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A review: Panchayati raj system and community development in India

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Abstract

The term "Panchayati Raj" in India primarily refers to the system that was implemented by a constitutional amendment in 1992, despite the fact that it is based on the conventional South Asian panchayat system. The extra-constitutional khap panchayats (or caste panchayats) present in various regions of northern India are not to be confused with the current panchayati raj and its gramme panchayats. Prior to the formalisation of the panchayati raj system in 1992, several Indian committees investigated various implementation strategies for more decentralised government. Panchayati raj, a decentralised type of administration in which each village was in charge of its own affairs, was the basis of the political system that Mahatma Gandhi favoured for India. Such a vision was known as Gram Swaraj. India instead established a very centralised system of governance. However, development has been restrained by the localization of a number of administrative tasks, giving elected gramme panchayats more authority. The Gandhian system, the traditional panchayati raj system, and the system that India officially adopted in 1992 are all very different from one another.

Keywords: Panchayati raj, self government, 73 amendment of constitution

Introduction

In ancient times, India's Institution of Panchayats served as the local administration for its villages. These Panchayats were demoted to a subservient role during the British era as the foreign rulers established local self governments based on the model of their own nation. Village Panchayats were envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, as a potential tool for the socioeconomic and political reform of rural society and the promotion of a democratic way of life at the local level. As a result, the Indian Constitution's basic principles of state policy require the State to create village Panchayats and grant them the essential authority and capabilities to act as self-governing entities. The Government of India began community development programmes on October 2, 1952, and these gave the Panchayat movement a boost. The Gram Panchayat, which governs the village at the most basic level, the Panchayat Samiti, which governs community development blocks, and the Zila Parishad, which governs districts, were the three levels of the Panchayat system suggested by the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee in 1958. The National Development Council gave its approval to these proposals, therefore the Government of India built its policy on them.

There is no doubting that on October 2, 1959, Rajasthan chose to implement the Panchayati Raj System as its initial system. Andhra Pradesh was the second step in this regard, with Maharashtra being ranked as the ninth state to adhere to these standards. Due to the passage of laws governing the creation of Panchayats in various states, the state governments were forced to adhere to the same structure Power and duties connected to the Panchayats were devolved as a result of the 1992 Amendment. The Panchayats were denied their rights to implement numerous functions in unique domains that were specified in the eleventh schedule of the constitution, as well as their rights to prepare economic planning and social policies. The current amendment focuses on and upholds the three tier Panchayati Raj system for those states with a population more than two million.

Its duties included regulating the panchayat elections at regular intervals, providing for the reservation of seats for SC, ST, and women, as well as making recommendations regarding the financial authority of panchayats.

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In addition, it had the responsibility of aiding in district-level development. It has been observed that the Panchayats primarily receive funding from three different sources: local body grants that are recommended by the Central Finance Commission; funding from state governments on the recommendation of the State Finance Commissions; and last but not least, funds for the implementation of centrally sponsored schemes. Thus, after experiencing various phases of Panchayati Raj in India up until the passage of the 73rd Amendment Act in 1992, we can affirm with confidence that the present act was expanded to Panchayats in the underdeveloped areas of eight states, primarily Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Andhra Pradesh that began on December 24, 1996, and that the present Panchayati Raj System is currently in operation in those states.

Block level panchayat

A Panchayat Samiti (block panchayat) is a tehsil-level local governing body. This organisation serves the tehsil's villages, which collectively are referred to as a "development block." The Panchayat Samiti serves as a conduit between the district administration and the Gram Panchayat. There are several other nomenclatures for the block panchayat, just as the tehsil is known by several names in different regions of India, most notably mandal and taluka. For instance, it is known as Panchayat Samiti in Maharashtra, Mandal Praja Parishad in Andhra Pradesh, Taluka Panchayat in Gujarat, and Karnataka. Generally speaking, the block panchayat is a higher level organisation with the same structure as the gramme panchayat.

Constituency

All of the Sarpanches (gramme panchayat chairmen) in the Panchayat Samiti area, the MPs and MLAs of the area, the sub-district officer (SDO) of the subdivision, co-opt members (representatives of the SC/ST and women), associate members (a farmer from the area, a representative of the cooperative societies, and one from marketing services), as well as some elected members, make up the membership of the block panchayat.

The chairman and deputy chairman of the Panchayat Samiti are elected for terms of five years.

Departments

The common departments in the Samiti are as follows:

- General Administration
- Finance
- Public Works
- Agriculture
- Health
- Education
- Social Welfare
- Information Technology
- Water Supply Department
- Animal Husbandry and others

For each department, an officer is present. A Block Development Officer (BDO) nominated by the government serves as the Samiti's executive officer, is in charge of its administration, and reports to the CEO of ZP.

Functions

- putting plans into action to advance infrastructure and

agriculture

- creation of primary health care facilities and primary schools
- drainage, the provision of drinking water, and the building or repair of roads
- creation of cooperative groups, small-scale industry development, and cottage industries
- the creation of youth organisations

District level panchayat

The governing of the advance system at the district level in Panchayat Raj is also popularly known as Zila Parishad. The chