram Pradhans* 25 Members* 25 Gram Sabha Members*	5 Gram Panchayat Development Officers**	45 Gram Pradhans 225 Members 225 Gram Sabha Members	45 Gram Panchayat Development Officers
<b>Total***</b>	<b>67 Representatives</b>	<b>11 Officials</b>	<b>603 Representatives</b>	<b>99 Officials</b>

\* These figures pertain to Gram Panchayats

\*\* Both the Gram Panchayat Development Officers were interviewed in the Gram Panchayats having two Gram Panchayat Development Officers

\*\*\* Total number of district level interviews 702

#### **1.4. LIMITATIONS**

This report makes an attempt to identify emerging trends of decentralisation across the four regions of the State that differ vastly from each other in terms of all the indicators. Though the sample size is fairly big and covers all the geo-economic regions of the State from the point of a qualitative study, one wished more districts could be included in the study because there are considerable variations among the districts of one region. This limitation of the study is recognised. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the study will give an idea of the trends of decentralisation and lead to identification of the points for further action.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE PROCESS**

### **2.1. GENESIS OF DECENTRALISATION**

To meet the Constitutional requirements, the State Government appointed an Administrative Reforms and Decentralisation Commission in chairmanship of Mr JL Bajaj, an IAS officer, through a resolution dated August 9, 1994. It asked the commission, nicknamed Bajaj Commission, to study and recommend necessary changes in the methodology of planning and development, and suggest measures for associating Panchayats, to a larger extent, in development programmes. For this the commission was to recommend delegation of powers to the Panchayats. The commission was expected to submit its report to the Government within six months of its constitution, but its term was extended to August 31, 1995.

The commission formed four working groups: (a) the planning system and procedures group, (b) the decentralised planning groups, (c) the devolution of functions and finances groups, and (d) the accounts group. These groups discussed various aspects of the issues involved in the process of decentralisation and gave valuable suggestions. The commission held extensive discussions with a large number of organisations government, semi-government and autonomous and individuals, including all MPs from UP and all MLAs and MLCs.

On planning the commission noted that the planning process must promote harmony, mutual understanding and co-operation between the State Government and Panchayats of different tiers. It proposed that there should be a representative forum similar to the National Development Council to consider the approach to the State's five year plans, review of the plans and related policy matters. The Chief Minister should be the chairman of this council with secretary planning as its member-secretary. It suggested: "The council may have standing committees to consider area specific and inter-district problems of different regions.... The standing committee may consist of Adhyakshas of Zila Panchayats of the region. These committees may nominate one of its members as Chairman." It noted that there is absence of linkages with higher level institutions and the Panchayats cannot function in the desired fashion. As a result the district plans without people's participation remained a paper exercise.

The commission remarked that there was no justification of the continuance of the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) in its present form after the coming into existence the new structure of Panchayati Raj. While going into pros and cons of maintaining separate identity of DRDA it recommended integration of functions of DRDA and Zila Panchayat to achieve convergence of sectoral and poverty alleviation programmes. To achieve this objective, it recommended that Zila Panchayat Chairpersons should be

designated as DRDA Chairpersons. To harmonise the functions of DRDA and Zila Panchayat, the Chief Development Officer should be nominated its secretary. It went on to recommend that Pramukhs of Kshetra Panchayats be made members of DRDA.

It noted that the success of decentralised planning would largely depend on the organisational capability of Panchayats. The human resource development aspect has to be given due importance so that the Panchayats have quality personnel of their own and have motivated and committed staff drawn from other departments. Training of non-official functionaries to develop leadership qualities should be attached high priority. Training courses of officials and non-officials at various levels should be organised on a regular basis. The focus of this is Gram Panchayats because their responsibilities would increase substantially with the devolution of functions and finances under the new legislation.

The commission did a detailed exercise for devolution of functions involving a number of considerations including efficiency, equity, economies of scale, economy of scope, management by exception, convergence of services, etc. It said to ensure success decentralised planning has to be backed by sound practices. It has also to be assiduously supported by right procedures and suitable structures. Necessary attitudinal changes have to be brought about among civil servants and politicians. For the success of decentralised programmes, it is not merely that functions and powers must be desegregated, but also certain attitudinal, behavioural and cultural conditions conducive to decentralisation should be created. The culture of decentralisation has to grow in strength and take deep roots to successfully resist the pressure for centralisation.

The commission noted that delineation of functions involves complex factors of efficiency of operation, equity, etc. In its own words: "It is necessary to evolve suitable criteria that will take into consideration the capacity of a Panchayat and its coverage in terms of area and population. The criteria should be simple enough so that rural local bodies understand its rationale. It took the following considerations for delimitation of functions at different levels: (i) Economies of scale, (ii) Economies of scope, (iii) Political proximity, (iv) institutional autonomy, (v) Organisational capability, (vi) Capacity for human resource development, (vii) Management by exception and (viii) Convergence of services."

Keeping in view the above considerations, the commission recommended delineation of functions between the State Government and Panchayats at different levels for 32 departments. Having said this much, the commission submitted its report to the Government in July 1995. At the time of submission of the report the State was under the President's rule. Therefore, the decision on the report was deferred till the popular government came into being.

When a popular government took reins of the State it constituted in June 1996 a high powered committee to examine the report of the commission. The committee was headed by the then Chief Minister, Ms Mayawati, and its members were her ministerial colleagues Mr Lalji Tandon, Mr Barkhram Varma, Mr Om Prakash Singh, Mr Sukhdev Rajbhar, Mr Shriram Pal and Mr Baleshwar Tyagi. It was decided that the report would be put before the State Legislature after the committee examined it.

But before the committee could complete its task the six-month tenure of Ms Mayawati came to an end and Mr Kalyan Singh took over as Chief Minister. In the ensuing high voltage political developments Ms Mayawati withdrew support to Mr Kalyan Singh, two political parties split and Mr Kalyan Singh managed to save his chair. Naturally, the process of strengthening the Panchayats took a backseat. Finally when Mr Kalyan Singh was able to save his post, the Cabinet took a decision on the committee's report.

Devolution of powers and functions started in the summer of 1997 with the passage of necessary Government Orders (GOs) of the departments concerned. Initially, 16 departments passed GOs, leading to euphoria in the political circles. The euphoria was, however, short-lived as it was realised by the Panchayat representatives as well NGOs that effectively nothing was given to the Panchayats and the GOs were a mere eyewash. The only happy entities with these GOs were politicians and government officials. But the Government was not heeding.

## **2.2. YEAR OF DECENTRALISATION**

More than one year thus passed and nothing much happened. Then came budget for the year 1999 – 2000. In his budget speech, the Chief Minister, Mr Kalyan Singh, in his capacity of Finance Minister said: “The Government has decided that the year 1999 – 2000 will be observed as the *year of decentralisation and people's participation*.... The proposed works to be transferred to the rural local bodies in the first phase will be primary schools and junior high schools, government tube wells, hand pumps, health sub-centres, veterinary health/service centre, youth welfare, selected functions of the Agriculture Department, selected functions of the Rural Development Department, selected works of the Panchayati Raj Department, and works related to the Public Distribution system of the Food Department.”

Acting on the budget proposals the State Government issued an order (no. 1642/33-1-99) on April 12, 1999, directing the District Magistrates to depute village level government employees to Gram Panchayats by April 30, 1999. The State Government decided that the services of village level employees would be brought under the administrative control of Gram Panchayats. The employees will be given designation of Gram Panchayat and Development Officers. Gram Panchayats belonging to villages having population of over

2,000 will be given an additional multi-purpose employee. The transferred employees will be disbursed salaries by the Gram Panchayats.

The order stated that village level works of eight government departments, viz., Rural Development Department, Panchayati Raj Department, Agriculture Department, Health Department, Irrigation Department, Social Welfare Department, Cane Department and Land Development and Water Resources Department would be carried out by the Gram Panchayat and Development Officers. In addition it was also stated that though the employees of the three departments, viz., Basic Education Department, Medical, Health and Family Welfare Department and Women Welfare Department would be brought under the control of Gram Panchayats, these employees would continue to perform works related to their departments only.

The order also stated that the financial grants, meant for different village level government departments will be transferred to Gram Panchayats. Thus, the grants transferred to the Gram Panchayats included: funds for maintenance of schools, funds for construction of new or existing schools, funds for construction of additional room, funds for repairing of tube wells, funds for maintenance of hand pumps, funds for all the village level activities related to youth welfare, funds for maintenance of health sub-centre, funds for honoraria of anganwadi workers, funds for maintenance of veterinary centre, and funds for all the village level works related to Agriculture, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Departments. In a major policy decision, the State Government decided that money from the village funds would be withdrawn by joint signature of the Pradhan and a nominated member after the recommendation of the relevant committee of the Gram Panchayat. Earlier, signatures of the Gram Pradhan and Gram Panchayat Adhikari were required for withdrawing money.

The above order evoked sharp reaction from the government employees about to be put under the control of Gram Panchayats. Therefore, the State Government amended certain points in the order dated April 12, 1999, through an order of April 29, 1999 (no. 1970/33-1-99). An order (no. 2105/33-1-99-223/99) dated May 6, 1999, regarding the training of Gram Panchayat and Development Officers opened a Pandora's box because of its provision that along with the Gram Panchayat and Development Officers Gram Pradhans, Up-Pradhans and the nearest rival of Gram Pradhans in the last election also be imparted training. The Gram Pradhans questioned the very wisdom of the State Government in authorising the nearest rival of Gram Pradhans in having anything to do with the Gram Panchayat except as a member of Gram Sabha.

On May 27, 1999, the State Government issued an order (no. 2542/33-1-99-159/99 TC) regarding the devolution of rights to Kshetra and Zila Panchayats. According to this order, the Kshetra Panchayats were required to run primary health centres, development block level veterinary hospital and seed centre, implementation, monitoring and

evaluation of programmes related to rural development being conducted from the Kshetra Panchayat level, complete supervision of marketing godowns for smooth conduct of public distribution system, and implementation and co-ordination of works covering more than one Gram Panchayat.

As far as Zila Panchayats were concerned, the Zila Panchayat Chairpersons were appointed Chairpersons of DRDA (also see below), Fisheries Development Authority and Sinchai Bandhu. Fifty per cent of the Kshetra Pramukhs in the district were nominated to the DRDA. To further give importance to the Zila Panchayat it was provided that the Zila Panchayats in the districts having more than 15 developmental blocks will have a senior IAS officer as its Chief Executive Officer (CEO) while in the rest the Chief Development Officer will be nominated CEO. In addition, District Supply Officer, Sub-regional Marketing Officer, Divisional Forest Officer, Superintending Engineer of Public Works Department and Superintending Engineer of Irrigation Department were made advisor to the Zila Panchayat. Lastly, it provided for constitution of a District Planning Committee to be chaired by minister in-charge of the district.

The order (no. D-545/38-2-99-2 (40) D/99) dated May 13, 1999, made it clear that the Zila Panchayat Chairpersons as Chairperson of the DRDA will chair the meeting of the Governing Board and provide leadership to the Panchayat system and authority for successful implementation of the programmes being conducted under the authority. Leaving aside chairing of DRDA, all administrative and financial rights would be vested in the Executive Director who will discharge all the functions which were being discharged by the District Magistrate as Executive Director. Chief Executive Officer/Chief Development Officer will perform the functions of the Executive Director.

The same day, that is, on May 27, 1999, job chart of Gram Panchayat and Development Officers was issued through an order (no. 2129/33-1-99-243/99). The job chart lists 128 jobs pertaining to Rural Development, Panchayati Raj, Agriculture, Health, Irrigation (Tube well), Irrigation (Canals), Social Welfare, Cane Development, and Land Development and Water Resources Departments to be performed by the Gram Panchayat and Development Officers.

On June 14, 1999 another order (no. 2980/33-1-99-159/99) the provision regarding the rights of nearest defeated candidate were dispensed with. Instead all the Gram Sabha members were given the right to get copies of documents pertaining to Gram Panchayat after paying a pre-determined fee.

### **2.3. REPEATED CHANGES**

The description thus far indicates that while decentralising the powers, the State Government was quite confused. It amended the order (no. 1642/33-1-99) thrice. As if it were not enough the State Government cancelled this order with immediate effect through

an order (no. 2735/33-1-99) on June 30, 2000. The very next day, that is, on July 1, 2000, a new order (no. 3467/33-1-99-222/99) was issued regarding devolution and discharge of functions. The main feature of long term consequences was regarding the withdrawal of money from the village fund. It was provided that the money from the village fund will be withdrawn with the joint signature of Gram Pradhan and Gram Panchayat and Development Officer. Thus the provision regarding any member of Gram Panchayat being co-signatory was changed. Another feature of this order was constitution of three more committees in addition to those mentioned in the UP Panchayat Raj Act, 1947. The additional committees were Planning and Development Committee, Construction Work Committee and Health and Welfare Committee.

Through an order (no. 4071/33-1-99-222/99) dated July 26, 1999, the designation Gram Panchayat and Development Officer was changed to Gram Panchayat Development Officer (GPDO).

An order (no. 4430/33-1-99-SPR/99) issued on July 29, 1999 decreased the number of committees to six. The six committees were Planning and Development Committee, Education Committee, Construction Work Committee, Health and Welfare Committee, Administrative Committee and Water Management Committee. Rights and duties which could be devolved to these committees were also delineated. These committees were to be constituted in Zila, Kshetra and Gram Panchayats. The order provided that each of the committees would have six elected members of the Gram Panchayats. Out of these members each committee would have a woman, one SC/ST and one backward class member. The committees were to meet monthly and quorum for the meetings was fixed at four. As far as committees at the Gram Panchayat level were concerned, a provision to co-opt principal and three guardians to Education Committee and two people from the command area of each government tube well was also made. These co-opted members were also given right to cast vote during the committee meetings. Across the three tiers of the Panchayats, the Planning and Development Committee and Administrative Committee would be headed by the Chairperson of the Panchayat concerned, Education Committee by the Deputy Chairperson and the rest by the people elected by the members from among themselves.

On August 7, 1999, an order (no. 3693/33-3-99-206/99) was issued to fix the day of meeting of Gram Panchayats. According to this order all the Gram Panchayats all over the State were required to hold their monthly meetings on second Wednesday of each month. The reason cited for this was irregularity of meetings of Gram Panchayats.

Another order (no. 4500/33-2-99-48G/99) dated August 17, 1999, fixed an extraordinary meeting on August 21, 1999, all over the State for the constitution of committees of Gram Panchayats. The order said constitution of the committees would not be required in the

Gram Panchayats which have already constituted them, but the rest would have to constitute them.

These apart various departments whose functions were transferred to the Panchayats brought out separate orders concerning their functions.

## CHAPTER 3: PEOPLE AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES

### 3.1. GRAM SABHA MEMBERS

The people interviewed for the study included 61.3 per cent men and the rest women. Their average age was 41.8 years. They included 36.6 per cent Scheduled Castes, 8.5 per cent Scheduled Tribes, 29.0 per cent backward classes and 25.4 per cent general categories. Education-wise, there were 29.8 per cent illiterates among them and 16.0 per cent were literates. Percentage of those with formal education was primary pass 13.3, junior high school 17.3, high school 9.8, intermediate 8.4 and graduates and above 5.3. Region wise educational scenario is summarised in Table 3.1.

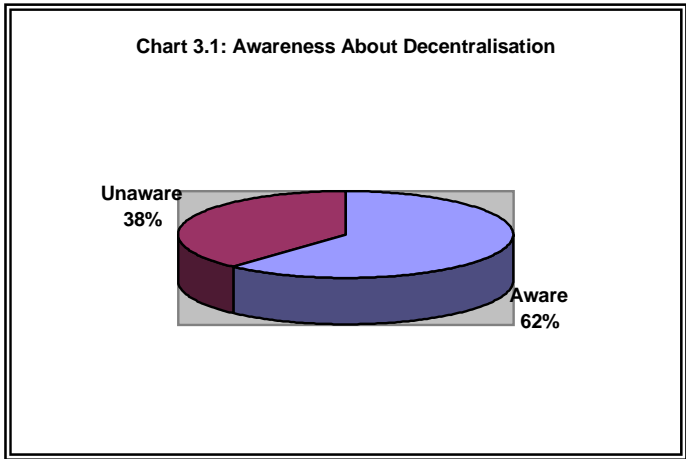
**Table 3.1: Education of Gram Sabha Members Across the Regions**

Sl. No.	Level of Education	Hills	Western	Central	Eastern	Bundelkh and
1.	Illiterate	16.0	38.0	32.0	28.0	28.0
2.	Literate	32.0	12.0	18.0	10.0	16.0
3.	Primary	12.0	10.0	24.0	4.0	16.0
4.	Junior High School	8.0	18.0	16.0	20.0	20.0
5.	High School	12.0	8.0	6.0	16.0	8.0
6.	Intermediate	16.0	4.0	4.0	14.0	8.0
7.	Graduate	4.0	10.0	0.0	8.0	4.0

#### 3.1.1. AWARENESS ON DECENTRALISATION

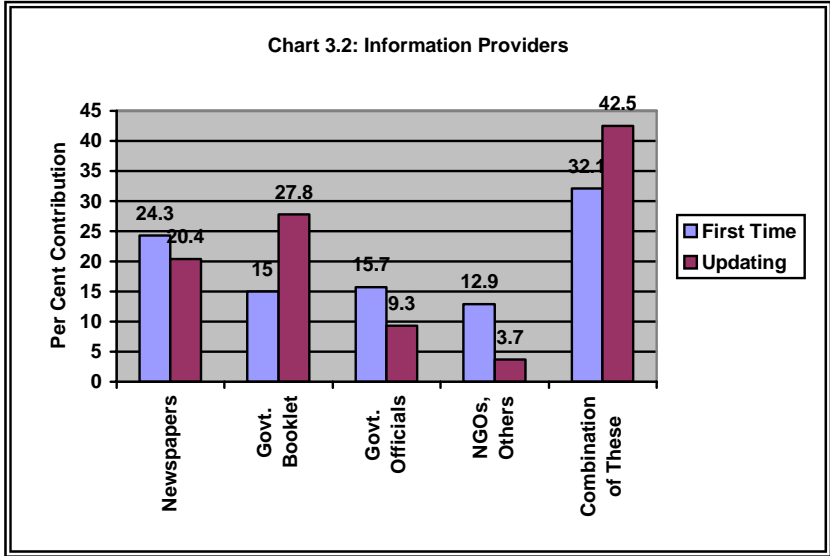
Over 60 per cent of Gram Sabha members, that is, 62.2 per cent were aware of the fact that the Uttar Pradesh Government had started a process of decentralisation to strengthen Panchayats (Chart 3.1). Highest level of awareness regarding this aspect was found in the Hill region where 72.0 per cent Gram Sabha members were found to be aware of the onset of decentralisation process.

Among 62.2 per cent of Gram Sabha members who knew that the process of decentralisation has been set in, 86.3 per cent could recall only the year of its beginning which was 1999. Seen region-wise most of Gram Sabha members in the Central region could not even recall the year of beginning. On the other hand a majority of Gram Sabha members in the Hill region said the process began in the month of August while those in the Western region said it began in June. Gram Sabha members in the rest of the regions could not specify the month.



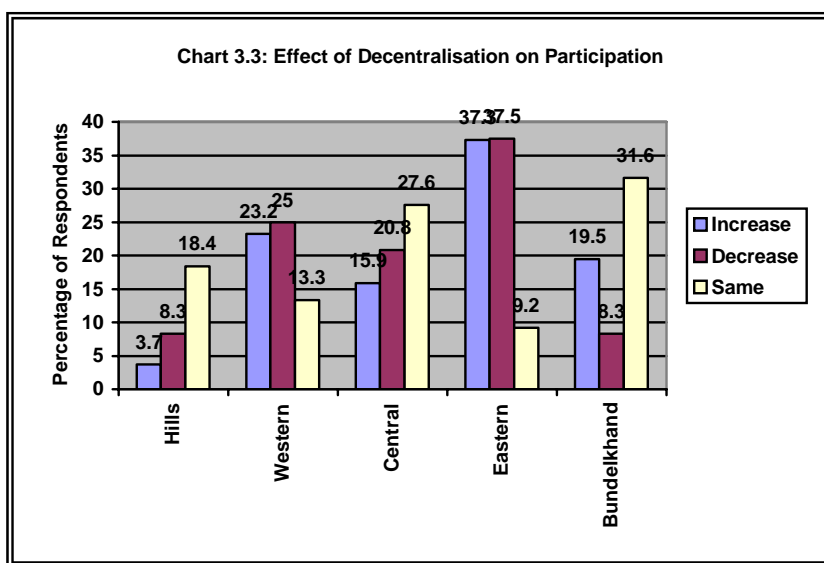
**3.1.2. INFORMATION PROVIDERS**

Newspapers were the information providers regarding decentralisation as 24.3 per cent of members said that they got information about decentralisation from the newspapers for the first time (Chart 3.2). Of these nearly half of Gram Sabha members, that is, 41.2 per cent, could keep track of all the developments regarding decentralisation. When it came to keeping track the most helpful medium was newspaper. In all 20.4 per cent of Gram Sabha members who could keep track of the developments said that they could do so with the help of newspapers. Chart 3.2 also shows the contribution of other informants in keeping the Gram Sabha members updated on decentralisation. It is clear that contribution of government officials as well as NGOs in keeping the Gram Sabha members informed of the developments regarding decentralisation registered a fall and the members had to depend on the booklet published by the State Government to fulfil their requirements.



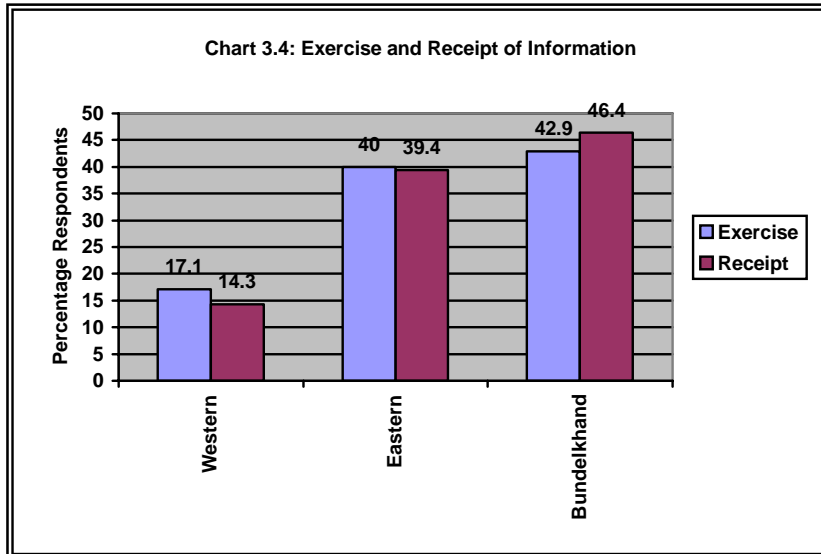
### 3.1.2. FUNCTIONING OF GRAM PANCHAYATS

Less than 40 per cent of the Gram Sabha members, that is, 38.8 per cent felt that functioning of Gram Panchayat has changed following the beginning of decentralisation. Seen across the regions, 6.2 per cent Gram Sabha members in the Hill, 24.7 per cent in the Western, 17.3 per cent in the Central, 29.6 per cent in the Eastern and 22.2 per cent in the Bundelkhand region felt that the functioning has changed. Similarly, only 40.2 per cent Gram Sabha members felt that participation of people in Panchayats has increased after decentralisation began. The percentage of those saying it has decreased was 11.8 and that of those saying it has remained same was 48.0. Region-wise scenario is depicted in the Chart 3.3. It is obvious from these graphs that perception of Gram Sabha members as to whether people's participation has increased, decreased or remained same across the regions varies vastly.

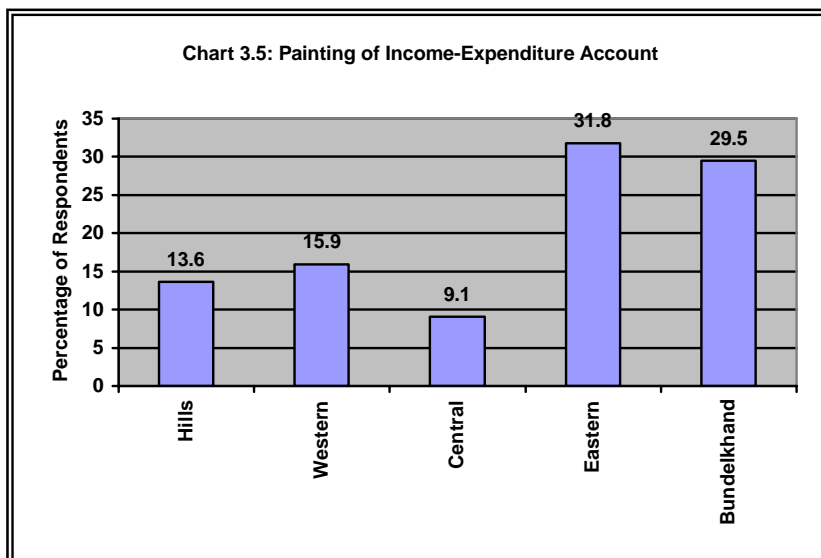


### 3.1.3. RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Notwithstanding the fact whether the Gram Sabha members got right to information or not 91.7 per cent Gram Sabha members felt that functioning of Gram Panchayat would become better if they exercised such a right. In all 19.6 per cent Gram Sabha members said that they knew that they got right to information. Of these 58.3 per cent have used this right. Regional distribution of such Gram Sabha members is shown in the Chart 3.4. Going back to the Gram Sabha members who used right to information 80 per cent of them said they got requisite information. Regional distribution of these Gram Sabha members is also shown in the Chart 3.4. Average time in getting necessary information was 13.2 days and the figures for Western, Eastern and Bundelkhand regions were 12.0 days, 4.8 days and 25.8 days, respectively. Less than one-fifth Gram Sabha members, that is, 19.0 per cent, got the information within one day. The percentage of those getting necessary information within the stipulated three days was 38.1.



It is clear from the above figures that granting of right to information seems to be achieving its objectives and information regarding affairs of Gram Panchayats has started getting out of closet. But the earlier mean of providing information regarding the (financial) business of Gram Sabha by painting income-expenditure account does not seem to be making much headway. Only 21.6 per cent of Gram Sabha members said that income-expenditure account has been made public in their respective Gram Panchayats. Region-wise scenario is depicted in Chart 3.5.

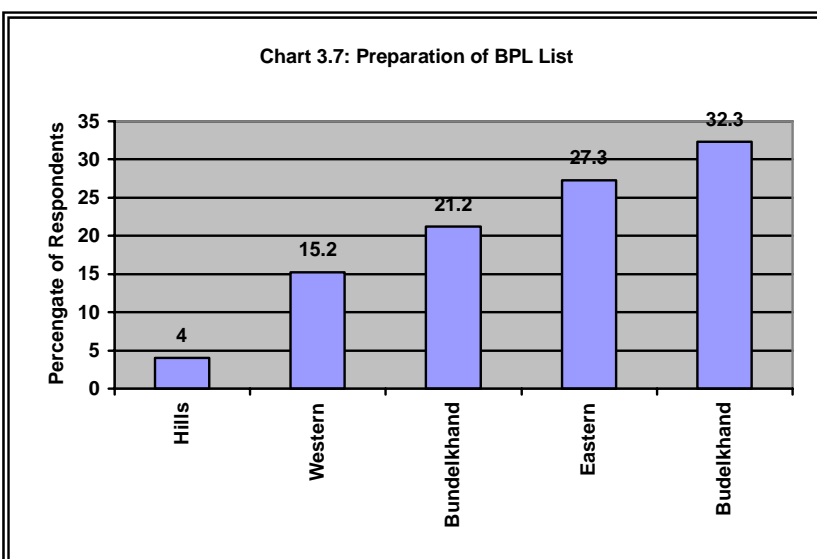
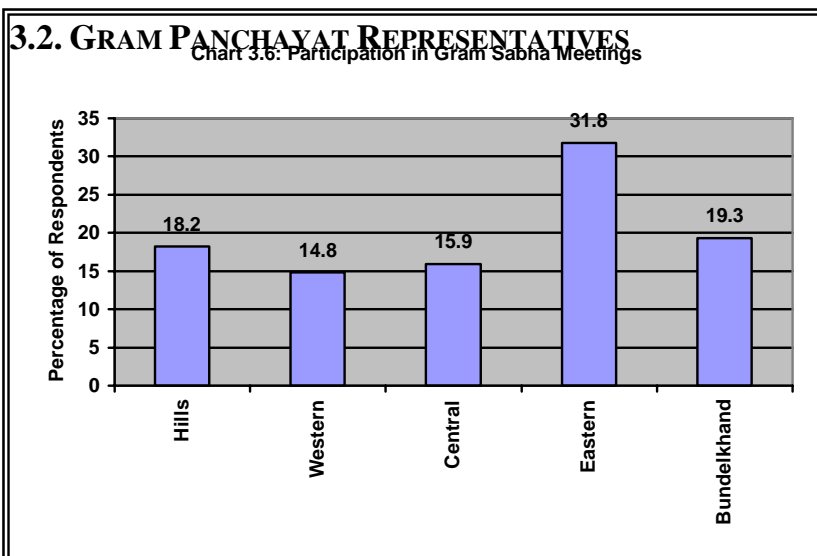


#### **3.1.4. AWARENESS ON TRANSFER OF DEPARTMENTS**

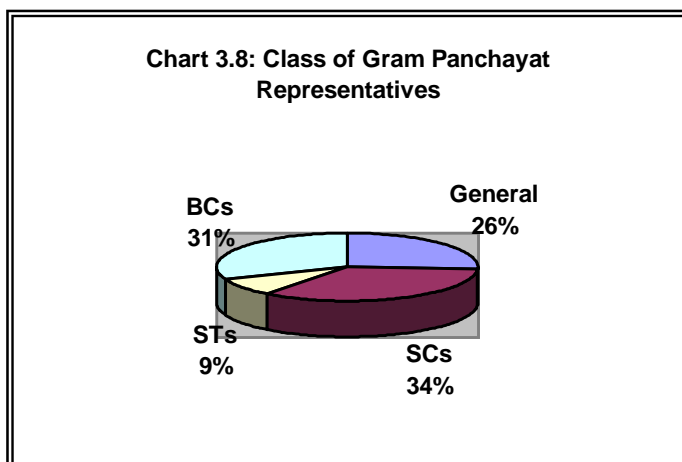
There seemed to be utter chaos among Gram Sabha members as they were not in a position to pinpoint exactly how many departments were transferred to Gram Panchayat.

The largest percentage of Gram Sabha members, that is, 19.2, said that just six departments have been transferred to Gram Panchayats following decentralisation.

On the participation in the affairs of Gram Panchayat, 40.2 per cent Gram Sabha members said that they participated in Gram Sabha meetings. The region-wise participation is shown in the Chart 3.6. One third of Gram Sabha members, that is, 33.9 per cent, said that they got requisite information in Gram Sabha meetings. More than half of the Gram Sabha members, that is, 56.6 per cent, said that Below Poverty Line (BPL) lists were prepared in their respective Gram Panchayats. Regional situation has been summarised in the Chart 3.7. Of these 53.9 per cent Gram Sabha members said that BPL lists were prepared and ratified in open meetings of Gram Sabha. The situation in this regard has been summarised in Chart 3.7.



Among the interviewed Gram Panchayat representatives 59.0 per cent were men and the rest women. The percentage of women was quite close to the actual percentage of women elected in the Panchayat elections. Their average age was found to be 40.2 years. Distribution of Gram Panchayat representatives in the sample according to class is shown in the Chart 3.8. It is worth noting here that of all the Gram Panchayat representatives belonging to reserved categories 24.7 per cent were elected from unreserved seats.



Education-wise, the sample included 27.7 per cent illiterates, 16.4 per cent literates, 18.6 primary, 15.1 per cent Junior High School, 8.0 per cent High School, 8.0 per cent Intermediate and Graduates 5.5 per cent. Their distribution across the five regions is given in the Table 3.2.

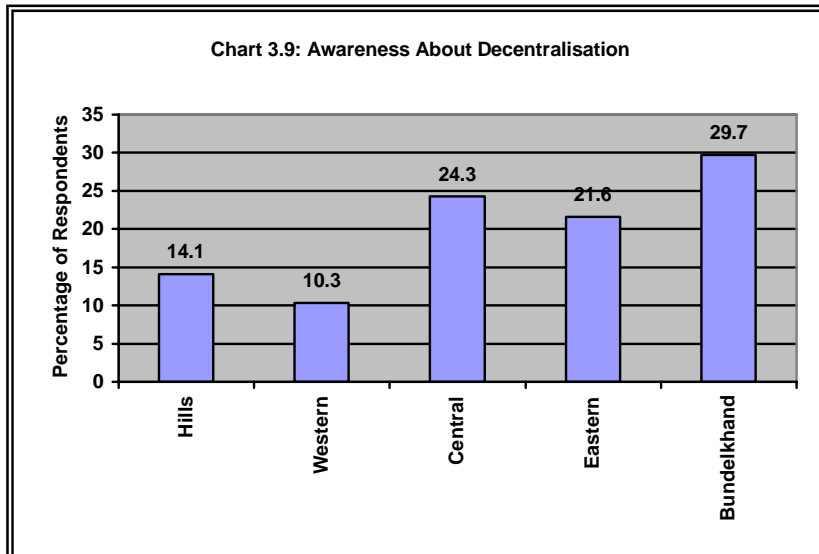
Table 3.2: Education of Gram Panchayat Representatives Across the Regions

Sl. No.	Level of Education	Hills	Western	Central	Eastern	Bundelkh and
1.	Illiterate	20.0	34.6	34.5	31.7	18.5
2.	Literate	25.7	7.7	13.8	10.0	23.7
3.	Primary	17.1	19.2	25.9	11.7	18.6
4.	Junior High School	17.1	11.5	10.3	16.7	18.6
5.	High School	8.6	3.8	5.2	13.3	6.8
6.	Intermediate	5.7	11.5	5.2	6.7	11.9
7.	Graduate	5.7	11.5	1.7	8.3	1.7

### 3.2.1. AWARENESS ON DECENTRALISATION

More than three-fourth of the Gram Panchayat representatives, that is, 77.4 per cent, knew the fact that the State Government had initiated process of decentralisation to strengthen Panchayats. Distribution of these Gram Panchayat representatives across the regions is presented in the Chart 3.9. Most of these Gram Panchayat representatives (98.2 per cent)

could recall that the process of decentralisation began in the year 1999. But when it came to knowing the exact month of the beginning, the responses of Gram Panchayat



representatives were extremely divided, though most of them said it began in the month of August.

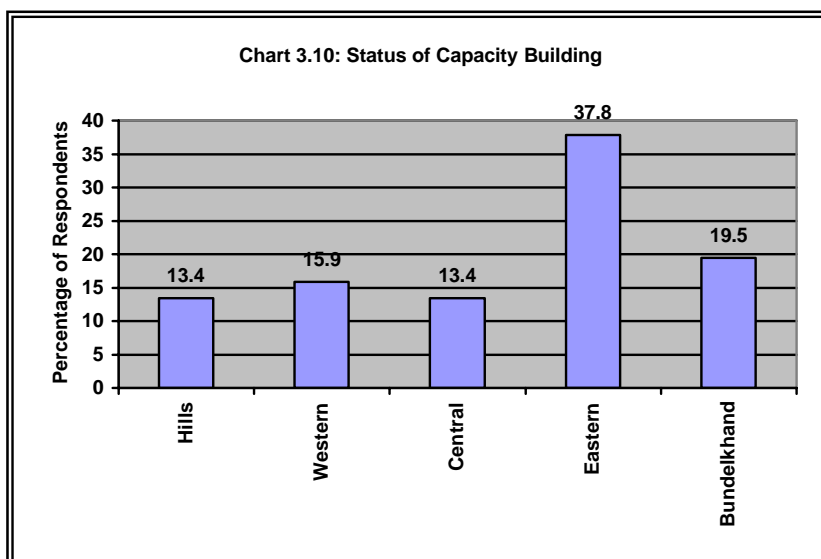
### 3.2.2. INFORMATION PROVIDERS

Over one-third of Gram Panchayat representatives, that is, 34.3 per cent, got information about decentralisation from the government officials. Next in the line of information providers were NGOs and others for 12.9 per cent Gram Panchayat representatives, government booklet for 9.0 per cent representatives and newspapers for 6.7 per cent representatives. But in due course nearly half of the Gram Panchayat representatives lost track of various developments taking place on the decentralisation front. Thus, 41.8 per cent of the representatives said they could keep track of all the happenings on developmental front. Here too the media of information were all the four mentioned above. Their percentage contributions were newspapers 8.6, government booklet 21.4, government officials 18.6 and NGOs and others 4.3 per cent. If the two sets of figures are compared it becomes clear that contribution of not only government officials but also that of NGOs and others showed appreciable fall under two different sets of conditions. It appears that government officials were prompt enough to give information regarding the onset of decentralisation. But when it came to giving details of quick pace of activities, they preferred not to give many details. What, however, surprising is failure of NGOs to do the needful. Probably a majority of grass roots NGOs working on the Panchayati Raj theme could themselves not get requisite information in time. This is reflected in the most telling manner by a fact as simple as transfer of government departments. Nearly one-third of Gram Panchayat representatives, that is, 29.6 per cent, said that eight government

departments were transferred to Gram Panchayat. This may be compared with the number departments actually transferred to the Panchayats.

### 3.2.3. TRAINING ON CAPACITY BUILDING

Over one-third of Gram Panchayat representatives, that is, 35.0 per cent said they received training for capacity building so they could discharge their duties in an efficient fashion. Distribution of these representatives over the five regions is given in the Chart 3.10. Of those who said that they were given training for capacity building 65.4 per cent said it was given by government departments, 22.2 per cent said it was given by NGOs and 12.3 per cent said it was given by both government departments and NGOs. Since question of capacity building coverage by government and NGOs is one of academic significance for SSK, it was thought necessary have a look on capacity building not only in the regions, but also in the districts. Scenario at both regional and district levels are presented in the Tables 3.3 and 3.4. It is clear from these tables that contribution of NGOs is quite significant in Eastern and Central regions. At the district level NGOs have made important contribution in Ghazipur, Khiri, Almora and Pratapgarh districts.



**Table 3.3: Contribution of Government and NGOs to Capacity Building (Region-wise)**

Sl. No.	Regions	Government	NGOs	Both
1.	Hills	81.8	18.2	–
2.	Western	69.2	7.7	23.1
3.	Central	70.0	30.0	–
4.	Eastern	45.2	32.3	22.6

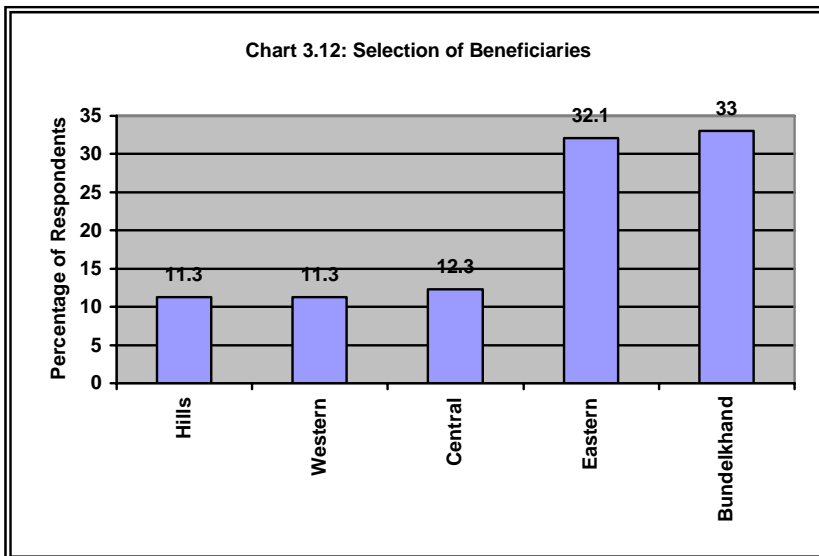
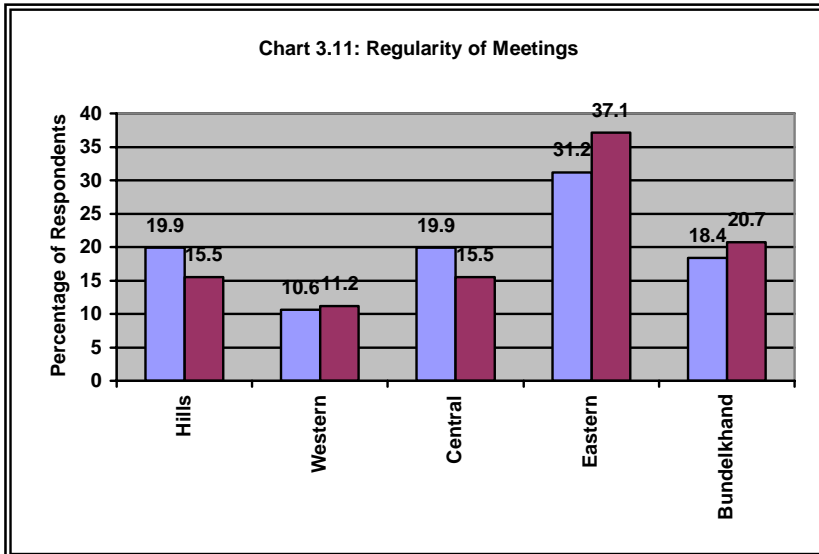
5.	Bundelkhand	87.5	12.5	–
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**Table 3.4: Contribution of Government and NGOs to Capacity Building (District-wise)**

Sl. No.	Districts	Government	NGOs	Both
1.	Almora	71.4	28.2	–
2.	Saharanpur	69.2	7.7	23.1
3.	Bijnore	100.0	–	–
4.	Khiri	62.5	37.5	–
5.	Rae Bareli	100.0	–	–
6.	Pratapgarh	63.2	26.3	10.5
7.	Ghazipur	16.7	41.7	41.7
8.	Banda	100.0	–	–
9.	Jhansi	81.8	18.2	–

#### **3.2.4. MEETINGS OF GRAM PANCHAYATS**

On transaction of business by Gram Panchayats, 63.8 per cent Gram Panchayat representatives said that meetings were held regularly. When this was viewed regionally, it was found that the Eastern region topped in the regularity of meetings. The region-wise trend is given in the Chart 3.11. Nearly half of Gram Panchayat representatives, that is, 48.4 per cent, said that beneficiaries in their Gram Panchayat were selected in Gram Sabha meetings. Here Bundelkhand region seems to be the place where selection of beneficiaries is taking place in the desired fashion. The region-wise trend about selection of beneficiaries is given in the Chart 3.12. When transaction of business by Gram Panchayats and selection of beneficiaries for various government schemes was viewed at the district level, Pratapgarh district was found to be topping the list.



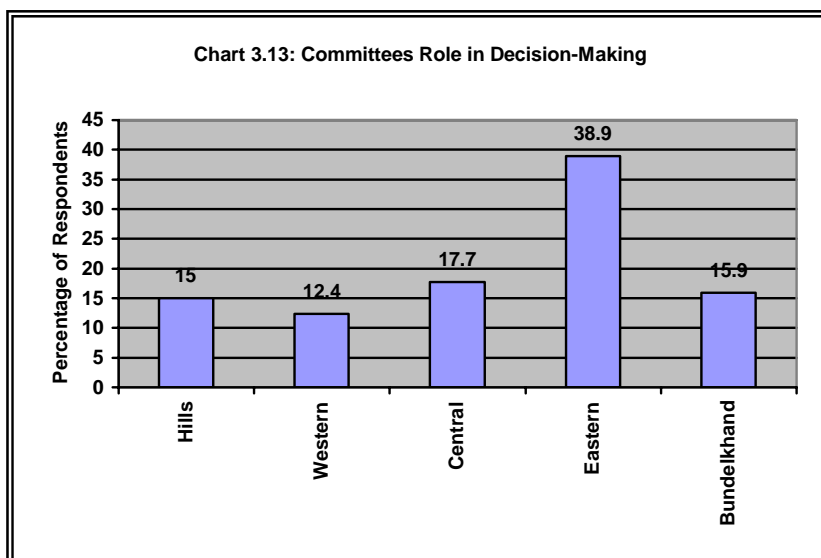
As regards implementation of the decentralisation, 80 per cent Gram Panchayat representatives said that a lot of confusion was created because of repeated changes carried out by the Government while implementing this. Again 72.4 per cent Gram Panchayat representatives said that fixation of day for Gram Panchayat meetings did not hinder decentralisation. When explored further, a majority of the representatives said that the Panchayats were still not capable enough to carry out their business according to their convenience. They said if such bars were not imposed on Panchayats there were chances that the respective heads of Panchayats will start behaving in an arbitrary fashion. Their fears emanated from the fact that despite so many regulations Panchayat heads had tendency of functioning according to their own with scant regards to the rules and

regulations. A few of the enlightened Gram Panchayat members commented that for the success of decentralisation a high degree of ideals are needed.

### 3.2.5. COMMITTEES

Decentralisation means considerable entailment of powers to Panchayats. There are good chances of misuse of these powers as corroborated by the Gram Panchayat representatives above. To counter this, the Government tried to put checks and balances on the functioning of Panchayats through the formation of committees. These committees are: Executive/Administrative Committee, Planning and Finance Committee, Construction Committee, Education Committee, Health and Welfare Committee and Water Management Committee. An overwhelming majority of the Gram Panchayat representatives, that is, 90.8 per cent, were aware of the existence of six committees of the Panchayats. But when it came to awareness regarding the chairmanship of these committees level of awareness dropped to nearly 60 per cent. Thus, 60.6 per cent Gram Panchayat representatives said that two committees were headed by the Gram Pradhan himself and the rest by someone from amongst the Gram Panchayat members. In all 30.7 per cent Gram Panchayat representatives were represented on two committees, 26.7 per cent on one committee and 13.1 per cent on three committees. A total of 14.8 per cent Gram Panchayat members were not represented on any of the committees. The rest were represented on more than three committees.

More than half of Gram Panchayat representatives, that is, 55.0 per cent said that the committees were holding their meetings regularly. The regions-wise distribution of respondents saying that meetings are held regularly is given in the Chart 3.11. Nearly three-fourths of Gram Panchayat representatives, that is, 71.1 per cent said that the committees were helpful in taking decisions. Their region-wise distribution is given in the Chart 3.13. Of those who said that the committees were not helpful in taking decisions related to Panchayats, 77.3 per cent felt that decision-making process at the Gram Panchayat level had become difficult. The rest could not give any plausible answer to this.



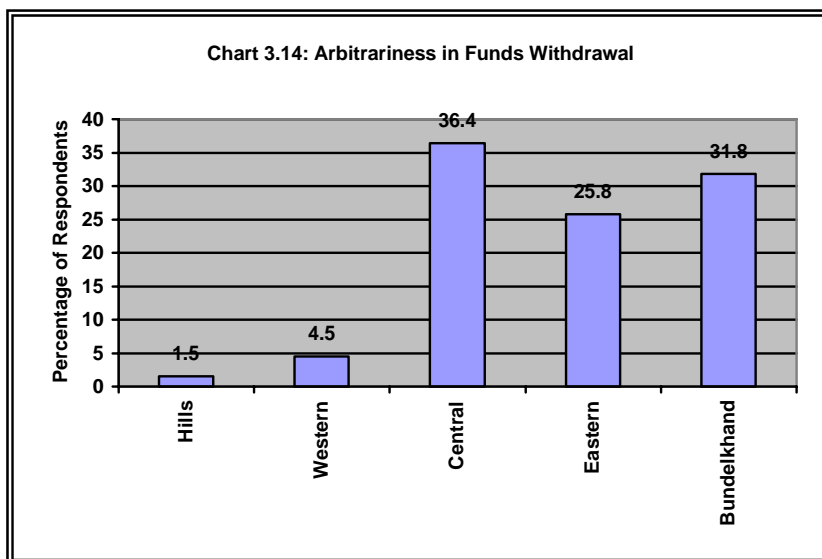
Nearly one-fourth of the respondents, that is, 26.8 per cent, did not prefer to comment on the question how important were decisions of committees for Gram Panchayats. Among

the rest, 31.4 per cent said that Gram Panchayats accorded full importance, 27.2 per cent said they accorded partial importance and 14.6 per cent said they accorded no importance. The region-wise break-up of these is given in the Table 3.5. The case of importance to decisions appeared to be highly in favour of withdrawal of money as 62.5 per cent Gram Panchayat representatives said that the money was withdrawn only after the recommendation of the committee concerned. The Central region topped all the regions as far as arbitrariness in money utilisation was concerned as revealed by 36.4 per cent of Gram Panchayat representatives. The situation in other regions is shown in Chart 3.14.

**Table 3.5: Importance to Decisions of Committees (Region-wise)**

Sl. No.	Regions	Importance to Decisions (Percentage of Respondents)		
		Full	Partial	None
1.	Hills	12.0	18.5	8.6
2.	Western	17.3	7.7	8.6
3.	Central	18.7	15.4	42.9
4.	Eastern	42.7	27.7	20.0
5.	Bundelkhand	9.3	30.8	20.0

In 76.5 per cent of the Gram Panchayats there was Gram Panchayat Development Officer



(GPDO) while in the rest two GPDOs were posted. This was because of the size of the Gram Panchayat in which the GPDOs were posted. The rules provide for stationing of

one GPDO in Gram Panchayats with less than 2,000 population while in the Gram Panchayats with population over 2,000 two GPDOs are to be stationed. In 79.4 per cent Gram Panchayats GPDOs from another village while in the rest of the cases they were from the same village. Of those who were from other villages only a minuscule 16.5 per cent were residing in the Gram Panchayat of their posting. Despite this fact 61.0 per cent Gram Panchayat representatives said that the functioning of their Panchayat had improved just because each Gram Panchayat had got at least one GPDO. Almost same percentage of Gram Panchayat representatives, that is, 57.9 per cent, said that there has been an improvement in the services offered by the Gram Panchayat following the decentralisation. The rest included no. Region-wise break-up of these is given in the Table 3.6. It may be noted that these figures are percentage of total people in a particular region making a particular response.

Table 3.6: Change in Services Offered by the Gram Panchayats after Decentralisation

Sl. No.	Characteristics	Hills	Western	Central	Eastern	Bundelkhand
1.	Improvement	51.7	81.0	47.3	73.2	48.3
2.	No improvement	48.3	19.0	50.9	26.8	51.7

The Gram Panchayat representatives seem to be keeping a close eye on their respective GPDOs. Thus, 82.5 per cent Gram Panchayat representatives said that GPDOs were imparted training so they could discharge their roles efficiently. A little lesser percentage of Gram Panchayat representatives, that is, 78.6 per cent, said that this training was imparted at the block level while 10.3 per cent said it was given at both block and district levels. Just 10.3 per cent Gram Panchayat representatives said that the training was imparted at the district level. Not only this. The Gram Panchayat representatives also had information as to who imparted training to the GPDOs. Thus, 56.7 per cent Gram Panchayat representatives said that the training was imparted by block level officials, 25.8 per cent said it was imparted by both block and district level officials and 15.0 per cent said that it was imparted by district level officials alone. In all 40 per cent Gram Panchayat representatives said that they were also included in the training imparted to GPDOs.

### 3.2.6. RIGHT TO INFORMATION

One of the most important happening in the process of decentralisation is granting of right to information to the Gram Sabha members so as to make functioning of Gram Panchayats transparent. When this issue was posed to the Gram Panchayat representatives, 33.5 per cent said that residents of their Panchayat had used this right. When this was viewed

region-wise it was found that in Bundelkhand region use of this right was most prevalent, while in the Hill region it was least used (Table 3.7). Of those who used this right, 21.9 per cent used it twice and 18.8 per cent each used it once and thrice. The rest used it more than thrice. In 90.8 per cent cases requisite information was given to those who sought it while in the rest of cases it was not given. Since nearly two-thirds of Gram Panchayat representatives said this right was not being exercised it was imperative that the Gram Sabha members were made aware of this right. Almost all the Gram Panchayat representatives, that is, 96.0 per cent, said were in this favour. Nearly 80 per cent Gram Panchayat representatives also contended that difficulties before Gram Panchayat will not increase as a result of exercise of right to information.

Table 3.7: Use of Right to Information

Sl. No.	Response	Hills	Western	Central	Eastern	Bundelkhand
1.	Yes	11.4	40.9	7.1	42.9	67.4
2.	No	88.6	59.1	92.9	57.1	32.6

### 3.2.7. PLAN PREPARATION AND OTHER ISSUES

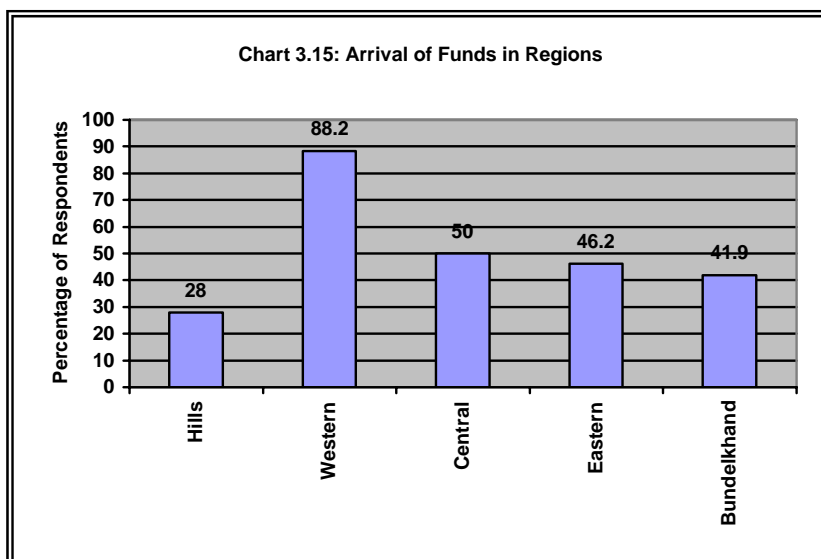
Decentralisation process has given considerable emphasis on preparation of plans by all the three tiers of Panchayats. By the time of data collection 41.0 per cent Gram Panchayat representatives said that plans were prepared in their Panchayats. Almost equal percentage of respondents, that is, 45.2 per cent, said the plans were not prepared in their Panchayat and the rest were not aware of the status of planning. Region-wise status of planning is presented in the Table 3.8. After the plan was prepared it was submitted to the Block Development Officer (BDO) as revealed by 74.4 per cent of Gram Panchayat representatives. BDO and his office seemed to be the favourites for interaction even after decentralisation process had been set in. Thus, progress of works being carried out by the Gram Panchayat was made to BDO as revealed by 73.3 per cent of Gram Panchayat representatives.

Table 3.8: Status of Plan Preparation (Region-wise)

Sl. No.	Response	Hills	Western	Central	Eastern	Bundelkhand
1.	Yes	42.9	11.5	31.0	50.0	53.3
2.	No	42.9	57.7	56.9	45.0	30.0
3.	Don't know	14.3	30.8	12.1	5.0	16.7

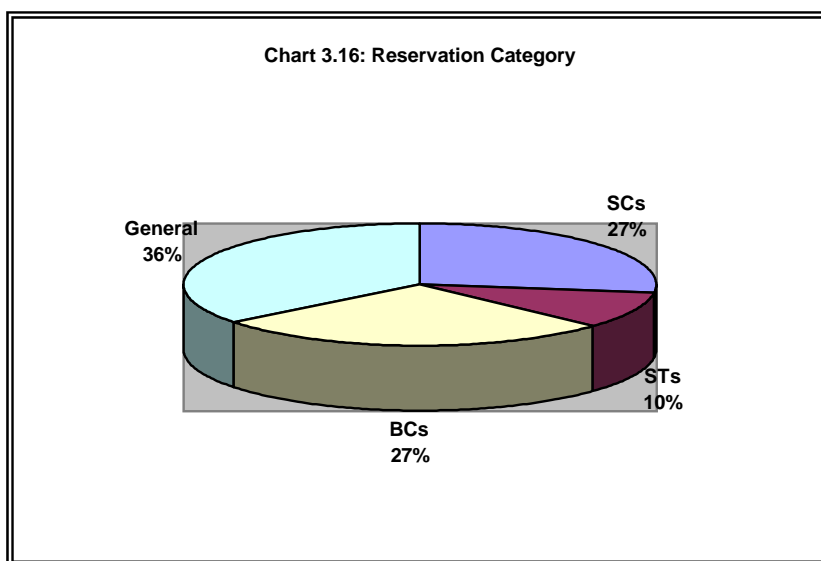
Timely arrival of funds is of prime importance for any level of Panchayats. But in only 47.4 per cent cases funds arrived on time. From the responses, it appears that the situation

is the happiest one in the Western region as revealed by 88.2 per cent of the Gram Panchayat representatives (Chart 3.15).



### 3.3. KSHETTRA PANCHAYAT REPRESENTATIVES

The sample Kshettra Panchayat representatives included 62.7 per cent men and the rest women. Like Gram Panchayat representatives the percentage of women in the sample was quite close to the actual percentage of women among Kshettra Panchayat representatives. Their average age was found to be 40.8 years. This was not much different from that of Gram Panchayat representatives. It seems that representation of people belonging to reserved categories decreased at this tier and that of those belonging to unreserved category increased. The category-wise situation is presented in the Chart 3.16. It may be noted here that 3.9 per cent Kshettra Panchayat representatives did not disclose their status as per provisions of reservation. Of all Kshettra Panchayat representatives who belonged to reserved categories 35.7 per cent were elected from unreserved seats.



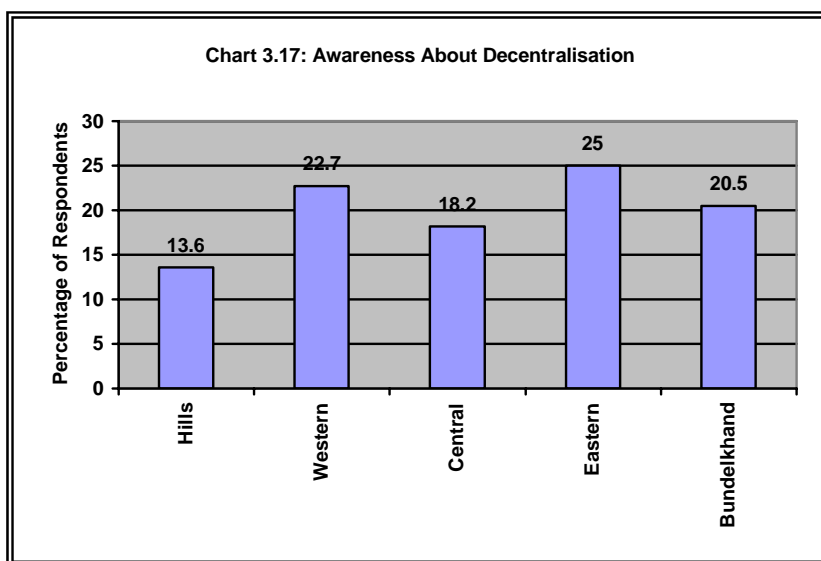
The sample included 7.8 per cent each of illiterates and literates, 13.7 per cent primary pass, 29.4 per cent Junior High School pass, 9.8 per cent High School pass and 7.8 per cent Intermediate pass. It had 21.6 representatives, which were either educated up to Graduate level or more. When these figures are compared with those for the Gram Panchayat representatives a sharp decline in the percentage of illiterates and literates and a sharp increase in the percentage of graduates is witnessed at the Kshetra Panchayat level. Educational level in each region is given in Table 3.9.

**Table 3.9: Educational Level in Regions**

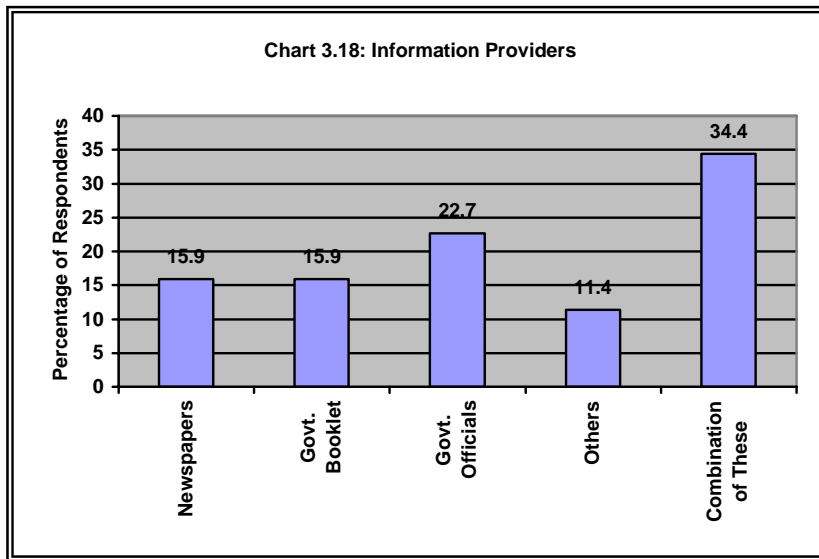
Sl. No.	Level of Education	Hills	Western	Central	Eastern	Bundelkhand
1.	Illiterate	–	8.3	18.2	8.3	–
2.	Literate	16.7	16.7	–	–	10.0
3.	Primary	16.7	16.7	9.1	8.3	20.0
4.	Junior High School	16.7	33.3	18.2	25.0	50.0
5.	High School	33.3	–	18.2	8.3	–
6.	Intermediate	–	–	27.3	8.3	–
7.	Graduate	16.7	25.0	9.1	33.3	20.0

### 3.3.1. AWARENESS ON DECENTRALISATION

In all 86.3 per cent Kshetra Panchayat representatives were aware of the fact that the process of decentralisation process. Regional distribution of the Kshetra Panchayat representatives who were aware of the commencement of decentralisation process is given in the Chart 3.17. Even more Kshetra Panchayat representatives as compared to Gram Panchayat representatives, that is, 97.6 per cent, said that the process of decentralisation began in the year 1999. The rest said that it began in 1998. Of those who said that



decentralisation began in 1999, 65.7 per cent Kshetra Panchayat representatives averred that it began between April 1999 and July 1999. It was the period, they maintained, when the activities on this front were taking place at a brisk pace. Reliance of Kshetra Panchayat representatives on government officials and employees for getting information about decentralisation was lesser compared to Gram Panchayat representatives. Percentage dependence on various sources is given in the Chart 3.18.



### 3.3.2. FUNCTIONS HANDED OVER

There appeared to be utter confusion among the Kshetra Panchayat representatives regarding the functions handed over to the Kshetra Panchayats. Over one-fifth of Kshetra Panchayat representatives, that is, 21.1 per cent, put the number of functions handed over at six. But no *repeat* no Kshetra Panchayat representative could give the exact number of functions handed over to their Panchayat. This complacency on the part of Kshetra Panchayat representatives emanated from the fact that despite the theoretical crucial role assigned to Kshetra Panchayats, the Government had only ignored them ever since the new Panchayati Raj regime came into being. What can better illustrate this point than financial allocation to Kshetra Panchayats, which 96.0 per cent Kshetra Panchayat representatives felt was inadequate? It might be recalled at this point that the State Government had earmarked just 10 per cent money to Kshetra Panchayats as compared to 20 per cent for Zilla Panchayats and 70 per cent for Gram Panchayats out of total money allocated to Panchayats as a result of recommendations of State Finance Commission. In the same vain 70.0 per cent Kshetra Panchayat representatives felt that provisions about implementation, monitoring and evaluation for the developmental programmes taken up

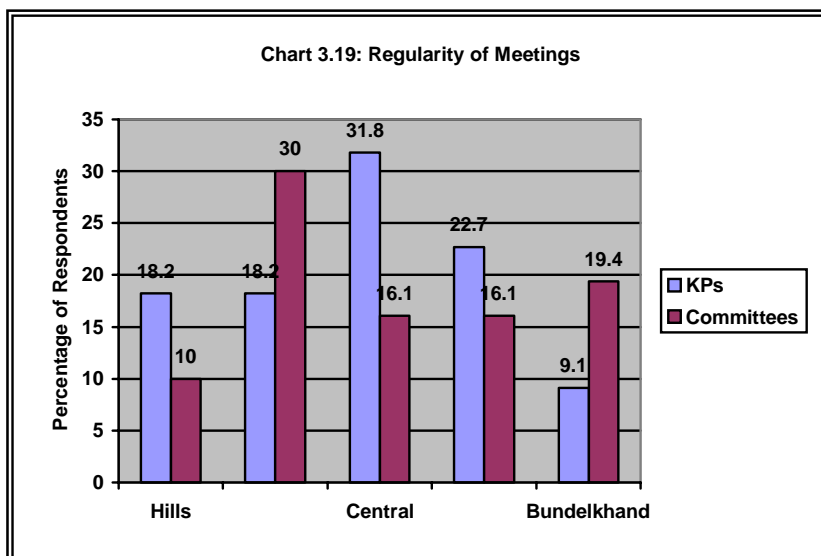
by the Kshetra Panchayat were inadequate. Likewise, 67.3 per cent representatives felt that provisions about block level officials and employees implementing these programmes were also not adequate.

Despite these profound inadequacies, 61.7 per cent Kshetra Panchayat representatives felt that powers delegated to their Panchayat to monitor the functioning of distribution of godowns would lead to an improvement in the functioning of Public Distribution System. But these powers were seldom put to use by the representatives. This was illustrated from the fact that 62.7 per cent Kshetra Panchayat representatives did not make any attempt to improve functioning of Primary Health Centre, Veterinary Hospital and Seed Centre despite their 'ownership' being transferred to the Kshetra Panchayats.

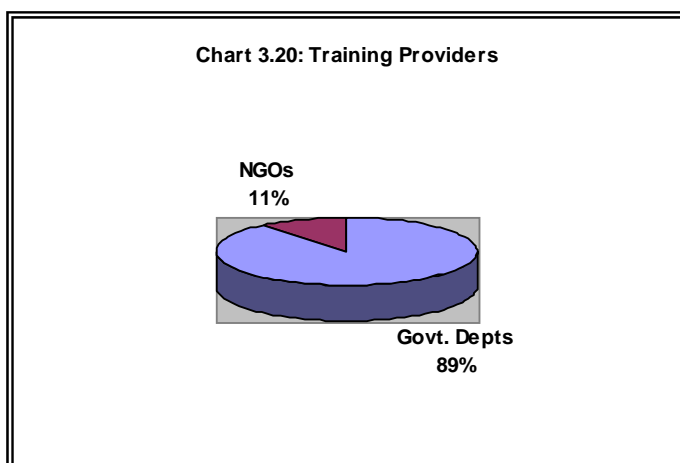
To remove some of the many confusions prevailing at the Kshetra Panchayats, an overwhelming percentage of Kshetra Panchayat representatives, that is, 84.0 per cent, felt that it would have been better to define all those functions that are to be carried out in areas falling under more than one Gram Panchayat. As an example 70.2 per cent Kshetra Panchayat members accepted that in the absence of such clarity their political ambitions were just flouting the norms how money from the Kshetra Nidhi should be spent. Yet they maintained that they were helpless as they had to face the coming election. Altogether, 35.4 per cent Kshetra Panchayat representatives felt that several provisions, especially those related to finance, were against the spirit of decentralisation.

### **3.3.3. MEETINGS**

On the regularity of meetings, the responses were divided almost equally. Thus 45.8 per cent Kshetra Panchayat representatives said that the meetings were being held regularly while the rest were not held regularly. When the distribution of the representatives who said that the meetings were held regularly was viewed regionally, it was revealed that most of them belonged to the Central region (Chart 3.25).



Just 17.6 per cent Kshetra Panchayat representatives were given training so they could carry out their roles and responsibilities in an effective fashion. Among those who were provided training 88.9 per cent said that it was provided by government departments and the rest said it was provided by the NGOs (Chart 3.20). Also, exactly 88.9 per cent Kshetra Panchayat representatives said that the training was effective.



### 3.3.4. COMMITTEES

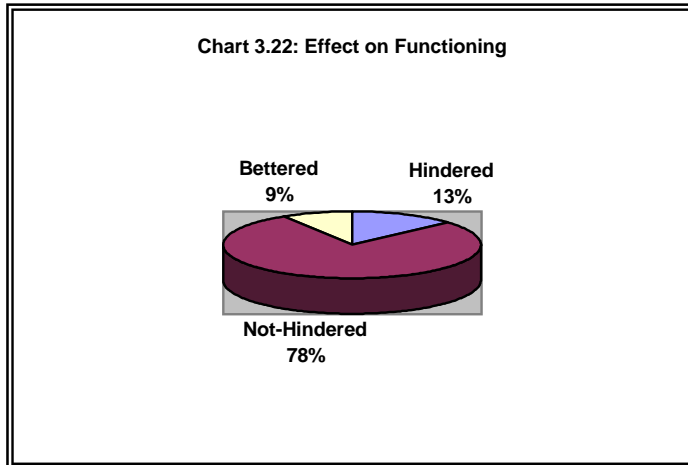
On the committees, 67.3 per cent Kshetra Panchayat representatives said that six committees were formed at this tier of Panchayat. Seventy per cent of Kshetra Panchayat representatives said that two committees were headed by the Kshetra Pramukh and 64 per cent said four committees were headed by from someone amongst them. Since Kshetra Panchayat is a large body of members, 54.9 per cent of the representatives interviewed

were not represented on any of the committees. Among the rest, 21.6 per cent were represented on one committee, 19.6 per cent on two committees and the rest on more than two committees.

As compared to Gram Panchayats where 55 per cent representatives said that the meetings of the committees were held regularly, just 24.4 per cent Kshetra Panchayat representatives said so. The distribution of these Kshetra Panchayat representatives across the regions is given in the Chart 3.21. It may be thus construed that meetings of committees at the Kshetra Panchayat level in the Eastern region are taking place at more regularly as compared to other regions. Moreover, less regularity of meetings of the committees as a whole (that is over half of Gram Panchayats) reinforces the view of Kshetra Panchayat representatives that the Kshetra Panchayats have little to do. In all 34.1 per cent Kshetra Panchayat representatives said that the system of committees has been helpful in taking decisions and 58.5 per cent said it has not been helpful. The responses of the rest were missing. Of those who said that it has not been helpful, 83.3 per cent said that the process of decision-making has become complicated. On the question as to whether the Kshetra Panchayat was giving importance to the decisions of the committees 15.2 per cent representatives said the Panchayat was giving full importance to decisions, 36.4 per cent said it was giving partial importance and 36.4 per cent said it was giving no importance. The rest could not comment on this. On the withdrawal of money from the Kshetra Nidhi, only 23.1 per cent said it was withdrawn after the order to this effect was received from the committee concerned.

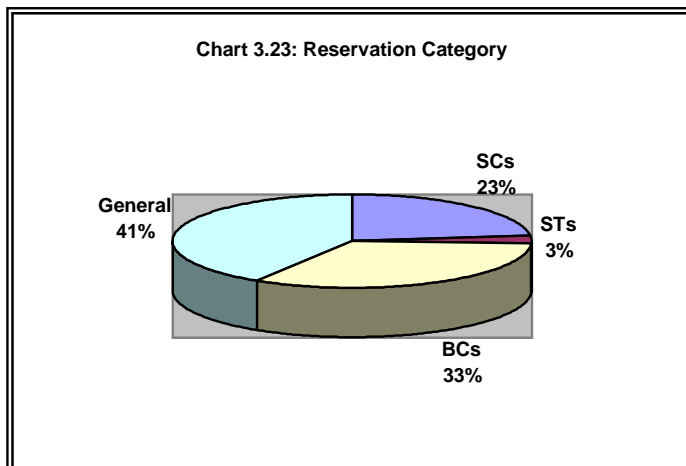
### **3.3.5. OTHER ASPECTS**

On other aspects, only 30.0 per cent Kshetra Panchayat representatives said that instalments of funds came to their Panchayat on time. A little more, that is, 36.1 per cent representatives said that their Panchayat had prepared plan for the coming year. By and large, however, representatives were not sure as to which body the plan was handed over after preparation, though the largest percentage of respondents, that is, 72.7 per cent representatives said that it was handed over Zilla Panchayat. Similarly, the largest percentage of the representatives said that reports of the works carried out by the Kshetra Panchayat were submitted to Zilla Panchayat. Responses of the Kshetra Panchayat representatives on the question as to whether the functioning of the Panchayat has changed are summarised in the Chart 3.22. As would be seen from the Chart 3.22, over three-fourth Kshetra Panchayat representatives felt that status quo prevailed in their Panchayat despite the onset of decentralisation process. Despite this grim scenario, as many as 80.9 per cent Kshetra Panchayat representatives felt that the decentralisation process has led to an increase in the expectations of the people.



### 3.4. ZILLA PANCHAYAT REPRESENTATIVES

The sample of Zilla Panchayat representatives consisted of 61.5 per cent men and 38.5 per cent women. This ratio is quite similar to the one observed in case of Kshettra Panchayat



representatives. The mean age of the Zilla Panchayat representatives in the sample was found to be 41.8 years. Thus there is a gradual increase in the mean age of representatives when one moves from Gram Panchayat to Zilla Panchayat through Kshettra Panchayat. Representation of the people belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes categories in Zilla Panchayat dropped over their representation in Gram Panchayat and Kshettra Panchayat. The representation of people belonging to backward classes and General categories, however, showed an increasing trend over their representation in these two tiers of Panchayats. Ratio of various categories among Zilla Panchayat representatives is shown in the Chart 3.23. It may be noted here that 23.1 per cent of Zilla Panchayat representatives who belonged to reserved categories were elected from General category.

When educational level of Zilla Panchayat was seen it was revealed that the percentage of illiterates to educated-up-to-Junior-High-School level dropped drastically as one moved

from Gram Panchayat to Zilla Panchayat level through Kshetra Panchayat. On the other hand percentage of High School Pass to Graduates and above showed continued increase across the three tiers. The sharpest swing was, however, witnessed at the graduate and above level and their percentage increased to 51.3 per cent. Other values are: Illiterates 2.6 per cent, literates 5.1 per cent, primary pass 2.6 per cent, Junior High School pass 10.3 per cent, High School pass 15.4 per cent and Intermediate pass 12.8. Region-wise scenario is depicted in Table 3.10.

**Table 3.10: Region-wise Education Status of Zilla Panchayat Representatives**

Sl. No.	Level of Education	Hills	Western	Central	Eastern	Bundelkh and
1.	Illiterate	–	–	11.1	–	–
2.	Literate	–	10.0	–	10.0	–
3.	Primary	–	–	–	–	20.0
4.	Junior High School	–	20.0	22.2	–	–
5.	High School	–	10.0	22.2	–	60.0
6.	Intermediate	40.0	–	22.2	–	20.0
7.	Graduate	60.0	60.0	22.2	90.0	–

#### **3.4.1. AWARENESS ON DECENTRALISATION**

Almost all the Zilla Panchayat representatives, that is, 97.4 per cent, said that they were aware of the fact that the State Government had initiated process of decentralisation regarding the Panchayats. This too is a continued increase in level of awareness if one goes up from Gram Panchayat through Kshetra Panchayat. Of these 80.8 per cent said that the process commenced in the year 1999, though a small percentage (7.7) said that it began in 1994, the year when the State Government enacted laws in the light of Seventy-third Constitutional Amendment. The rest gave other years. Over three-fourths of Zilla Panchayat representatives, that is, 76.0 per cent, said that it began between April and July months of the year 1999. Fifty per cent Zilla Panchayat representatives said that they got information regarding decentralisation from newspapers, 8.3 per cent said they got it from the booklet published by the government, 13.9 per cent said they got it from the government officials and 2.8 per cent said they got it from the sources other than these. In the rest of the representatives got it from a combination of sources. Of these nearly half of the Zilla Panchayat representatives, that is, 45.7 per cent, could keep track of all the developments taking place on the decentralisation front. The reliance of Zilla Panchayat representatives on various sources for keeping themselves informed, however, changed. Thus, 18.8 per cent representatives depended on newspapers, 12.5 per cent on government booklet and 18.8 per cent on government officials. The rest of the representatives used multiple sources for keeping themselves informed.

### **3.4.2. CAPACITY BUILDING TRAININGS**

Importance of training for building capacity of Zilla Panchayat representatives took a back seat. This is understandable too as one goes up from the level of Gram Panchayat. Thus, only 15.8 per cent Zilla Panchayat representatives were imparted training. All these were imparted training by the government departments. This shows that NGOs are either not able to reach Zilla Panchayat representatives or they have not made efforts in this direction. Still there seems to be scope of training at this tier too as only one-fifth of those trained have termed training to be sufficient.

### **3.4.3. MEETINGS**

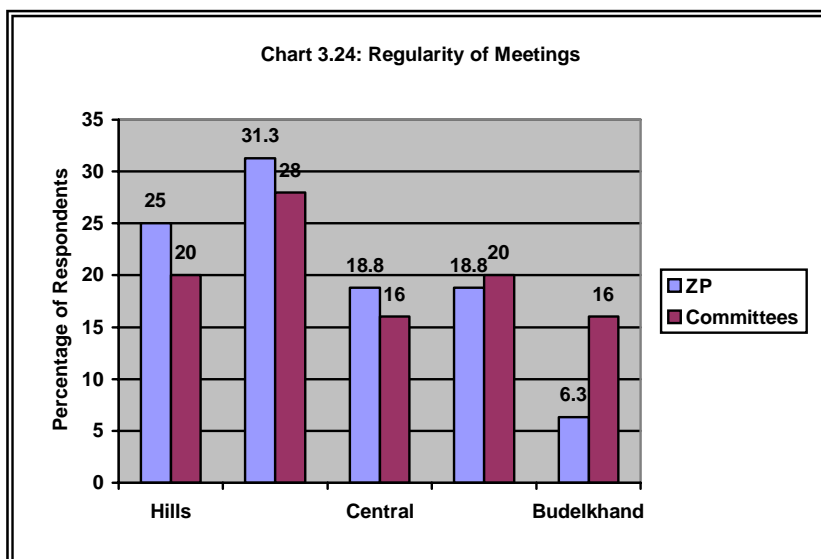
Meetings at Zilla Panchayat are held quite regularly as revealed by 69.4 per cent Zilla Panchayat representatives. This is a drastic improvement over the situation at the Kshettra Panchayat level and considerable improvement over the situation at the Gram Panchayat level. Distribution of representatives saying that the meetings of Zilla Panchayat are held regularly is given in the Chart 3.24.

Despite the fact that decentralisation entails considerable activity on the part of Zilla Panchayat representatives, just 25 per cent Zilla Panchayat representatives have taken steps to improve the functioning of the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) which has of late brought under the control of Zilla Panchayat. The main reason why they kept off DRDA is that the district level officials have by and large ignored Zilla Panchayat. Thus only 17.1 per cent Zilla Panchayat representatives said that district level officials were following orders of Zilla Panchayat. Of these representatives, half belonged to Pratapgarh district. Does this mean that the message of decentralisation has reached Pratapgarh quickly and loudly? A still lower percentage of Zilla Panchayat representatives, that is, 14.7 per cent, said that district level officials were functioning as advisor to Zilla Panchayat.

### **3.4.4. COMMITTEES**

Three-fourth Zilla Panchayat representatives, that is, 75.6 per cent, said that six committees were formed to facilitate functioning of Zilla Panchayats. Of these 69.7 per cent Zilla Panchayat representatives said that two committees are headed by Zilla Panchayat chairpersons. Somewhat lesser representatives, that is, 59.4 per cent, said that four committees were headed by others. Exactly half of the respondents were represented on one committee. Nearly one-third respondents, that is, 32.4 per cent, said they were not there on any committee. Rest of the respondents were not represented on any of the committee. Nearly half of the respondents, that is, 47.1 per cent, said that meetings were held on a regular basis. Regional situation regarding the regularity of meetings is presented in the Chart 3.24. The provision of committees is helping in taking decisions,

said 58.6 per cent Zilla Panchayat representatives. Nearly 30 per cent representatives said that committees were not helpful in taking decisions. The rest could not say anything on the issue. Of those who said that the committees were not helpful in taking decisions, 88.9 per cent said that the process had become complicated. On the importance accorded to decisions of committees, 43.3 per cent said the Zilla Panchayat accorded full importance to the committees decisions, 23.3 per cent said it accorded partial importance and 33.3 per cent said it did not accord any importance. A little over one-third of Zilla Panchayat representatives, that is, 34.4 per cent, said the funds are withdrawn from Zilla Panchayat funds after sanction of the relevant committee.



### 3.4.5. DISTRICT PLANNING COMMITTEES

Nearly 40 per cent Zilla Panchayat representatives, that is, 39.3 per cent said that District Planning Committees have been constituted in their district. As regards number of members in the District Planning Committee 54.5 per cent Zilla Panchayat representatives lacked information about this. The rest gave figures varying between seven and 50. Three-fourth Zilla Panchayat representatives said one meeting of District Planning Committee was held by the time of interview. According to 12.5 per cent representatives two and three meetings of the committee had been organised. Nearly 80 per cent Zilla Panchayat representatives, that is, 77.8 per cent, said office and officials had been allotted to the committee. At the time of information collection, according to just 27.3 per cent Zilla Panchayat representatives planning process had begun in their districts. All these Zilla

Panchayat representatives were from Pratapgarh district. Despite the poor scenario in planning process, 66.7 per cent Zilla Panchayat representatives felt that this model of planning will lead to a change in the developmental process.

Lastly, 61.8 per cent Zilla Panchayat representatives held that meetings were held in their Panchayats on time. Even more representatives, that is, 71.9 per cent, felt that the resolutions were passed properly in their Panchayat.

## CHAPTER 4: THE BUREAUCRACY

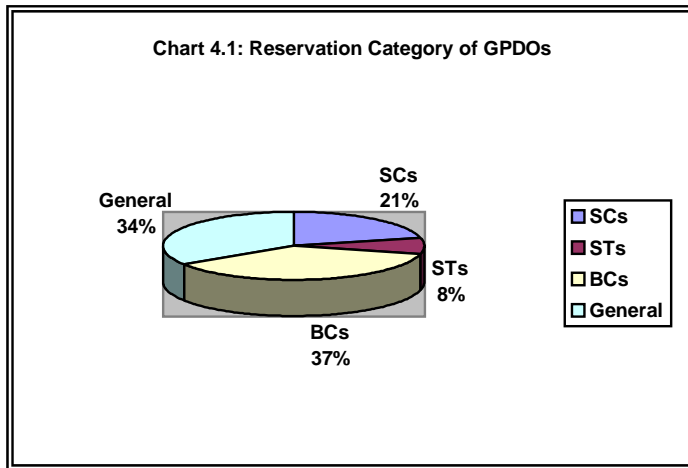
### 4.1. GRAM PANCHAYAT DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Before the beginning of the decentralisation process, a Panchayat Secretary was posted at the Nyaya Panchayat level. Each Panchayat Secretary used to look after the functions of all the Panchayats falling under a Nyaya Panchayat. The number of Gram Panchayats under a Nyaya Panchayat used to range from five to seven or even eight. Naturally, it was physically impossible for a Panchayat Secretary to do justice with the work assigned to him. After the decentralisation process began, each Gram Panchayat was provided with a multi-purpose worker (MPW). These MPWs were initially designated as Gram Panchayat and Development Officers, but they were later called Gram Panchayat Development Officers (GPDOs). These GPDOs were drawn from among the village level officials working in all the departments transferred to the Panchayats. Each Gram Panchayat with less than 2,000 population was provided with one GPDOs and those over 2,000 population with two GPDOs. Since these GPDOs were drawn from various departments they were ill equipped to handle their new job. Their capacity was, therefore, of prime importance. A training programme for building their capacities was drawn up and the GPDOs were provided training.

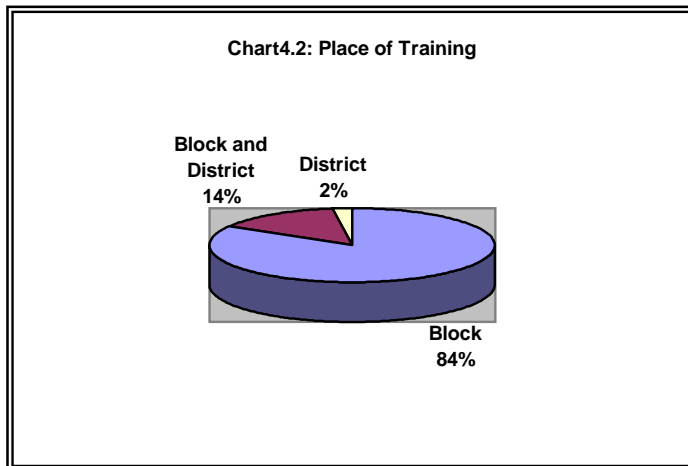
While the training programme was going on the GPDOs were agitated over their posting. The Government wanted to post the GPDOs, as far as possible, in their home village for the consideration that since they were low-paid employees it would be better to post them in their home village. But this was opposed to GPDOs by themselves on the plea that it would be difficult to function from their homes. Later, the earlier practice of posting a government official away from the home place was resorted to. Another problem was over the nomenclature of MPWs and as seen above their name was changed from Gram Panchayat and Development Officers to Gram Panchayat Development Officers. Yet another problem related to their roles. The GPDOs were supposed to perform the roles of both Panchayat Secretary and look after the development works. The situation was especially grim in those Gram Panchayats in which two GPDOs were stationed. It was then decided that in such Gram Panchayats one of the GPDOs would be designated as Panchayat Secretary and would be responsible for secretarial work pertaining to the Gram Panchayat. And the other would continue to be addresses as GPDO and be responsible to carry out developmental work.

It is in this backdrop GPDOs were interviewed to have an insight into them and to judge if they are meeting expectations of the people. All the GPDOs interviewed were men. This is because there are no women officials at the village level in the departments brought under the purview of Panchayats. Among the GPDOs interviewed 21.1 per cent belonged

to Scheduled Castes, 7.9 per cent to Scheduled Tribes, 36.8 per cent to Backward Classes and the rest to General Classes. This is shown in the Chart 4.1.



Over 90 per cent GPDOs interviewed for this study, that is, 92.1 per cent, were provided training to discharge their functions and duties properly. Of those who were provided training 82.9 per cent said it was provided at the block headquarters, 14.3 per cent said it was provided at the block and district headquarters both and the rest said it was provided at the district headquarters. This is shown in Chart 4.2. Of those GPDOs were provided training, as many as 77.1 per cent said that training provided to them was not sufficient to discharge their duties.



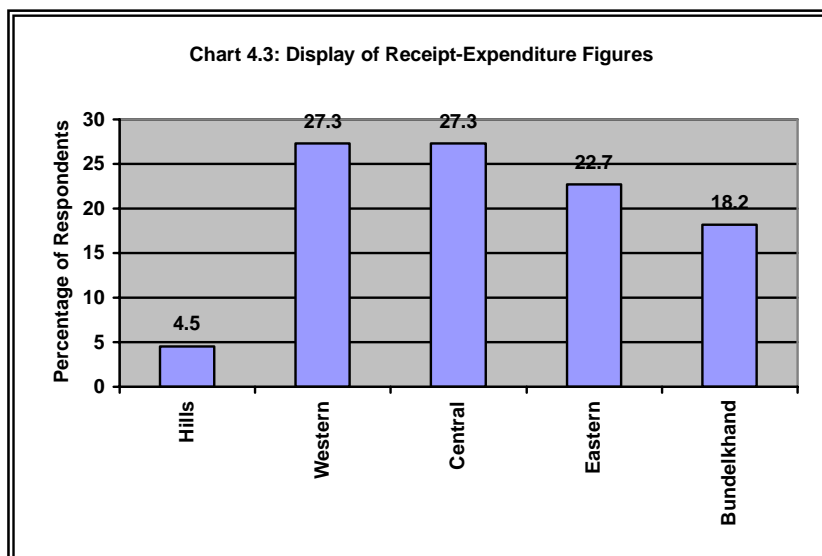
This was reflected in many ways. There was no unanimity among the GPDOs regarding the kinds of works they were supposed to carry out. Thus, 28.1 per cent GPDOs said that they were supposed to carry out eight kinds of works while 18.8 per cent of them maintained that they had to carry out 12 kinds of works. The rest gave figures that were too varying in nature. Nevertheless, 74.3 per cent GPDOs prepared lists of natural

resources and governmental, semi-governmental and co-operative infrastructural facilities and properties. Even more GPDOs, that is, 88.6 per cent prepared family and economic register. Still more GPDOs, that is 97.1 per cent, timely organise meetings of Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat and its committees. They also keep their records of decisions taken in these meetings and implement and monitor them. An equal percentage of GPDOs said that they impart information regarding various plans, their physical and financial targets and achievements in the meetings of Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat and its committees.

More on the affairs of Gram Panchayat. As many as 79.4 per cent GPDOs said that they had prepared plan for integrated development of the village. A total of 94.3 per cent GPDOs said that they were able to follow procedures and guidelines regarding the selection of beneficiaries in their Panchayat area. But when it came to ensuring appropriate distribution of pension to old age, widow and disabled and scholarship to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and minorities their percentage dropped to 64.7 per cent.

One of the important functions delegated to the GPDOs is regarding the atrocities committed on Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women. They are required to reach the information regarding these to the higher officials. From the figures available, it was revealed that such incidents did not occur in the Panchayats of 59.4 per cent GPDOs, they occurred in the rest of the Panchayats. What is worrying is that 12.5 per cent GPDOs failed in their duty of reaching the requisite information to the higher authorities. These incidents were from the Western and Bundelkhand regions of the State.

By the time data collection, Gram Sabha meetings were organised in 77.1 per cent of Gram Panchayats. The GPDOs claimed that satisfactory answers to the people's questions were given in all the cases. But this claim was belied by at least two facts. One, only 57.9 per cent GPDOs said that they had put a notice board regarding receipt and expenditure of their Gram Panchayat. Their percentage distribution, which might be construed as the percentage of sample Gram Panchayats in a particular region as having this board, is illustrated in the Chart 4.3. Two, only 33.3 per cent of GPDOs admitted that copies of the records of Gram Panchayat were asked in their Gram Panchayats. These GPDOs were from the Western region (25 per cent), Central region (33.3 per cent) and Bundelkhand region (41.7 per cent). According to GPDOs, copies of records were made available in three-fourth cases. When this was viewed in regions it was revealed that all those cases in which copies were sought and were not given were from Bundelkhand region. And in Bundelkhand region too all the Gram Sabha members were denied the copies while in Jhansi district only one-third Gram Sabha members were obliged.



## 4.2. BLOCK LEVEL OFFICIALS

Most of the block level officials interviewed claimed that there had been no change in development administration at the village level and everything was in the pre-decentralisation mode even after the onset of decentralisation process. Cutting across the regions and districts the Block Development Officers (BDOs) aired the view that ‘little’ recognition was being given to the new system of grass roots governance. Moreover, they were grieved at the fact that in the changed scenario the status of block in development administration had taken a severe beating as blocks were robbed off their primary role in development. The decentralised system dovetails development to the people with their participation in development process.

Generally, block level officials were not vocal enough. The plea advanced by them was that they, at intermediary level in the development administration in the district, were not in a position to speak on the nuances of decentralisation. One BDO said there was effectively no change in planning process and all the plans were still being formulated at the Government level – both Central and State. He cited instance of Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana, a Centrally sponsored scheme. In addition, he gave a long list of various schemes formulated by the Government for the village level. He averred that in the name of decentralisation such schemes were thrust upon from the ‘above’ and implemented by the people’s representatives, instead of officials. Moreover, plans formulated by the Gram Panchayats were treated with disdain and often thrown into waste paper basket.

Another BDO said as of now the Panchayat were not strengthened enough to chalk out plans. He said that at the time of interview (January 2000) planning process had not begun at the village level. He was sceptical how during the coming days plans of all Panchayat

in his block would be consolidated to prepare the plan of block and so on because of paucity of time. Thus, he said, the fate of planning from below hanged in balance.

One of the BDOs interviewed for this study commented that there was no inter-relationship among the three tiers of Panchayats – both at the political and administrative level. As a result there was no change in the functioning of the Panchayats. The constitution of the committees was mere eyewash. Where the chairperson of the Panchayat concerned was a dominating person, the committees, so vital for decentralisation, were ineffective and the chairperson just continued to behave and function in an arbitrary fashion.

As regards flow of money in the new set-up, the BDOs across the regions were found to be sore over the fact that they had lost control over the Gram Pradhans. They said if they tried to take any 'action' against the erring Gram Pradhan, they were transferred. Thus, they said, proper checks and balances, which were extremely vital for the smooth functioning of any democratic set-up, have gone to the winds.

BDOs were unanimous in commenting on the practical difficulties in decentralisation process, especially on the administrative side. The most serious of these difficulties pertained to GPDOs. They said the GPDOs were working somewhere and were getting salaries from somewhere else. This led to their accountability to their parent department and affected their overall performance. As a solution, the BDOs said that they should disburse salaries of GPDOs. Only when this is done it would be possible to rein in GPDOs.

On the fate of decentralisation the BDOs were divided. A majority of them said that decentralisation had put obstacles in work. They forecast that the results would not be good especially in view of financial distribution. The members across the three tiers of Panchayats were agitated over the fact that they did not have any finance at their disposal, leading to heartburn vis-à-vis chairpersons. Yet there were a few hopefuls too among the BDOs. Thus said a BDO interviewed for the study if decentralisation was implemented in right spirit, quality would improve and corruption controlled. For this he said the people would have to be empowered so they might play role in decision-making. He said that the effective steps would have to be taken against the anti-democratic people in the entire set up and the violators should be punished.

### **4.3. DISTRICT LEVEL OFFICIALS**

#### **4.3.1. APAR MUKHYA ADHIKARIS**

At the district level, the Secretaries to the Zila Panchayats, designated as Apar Mukhya Adhikaris (AMAs), were sceptical and often critical of decentralisation. In the view of some of the AMAs there was nothing new in decentralisation as in his analysis the arrangement prevailing four or five decades ago was coming back. As an example, they cited the case of primary education, which was the domain of the Zila Parishads. They asserted since Zila Parishad had to deal with just a district, there was great emphasis on the quality of education.

Some others said there was no change in the status of Zila Panchayats in the administrative set-up. The Zila Panchayats were functioning in isolation as ever. According to an AMA the problem emanated from the very fact that there was no mention the words Apar Mukhya Adhikari in the UP Kshetra Panchayat and Zila Panchayat Adhiniyam. Instead it mentioned that there would be a Mukhya Adhikari in every Zila Panchayat. As a result power has never been delegated to the Apar Mukhya Adhikari. No one gave any recognition to AMAs and Zila Panchayats. The functions supposed to be performed by the Zila Panchayat were still being performed by those at the helm of affairs in the Vikas Bhawan.

On the change in style of functioning the AMAs were nearly unanimous that it was too early to comment because it was just a beginning. An AMA said that there was no change because the rules were not effective. He specifically mentioned lack of rules regarding punishment to the erring employees. As a result there were wide ranging differences of opinion among officials of same level. Lack of financial and administrative rights with the Zila Panchayat was also coming in the way, he said.

When it came to accountability of machinery involved in development administration to the people, Panchayat leadership or superior officials and change in it, the AMAs complained of status quo. This they said was because the Panchayats, and specially, Zila Panchayats, were not given powers to take decisions. According to an AMA, this situation emanated in Zila Panchayats because its officials and employees were not interactive enough as they have worked in isolation for several decades. On the other hand, another AMA said that the people were not ready to have faith in the Panchayats and it would take some time to change this mentality.

The relations between the three tiers of Panchayats and government departments related to them continue to be as they were. As an example, relations between Zila Panchayat and Vikas Bhawan have not changed and were dependent on the political lineage of the Zila

Panchayat Chairpersons. An AMA said that the present imbroglio prevailed because of considerable leverage given to the States in the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment to the Constitution. As a result, he said, administrative structure was especially lacking at the district level. Another AMA said ever since the chairmanship of District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) was transferred to the Zila Panchayat Chairpersons, the District Magistrates were passing the buck to the Chief Development Officers (CDOs) and Zila Panchayats. Moreover, according to a few AMAs, integration of the three tiers of Panchayats has not taken place.

On the functioning of committees, the AMAs were divided. One AMA said the committees were there just for namesake and they have failed to change the functioning of Panchayats. But the views of another AMA were just opposite to this. He said that the committees have made pressure not only on Zila Panchayats but also on other Panchayats.

As far as change in the planning process was concerned, there too was little change and everything was going on as before. One AMA commented the District Planning Committee (DPC) was seeking plans not from Zila Panchayat but from Kshetra Panchayats. According to the norms the DPC is expected to prepare a consolidated plan for the development of district by integrating plans from rural areas (through Zila Panchayat) and urban areas. One of the minister in-charge of a district has been made chairperson of DPC in each district. The minister was sitting like an idol, said an AMA.

There were numerous practical difficulties in the way to decentralisation. The foremost of them was lack of clearly defined administrative structure, despite recommendations to this effect by Decentralisation Commission (Bajaj Commission) and Mehta Committee. The second difficulty arose from the fact that there were shortcomings in what is being espoused as people's participation. Norms of people's participation were yet to be decided. It was also difficult to get hold of people's representatives. Since execution of works has been handed over to the Panchayats, it was getting difficult to maintain quality.

On the fate of decentralisation, the AMAs said that the greatest impediment in the way of decentralisation was people's mentality. If decentralisation has to be made effective, said one AMA, certain steps would have to be taken. The first step would be fixing of protocol concerned to Zila Panchayat Chairpersons, Kshetra Pramukh and Gram Pradhan vis-à-vis officials concerned to their tier of Panchayat. The second would be separation of financial and policy-making functions – let Zila Panchayat be policy-making body and financial aspects be looked after by the officials of Zila Panchayat. Lastly, control of Zila Panchayat over Kshetra and Gram Panchayats be established.

#### **4.3.2. DISTRICT PANCHAYAT RAJ OFFICERS**

Cutting across the regions and districts, the District Panchayat Raj Officers were unanimous that there had been a definite change in the Panchayat administration

following decentralisation. But these changes had been more profound at the Gram Panchayat level and have largely left Kshettra Panchayat untouched. Despite this optimism, there were numerous problems especially at the Gram Panchayat level. Though decision to provide one GPDO at the Gram Panchayat level was a welcome move (earlier Panchayat Secretaries were posted at the Nyaya Panchayat level) countless problems also prevailed at this level. Foremost of these problems was frustration among GPDOs as their cadre had been declared dead. The GPDOs all the time felt that they would be sacked and therefore were not working to their full capacity. The next was the employees hailing from other departments were finding it extremely difficult to discharge the duties of Panchayat Secretaries. The one round of training provided to the GPDOs had not cut much ice. The situation was especially bad in case of older GPDOs (over 40-50 years age). Though majority of DPRs felt that more intensive training to the GPDOs would do the trick, the rest felt that the need was to redo the entire Panchayati Raj structure. This would mean delimitation of Panchayats so as to reduce their overall number and then stationing of competent staff at their disposal.

As of now, the DPRs unanimously held that there was no inter-relationship among the three tiers of Panchayats. Since there was no clear demarcation of works to be carried out by the Panchayats, linkages were not being established among the Panchayats. This was most glaring in case of planning. Since no ceilings were fixed regarding the likely financial allocation to a Panchayat, there were full chances of cut in budget at different levels. Thus, the budget of Gram Panchayats was liable to be hacked at the Kshettra Panchayat level and that of Kshettra Panchayats was liable to be cut at the Zila Panchayat.

The DPRs were confident that decentralisation will usher in an era of transparency in the Panchayat administration. However, the hurdle in transparency was that many matters were politicised. On the fate of decentralisation, most of the DPRs opined that it was bright, subject to certain changes. The most prominent area of changes, according to the DPRs was reservation policy, which was propping up, at least at the lower level, leaders who were not educated enough to take care of the works of Panchayats, and which was leading to proxy leadership, especially in case of women.

#### **4.3.3. CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS**

Most of the CDOs interviewed observed that the Government proceeded in a great haste on decentralisation front and confusions were galore at the Government level. The decentralisation was based, in the eyes of CDOs, on the premise that the people were the best judges of their problems and expected them to identify their problems and deal with them. And to help them at the grass roots were GPDOs. It was probably too much to expect from the people and GPDOs both. Some of the CDOs expressed concern on overburden on GPDOs and their working conditions and maintained that they were such

as not to facilitate smooth conduct of work. On the other hand they accepted that workload on senior officials had decreased and now they could devote more time to policy level things and monitoring of the programmes.

Another concern of CDOs was on financial aspects. They said since finances of all the departments brought under the Panchayats have been put in the same account administrative difficulties have increased. The worrying part, they said, that neither the people's representatives nor GPDOS drawn from other departments were aware of the financial provisions. As a result there were fair chances that either the work would not be done, or the money would be withdrawn very quickly and misused. More than this decentralisation has raised hopes among the people and they have started looking to Panchayats as a mean to seek redress of their problems. But with the precarious financial situation in the State, it was becoming difficult to timely disburse money to the Panchayats. Similarly, the planning process was also difficult to initiate. In fact by the time of last interview in Khiri in February the planning process had not started. By that time, the Government had fixed ceiling on the plan size. In view of this, there were good chances that plans of each Panchayat were slashed.

In a nutshell, said the CDOs, the entire issue was of intent. If the intent were clear the arrangement would work out fine, otherwise not. The fate of decentralisation was subject to certain conditions. These were political will, political integrity, commitment at all levels, discard of narrow mindedness and change of mindset. But will all this materialise, questioned the CDOs.

#### **4.3.4. DISTRICT MAGISTRATES**

By and large the District Magistrates were of the opinion that bureaucratic channels have lessened owing to decentralisation. But at the same time, they asserted, political accountability has gone up by leaps and bounds. They said it seemed that decisions were not taking place owing to decentralisation. This is true to an extent because this was a phase of evolution leading to confusions at all the levels. That is why if one were to pass a judgement, they said, it would be too early to pass a verdict. On the relationship among the three tiers of Panchayats, the District Magistrates said that dominance of influential people and their political leanings were coming in the way of establishment of a relationship among the Panchayats.

As of now the District Magistrates said that there were too many obstacles on the road to decentralisation. For example, Anganwadi workers are mostly daughter/daughter-in-law/somebody in the family of Gram Pradhan. This Anganwadi worker is supposed to work for the downtrodden. Now since in most cases the Anganwadi worker is related to the Gram Pradhan, how the latter is going to monitor him is a big question. Another

example is planning, whose process decentralisation intends to inverse. But who is going to tell the people how they have to proceed to prepare plan for the development of the villages.

In the eyes of some of the District Magistrates, corruption at all the levels of administration, including Panchayat administration, was a major hurdle in the success of decentralisation. Who does not know that GPDOs take a bribe equalling nearly one-fourth of the cost of Indira Awas Yojana unit to sanction them, questioned one District Magistrate. This money, he said, was misappropriated between the officials and politicians both.

Taking a philosophical and somewhat dissenting note, a District Magistrate said the entire concept of decentralisation was based on lofty ideals. The greatest impediment in the success of decentralisation was division of the villages on narrow caste and political lines. Politicians of all hues have so far used the poor as puppets and this would in all probability continue because of illiteracy and heavy conditioning of mindset. Prevailing illiteracy and mindset make the people very alien to the ideals of decentralisation, he averred.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1. REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS

To begin with Article 243G of the Constitution, inserted by the Constitution (Seventy-third) Amendment Act, 1992, says that under the provisions of this Constitution, the State Legislature, by law, shall provide with powers and authority as it deems fit to enable them to act as institutions of local self-government.... It further says that such law may contain provisions for devolution of powers and responsibilities upon Panchayats with respect to the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice and the implementation of plans for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them in relation to the matters listed in the 11th Schedule. The emphasis in this Article seems to be on the phrases *institutions of local self-government*, *economic development* and *social justice*. These phrases give an indication about the spirit of the epoch making Constitutional Amendment that heralded advent of 'new' Panchayats.

To make these things operational, the Amendment has made certain provisions. For economic development, the Panchayats have to be financially self-reliant. An attempt has been made in the Act in this direction through the Article 243-H according to which the State Governments may authorise Panchayats to collect certain taxes, or assign them certain taxes, or provide for making grants-in-aid to them. The Article 243-I has provision for the constitution of a Finance Commission to review the financial position of the Panchayats and to make recommendations to the Governor as to the principles which should govern the distribution between the State and the Panchayats of the net proceeds of certain taxes.

But does the Conformity Act passed by Uttar Pradesh Legislature reflect this sentiment. The objects and reasons of the Uttar Pradesh Panchayat Laws (Amendment) Act, 1994, says that to incorporate the order to be sought to be established by the Constitution (Seventy-third) Amendment Act, 1992, it has been decided to make certain arrangements such as (1) constitution and structure of Panchayats, (2) reservation of positions in favour of the people belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, backward classes and for women, (3) five year duration of Panchayats, (4) strengthening of the State Government to dissolve any Panchayat under certain circumstances, (5) preparation of electoral rolls for each of the three tiers of Panchayats under the supervision, direction and control of the State Election Commission to be established by the Government and to conduct all the election, (6) establishment of a fund for each Panchayat, (7) functions, powers and responsibilities, in which provisions listed in the Eleventh Schedule to the Constitution are included, (8) strengthening of Panchayats to realise taxes, fees, etc., (9) constitution of a Finance Commission to review financial situation of Panchayats and for recommending to the Governor the principles regulating distribution of net receipts of realisable taxes, toll tax, fee, etc., between the State and the Panchayats. Clearly, the spirit of the Constitution (Seventy-third) Amendment Act, 1992 was done away in the State at the very beginning.

Some echo of these sentiments was, however, already there in the UP Panchayat Raj Act, 1947. The opening lines of this Act read: "Whereas it is expedient to establish and develop local self-government in the rural areas of the United Provinces and to make better provision for village administration and development...." On the other hand, the opening lines of UP Kshetra Panchayat and Zila Panchayat Adhiniyam, 1961, reads: "Whereas it is expedient to provide for the establishment of Kshetra Panchayats and Zila Panchayats in the districts of Uttar Pradesh to undertake certain governmental functions at Kshetra and district levels respectively in furtherance of the principle of democratic decentralisation of governmental functions and for ensuring proper municipal services in rural areas, and to correlate the powers and functions of Gram Sabhas under the UP Panchayat Raj Act, 1947 with Kshetra Panchayats and Zila Panchayats...." Thus the UP Panchayat Raj Act, 1947, seeks to establish local self-government in rural areas. Similarly, the UP Kshetra Panchayat and Zila Panchayat Adhiniyam, 1961 mentions democratic decentralisation of governmental functions and seeks to devolve certain governmental functions to the blocks and districts. What this Act, however, does not do is to correlate the powers and functions of Gram Panchayats; instead it seeks to play a correlative role for Gram Sabhas. Thus confusion has been set in right since the beginning and no attempt has so far been made to remove it.

Apart from appointing a Finance Commission the Uttar Pradesh Government went one step ahead to and appointed a Decentralisation Commission to critically review the functioning of Panchayats. It may be recalled that though the appointment of Finance Commission was a Constitutional binding that of the Decentralisation Commission was not one. What the State Legislature could not do the Decentralisation Commission forcefully tried to do, that is, it made attempts to bring local self-government back on the agenda.

While going into the reasons for downfall of the Panchayats, it noted that one reason behind this was lack of political will power to make and develop them (the Panchayats) lively units of rural government. Panchayat Acts were amended several times. But for the lack of regular elections and financial and administrative powers the Panchayats were reduced to just frame of decentralised institutions. Elsewhere, the Commission noted half hearted attempts never deliver. If these bodies have to play their roles, these would have to be provided sufficient works and responsibilities along with necessary powers. Accountability should only be expected when these institutions are provided necessary powers and works.

On planning the Commission remarked planning was a participatory process, which should have reasonable mix of collective efforts based on all possible consultations and experiences of technical or specific inputs and basic realities from the fields of economic and social planning. The planning process should have such culture and values as are

different from regulatory administrative systems. On the district plans, the commission noted the district planning was a paper exercise that was fitted into the framework of pre-determined plan. It regretted that despite the fact the district planning was continuing for quite some time, district or micro planning methods have not been developed. It castigated the bureaucrats and politicians both that they depend on their general knowledge for reaching conclusions and searching remedies.

The Commission made wide-ranging recommendations whose details it is not possible to go into at this place. But some of the main recommendations are being summarised here. At the district level it recommended that Zila Panchayat Chairpersons be made Chairpersons of DRDA, but maintain separate identity of DRDA for coming few years. It recommended that District Magistrates be appointed Deputy Chairpersons of DRDA for he is chief of development administration, revenue administration, land management and law and order in the district. It called for making CDOs secretary of Zila Panchayats. It laid great emphasis on the quality of officials and employees to be posted with the Panchayats and called for an end to ad hocism in their appointments. It recommended that 24 district officials be put under Section 39 of the Zila Panchayat and Kshetra Panchayat Adhiniyam, 1961, and another six in Section 95 of the Act. Since job of these officials entailed continuity, it recommended that the officials posted with the Panchayat not be transferred for three years at least. For the Kshetra Panchayat it recommended that block level officials be attached to the Kshetra Panchayats. At the Gram Panchayat level it recommended that one employee be provided to each Gram Panchayat.

To enhance quality of officials and non-officials the Commission recommended that the officials be provided extensive training. The training should aim at inculcating the spirit of self-governance among the officials and beginning of people-centred participatory development. As far as women non-officials were concerned, it recommended that the job of training them be awarded to the NGOs.

The major recommendations of the Commission were: (i) money be released in minimum instalments, (ii) Gram Panchayats be given more money, (iii) the money should go to DRDA directly from the State Government and not through the Rural Development Commissioner, (iv) formulation of a suitable policy to disburse money to various agencies, (v) increase in Jawahar Rojgar Yojana funds to the districts, (vi) regular meetings of the general body of DRDA, (vii) strict monitoring for which the post of Assistant Commissioner be created, and (viii) creation of the post of and executive engineer in DRDA.

## **5.2. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.2.1. STATE LEVEL ACTS**

The above review clearly brings out some very interesting moves that the Uttar Pradesh Government has undertaken with respect to Panchayats.

To begin with it amended existing laws related to Panchayats, that is, the United Provinces Panchayat Raj Act, 1947, and the Uttar Pradesh Kshetra and Zila Panchayat Adhiniyam, 1961, through the Uttar Pradesh Panchayat Laws (Amendment) Act, 1994. But while doing so it lost the core of the Constitution (Seventy-third) Amendment Act, 1992, that is, to provide the Panchayats such powers and authority as it (the State) deems fit to enable them to act as institutions of local self-government. As noted above, while words local self-government find mention in the introduction to the United Provinces Panchayat Raj Act, 1947, these words do not find mention in the introduction of the Uttar Pradesh Kshetra Panchayat and Zila Panchayat Adhiniyam, 1961. Therefore, *it will be desirable to put the words 'local self-governance' suitably in the introduction of the two Acts so they incorporate the spirit of local self-governance.*

### **5.2.2. DRDA AND ZILA PANCHAYAT**

The State Government went ahead one step to appoint a Decentralisation Commission to suggest to it the steps it could take to decentralise its functioning and transfer certain works to Panchayats. It took considerable time to consider the report of the Decentralisation Commission, but never made public which recommendations of the Commission it accepted and which it did not. When the process of decentralisation began, it was marked by utter confusion – there were numerous instances in which the orders were repeatedly changed, cancelled and modified – and confusion still continues. It is thus obvious that the State Government moved one step ahead and two steps backward on the decentralisation front.

Recommendations of the any Commission are not mandatory for any Government to accept. The State Government has implemented many recommendations of the Decentralisation Commission. Thus, Zila Panchayat Chairpersons have been made Chairpersons of DRDA. Separate identity of DRDAs has been maintained by retaining all the administrative and financial powers with the Executive Directors, which are CDOs. The Governing Board of DRDA is now comprised of over 50 people which include 22 officials, six nominated non-officials (one women worker having experience in organising rural poor, one representative of Milk Union, two representatives of weaker sections out of which one has to belong to Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes, one representative of rural women and one representative of minorities), and the rest people's representatives of all hues – Lok Sabha members, Rajya Sabha members, members of Vidhan Sabha, members of Vidhan Parishad, Chairpersons of Standing Committees of Zila Panchayat, Kshetra Pramukhs and Zila Panchayat Chairperson. Obviously, the Governing Board of DRDA is too big a body to transact any meaningful business. Incidentally, too big size of Zila Panchayat was the reason advanced by the Decentralisation Commission against the merger of DRDAs and Zila Panchayats for the Commission had maintained that decision-making in DRDA was easy because of its small size. In view of this *Zila Panchayats and*

*DRDAs should be merged without delay. A smaller committee of Zila Panchayat members headed by Zila Panchayat Chairpersons should perform the functions that the Governing Board of DRDAs is performing at present.*

It has been seen that non-officials nominated by the Zila Panchayat Chairperson in his or her capacity as DRDA Chairperson do not serve any meaningful purpose for the voice of such nominated members gets stifled. Their continuation in this form can thus be dispensed with. Moreover, there is a provision of nomination of one woman worker having experience in organising the rural poor to DRDA governing board. On the other hand there is provision in the manuals of Jawahar Rojgar Yojana and Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana of NGO involvement. In view of this instead of nomination of woman worker with experience in organising the rural poor, one or two NGOs having people centred participatory development as their vision and having faith in Panchayati Raj system should be there on the committee of Zila Panchayat mentioned above to put people's perspective before the committee. Guidelines for the selection of these NGOs may be formulated at the State level and the job of identifying such NGOs should be left over to state or regional level networks of NGOs.

### **5.2.3. ACCOUNTABILITY OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS**

In all 26 officials at the district level have been put under Section 39 of the UP Zila Panchayat and Kshetra Panchayat Adhiniyam, 1961, as against recommended 24. According to the opening lines of Section 39 these are the officials of the Zila Panchayat. As against recommended six officials 10 officials have been brought under Section 95 to advise Zila Panchayats concerning their departments. At the Kshetra Panchayat level, all officials of the Rural Development Department have been brought under the administrative control of Kshetra Panchayat. Lastly, each Gram Panchayat has been provided with an official Gram Panchayat Development Officer. But supremacy of people's representatives of a particular tier of Panchayat over the officials of the same tier of Panchayat was not established at the time of data collection. The case in point is Zila Panchayat Chairpersons who in their earlier *avtar* of Zila Parishad Chairperson enjoyed the status of a Minister of State and thus had higher status in the list of protocol vis-à-vis district officials. Therefore, *the need of the hour is to re-draw the list of protocol to include Panchayat representatives in that. Once this is done the clash of personalities at all the levels of Panchayats will in all probability end.*

### **5.2.4. BUREAUCRATIC STABILITY**

The list of what has not been done and what has been shabbily done is also long. Thus, the CDOs have not been made secretary of Zila Panchayats. On the bureaucratic side the Zila Panchayats are still headed by Apar Mukhya Adhikaris, who also act as secretary to Zila Panchayats. Apar Mukhya Adhikaris are considerably junior to CDOs in administrative hierarchy. Therefore, any communication of Apar Mukhya Adhikaris to CDOs is most likely to be ignored by the latter. Mindset of officials continues to be the same. Transfer of officials continues unabated as the State Government has largely

ignored the Decentralisation Commission's recommendation that the officials should not be transferred for at least three years. Continuing transfers have caused much harm to the concept of continuity. In view of this, *transfer of the officials related to the Panchayats should be halted at least for the coming few years.*

#### **5.2.4. TRAINING EFFORTS**

Quality of officials continues to be the same. Data from the field reveals that at the lowest level most of the GPDOs (that is, 92.4 per cent) were imparted training for discharging their new duties. Yet a whopping percentage of GPDOs (73.7 per cent) felt that the training imparted to them was not sufficient. Among the non-officials 35.0 per cent Gram Panchayat representatives, 17.6 per cent Kshettra Panchayat representatives and 15.8 per cent Zila Panchayat representatives received capacity building training. In all cases of Zila Panchayat and Kshettra Panchayat representatives the government departments concerned gave the training. But in case of Gram Panchayat representatives NGOs supplemented efforts of government departments and even at some places led the efforts. This brings to fore some hard facts:

- (a) government efforts towards capacity building are focused on chairpersons (and at the most deputy chairpersons),
- (b) NGOs have not so far paid attention to higher tiers of Panchayats, that is, Kshettra Panchayats and Zila Panchayats, and
- (c) NGOs are more comfortable with Gram Panchayats where too their efforts are concentrated at Gram Panchayat members.

Lacking in these trainings, however, were the very recommended aims – to inculcate the spirit of self-government among officials and non-officials and to begin people centred participatory development.

In view of the recommended aims the government policy on imparting training to the officials and non-officials needs to be practically looked into. The sheer number of officials and non-officials of the Panchayats all over the State demands that this effort too needs to be decentralised. Whole of the government machinery including SIRD, RIRDs and DIRDs have not been able to train the Panchayat officials and non-officials. Experience of the last five years of functioning of Panchayats confirms the data. A practical and effective policy which is fundamental needs to be formulated. Identification of other actors well versed with training and local self-governance needs to be done and involved in the whole providers. Further, imparting training should not be merely seen as a mechanical and target oriented approach. Capacity building has to be an interactive process requiring long term follow-up and support. It needs to be viewed as an integral component of capacity building and confidence building measure. Further, it has to be time bound providing enough space to the non-officials and Gram Sabha members to deliver the results. Experience during the data collection and during other times while

interacting with officials and non-officials clearly reveals the lacunae in training strategy of the Government. Added to this should be considered the quality of trainers within and outside the Government. This gains importance in view of the responses gained that right from top to bottom, every government employee was involved during the training process. This implies that till date it has been treated in a very laissez faire manner. A serious thought needs to be given to this whole affair. The Government and a few selected NGOs working towards strengthening the Panchayats together can do this work.

But imparting training to non-officials on such a massive scale (there are about 9 lakh Panchayat representatives) every five years is an extremely difficult task. In view of large number of Gram Panchayats in the State (58,605) a minimum of as many GPDOs are required. This contention does not take into account the Gram Panchayats where more than one GPDO are needed. Moreover, job chart of the GPDOs is so long (128 functions) that it is humanely impossible for them. Not only that. None of the GPDOs interviewed for the study could recall the number of jobs assigned to them. Apart from this the GPDOs are finding it difficult to do works of departments other than their parent departments. These two facts call for a serious thought to resizing of the Gram Panchayats. It may be recalled here that the average size of Gram Panchayats in States like Karnataka, which is touted as the best example of success in Panchayati Raj, is 10,381. Only when the size of Gram Panchayat is increased the concept of each Gram Panchayat having its secretariat can materialise.

#### 5.2.4. GRAM SABHA

But with the increase in size of Gram Panchayats, adequate attention needs to be given to people's participation in Panchayati Raj. One can argue that with the increase in size of Gram Panchayats people's participation will further decrease. It is true, but having Ward Sabhas instead of Gram Sabhas can counteract this. Experience reveals that Gram Sabha as a body has been difficult to prove its effectiveness generally. It has been difficult to meet and organise itself so as to perform any effective role in Panchayati Raj. On the contrary, experiences from other States reveal that Ward Sabhas have been effective. Latest addition to the list is the state of Rajasthan, which has incorporated provisions in its state level act regarding the same. Secretariat of Gram Panchayats needs to be strengthened. Data corroborates the fact that with officials at the disposal of the local level institutions, their efficiency increases. Further the frequency of meetings of Ward Sabha need to be increased to four times a year. This does not mean that provisions related to Gram Sabha need to be removed. Gram Sabha does provide an opportunity to all the adults of the Panchayat to meet and discuss issues. Its frequency can be decreased to once a year but at the same time the state should think of providing meaningful and binding roles to Gram Sabha and Ward Sabha. They should help establishing accountability of the elected representatives towards their electorate. At present the state level act of Uttar

Pradesh does not ensure accountability of the elected representatives at any level towards the villagers. This needs to be taken care of. And, having Ward Sabhas can help establish it. Ward Sabhas will not only ease the accessibility of the villagers towards their representatives, but also ensure the accountability of the latter towards their electorate. It should be made mandatory for the ward representative to hold quarterly meetings of the ward and adequate measures for enhancing transparency in the whole process need to be incorporated.

#### **5.2.6. AWARENESS ON DECENTRALISATION**

Awareness about decentralisation process among various stakeholders was found to be considerably limited. Though over 60 per cent of the stakeholders ranging from Gram Sabha members to Zila Panchayat representatives were aware of the fact that a process of decentralisation regarding Panchayats had been set in, the fraction of those having nuances of this was considerably low. Awareness regarding onset of decentralisation process increased from Gram Sabha members to Zila Panchayat representatives. Incidentally, this increasing trend was in direct proportion to their increasing education level, that is, the Gram Sabha members were least educated and Zila Panchayat representatives were most educated. Awareness was also found to be dependent on the reservation category – in any given category of stakeholders awareness of those belonging to general category was found to be more than that of those belonging to reserved categories. This brings to the fore that more emphasis has to be given to the stakeholders belonging to the reserved categories in any capacity building programme. And evening reserved category, more emphasis has to be paid to the women stakeholders.

Source of receipt of information by various stakeholders was used as a proxy indicator to gauge interaction of the government machinery with the rural people and their representatives. Fifty per cent of Zila Panchayat representatives said that they got information about decentralisation through newspapers, but this percentage dropped to mere 6.7 in case of Gram Panchayat representatives. Decreasing importance of newspapers as medium of information may be explained by the penetration of newspapers in remote villages and education level of stakeholders. Alongside this gradual fall, there was a steady increase in the percentage of government officials as informant. While 13.9 per cent Zila Panchayat representatives got information from government officials 34.3 per cent Gram Panchayat representatives got information from them. But in case of Gram Sabha members the percentage of such members getting information from government officials dropped to a mere 15.7. This brings to the fore that interaction of government officials at the district level with the Panchayat representatives is considerably low. This could be understood from the fact that the district level officials were still not identifying themselves with the Panchayat representatives. On the other hand village level government officials were identifying themselves with the Panchayat representatives may

be out of sheer compulsion. But they were not yet ready to identify themselves with the ordinary villagers. This calls for a drastic change in the mindset of officials. Moreover, it was found that across the regions, initially all the sources, viz., newspapers, government booklet and government officials, played dominating role, except in case of Zila Panchayat representatives. But as the developments started unveiling, role of any single source of information became less important and Gram Sabha members and Panchayat representatives started taking advantage of any source they could lay hands on. A dramatic increase in the importance of government booklet specially published for the purpose was witnessed. This may be attributed to the availability of its copies. Thus suitable publications do play a great role in enhancing awareness regarding any move the government may make and this practice should be continued.

Villagers have started using right to information granted to them with a view to making functioning of Panchayats transparent. Though at the time of information collection nearly one-fifth of villagers interviewed were using this right, the heartening fact was that of those four-fifth of those who sought information were given required information. That is another matter that there was a large gap between mandatory time period for giving such information and actual time in getting such information. The sad aspect of ensuring transparency in Panchayats was that a little more than one-fifth of the villagers said that the financial details of transaction made in the Panchayat were publicly written in their Panchayats. This may be compared with the percentage of GPDOs three-fifth of whom said that they had made such information public.

In the changed context when the Panchayats have to carry out a large quantum of work, regular holding of meetings gains importance. Notwithstanding provision regarding meetings in the Act and Rules, 63.8 per cent of Gram Panchayat representatives, 45.8 per cent of Kshettra Panchayat representatives and 69.4 per cent of Zila Panchayat representatives said the meetings were being held regularly in their respective Panchayats. Almost equal and high regularity of meetings at Zila Panchayat and Gram Panchayat level and considerably low regular meetings at Kshettra Panchayat level goes on to show the importance the two sets of Panchayats have been given. Zila Panchayat is the supreme body catering to rural areas at the district level while Gram Panchayat is executing body at the village level. Both of them seem to be more important than Kshettra Panchayat that is an intermediary body for which only a very few things have been defined. Thus overall record in holding meetings in Zila Panchayats and Gram Panchayats was better compared to Kshettra Panchayats whose members were still in a state of confusion. In view of this, Kshettra Panchayats should be given more powers regarding coordination among Gram Panchayats. The role of the Zila Panchayats should be limited to policy formulation. In short, this calls for clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities of the Panchayats.

As far as meetings of the committees of the Panchayats were concerned, it was found that the meetings of the committees followed the same trend as that of their respective Panchayats. But the incidence of meetings of these committees was on a lower side as compared to their Panchayats. The committees are helpful to Panchayats in taking decisions and here too the trend was one similar to that of the meetings. Similarly, as far as giving importance to the decisions of the committees was concerned, it was found that the trend was again similar to that of the meetings. However, despite the trend lower percentage of representatives commenting on importance to decisions goes on to show that the chairpersons of the Panchayats were still behaving in an arbitrary manner and giving little attention to the democratic processes. Therefore, the committees should be given more teeth so they could play a meaningful role.

At the time of data collection planning from below had started as revealed by 41.0 per cent of Gram Panchayat representatives and 36.1 per cent of Kshetra Panchayat representatives. But nearly all Gram Panchayat representatives were not sure which body these plans were submitted to. On the other hand majority of Kshetra Panchayat representatives were quite sure that the plans were submitted to Zila Panchayat. Over 60 per cent of the Zila Panchayat representatives were, however, not aware about constitution of District Planning Committee. Even more were not aware whether the planning process had started in their district at all. From this it appears that the neither the Panchayat representatives nor the officials attached with the Panchayats have necessary expertise regarding planning. Many NGOs in the State have demonstrated how planning at the Panchayat level could be carried out in a real participatory sense. The Government would be well advised to interact with these NGOs, decide on a model of planning and issue necessary guidelines to the Gram Panchayats in this regard. Moreover, capacity building of Gram Panchayats in planning should be handed over to the NGOs. At the higher levels detailed guidelines for integration of these plans should be chalked out and issued. Since it would be a people's plan a thought must be given to stop schemes sponsored by the Central and State Governments and the funds must be untied.

A large percentage of Kshetra Panchayat representatives, that is, 82.4 per cent, were of the opinion that it would have been better had the works to be carried out by Kshetra Panchayat in more than one Gram Panchayat were defined beforehand. In the same vein 79.5 per cent of Zila Panchayat representatives said that the district officials related to rural development works were not following orders and directives of Zila Panchayats. Most of the Zila Panchayat representatives said that the district level officials who had been made advisor to the Zila Panchayat were not functioning as advisor. Non-cooperation on the part of district level officials had led to complacency among the Zila Panchayat representatives as majority of them said they did not make any attempt to improve functioning of DRDA.

The decentralisation does not seem to have percolate down to the Gram Sabha level as is revealed by the following two facts. One, more than half of the Gram Panchayat representatives said that in their Panchayat area the Gram Sabha was having no role in selection of beneficiaries as well as distribution of pension. Two, more than half of the Gram Sabha members found that there was no change in the functioning of Panchayats. This dismal scenario emanates from the very definition of Gram Sabha in the UP Panchayat Raj Act, 1947, which says that 'Gram Sabha' means a body ... consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of a Gram Panchayat. According to Section 11(3)(a) and (b) of this Act the Gram Sabha will consider annual statement of accounts of the Gram Panchayat, the report of administration, report of development programmes undertaken and report of the development programmes proposed to be undertaken and it may make recommendations and suggestions to the Gram Panchayat. Section 11(4) of this Act says that the Gram Panchayat shall give due consideration to the recommendations and suggestions of the Gram Sabha. Section 11(5) says that the Gram Sabha shall mobilise voluntary labour and contribution, identify beneficiaries and render assistance in the implementation of development schemes. These sections need suitable Amendment to make the Gram Sabha a powerful body, playing role in plan formulation and its implementation and keeping necessary checks on Gram Panchayat. Only when this is done Gram Sabhas will become watchdogs to Gram Panchayats and exercise necessary control over them.

A majority of Panchayat representatives said that functioning of Panchayats had not changed even after the beginning of decentralisation process. In fact there was a small fraction of the representatives, which said that the functioning had worsened. Yet a very large fraction of Gram Panchayat representatives maintained that expectations of the people have increased from the Panchayats owing to decentralisation.

Lastly, a villager not being aware of the details and nitty-gritty of Panchayati Raj is a problem of not having an effective policy or lack of political will? Is it not a problem of our polity? Unaware masses make it easier for some to remain in power. The degree of political interference observed during elections this year reveals the intention of political parties. This needs to be halted if accountability of elected representatives has to be established towards the electorate and not to the political parties. Of course people may argue that Kerala and other States where elections of Panchayats are held on party lines the results have been positive. But the socio-cultural scenario of the two States is strikingly different. A clear-cut strategy as to how to have informed, educated, constitutionally and administratively aware literate masses needs to be urgently chalked out. This in turn would also mean a re-orientation of bureaucracy also. Of course, one-and-a-half century of functioning cannot be changed overnight but a beginning has to be made. Different actors need to be involved in this process.

In short it follows from the above description that:

1. It will be desirable to suitably incorporate the words 'local self-governance' in the introduction of the United Provinces Panchayat Raj Act, 1947, and the Uttar Pradesh Kshettra and Zila Panchayat Adhiniyam, 1961, so they incorporate the spirit of local self-governance.
2. Sections 11(3), (4) and (5) of the United Provinces Panchayat Raj Act, 1947, need suitable Amendment to make the Gram Sabha a powerful body, playing role in plan formulation and its implementation and keeping necessary checks on Gram Panchayat. Only when this is done Gram Sabhas will become watchdogs to Gram Panchayats and exercise necessary control over them.
3. Only when the size of Gram Panchayat is increased suitably the concept of each Gram Panchayat having its secretariat can materialise. This, however, has its pitfalls as in a larger body people's participation, which is vital for the success grass roots democratic structures, is likely to become less. To keep people's participation at an optimum level regular organisation of Ward Sabhas may be considered.
4. The district level officials who had been made advisor to the Zila Panchayat were not functioning as advisor. Non-cooperation on the part of district level officials had led to complacency among the Zila Panchayat representatives as majority of them said they did not make any attempt to improve functioning of DRDA.
5. Zila Panchayats and DRDAs should be merged without delay. A smaller committee of Zila Panchayat members headed by Zila Panchayat Chairpersons should perform the functions that the Governing Board of DRDAs is performing at present.
6. One or two NGOs having people centred participatory development as their vision and having faith in Panchayati Raj system should be there on the committee of Zila Panchayat mentioned above to put people's perspective before the committee. Guidelines for the selection of these NGOs may be formulated at the State level and the job of identifying these NGOs should be left over to state or regional level networks of NGOs.
7. Neither the Panchayat representatives nor the officials attached with the Panchayats have necessary expertise regarding planning. A few NGOs in the State have demonstrated how planning at the Panchayat level could be carried out in a real participatory sense. The Government would be well advised to interact with these NGOs, decide on a model of planning and issue necessary guidelines to the Gram Panchayats in this regard. Moreover, capacity building of Gram Panchayats in planning should be handed over to the NGOs. For the higher levels of Panchayats detailed guidelines for integration of these plans should be chalked out and issued. Since it would be a people's plan a thought must be given to stop schemes sponsored by the Central and State Governments and the funds must be untied.
8. Transfer of the officials related to the Panchayats should be halted at least for the next few years. In view of the recommended aims re-formulation of training design and

strategy for both officials and non-officials is required. The Government and a few selected NGOs working towards strengthening the Panchayats together can do this work. NGOs active in strengthening local self –governance too need to collaborate and adopt innovative methods of imparting constitutional and administrative literacy/education to the people. They also need to come together and give a definite direction to their efforts.

9. In any capacity building programme more emphasis has to be given to the stakeholders belonging to the reserved categories. And even in a reserved category, more emphasis has to be paid to the women stakeholders.
10. Overall record in holding meetings in Zila Panchayats and Gram Panchayats was better compared to Kshetra Panchayats whose members were still in a state of confusion. In view of this, Kshetra Panchayats should be given more powers regarding coordination among Gram Panchayats. The role of the Zila Panchayats should be limited to policy formulation. In short, this calls for clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities of the Panchayats.
11. Chairpersons of the Panchayats were still behaving in an arbitrary manner and giving little attention to the democratic processes. Therefore, the committees should be given more teeth so they could play a meaningful role.
12. The district level officials were still not identifying themselves with the Panchayat representatives. On the other hand village level government officials were identifying themselves with the Panchayat representatives may be out of sheer compulsion. But they were not yet ready to identify themselves with the ordinary villagers. The Gram Panchayat representatives have corroborated the fact that having administrative officials at their disposal improves the functioning of Panchayats. Now the task is to fix accountability of these appointed officials at all levels towards Panchayat representatives.
13. The list of protocol should be redrawn to include Panchayat representatives in that. Once this is done the clash of personalities at all the levels of Panchayats will in all probability end.
14. Suitable publications do play a great role in enhancing awareness regarding any move the government may make and this practice should be continued.

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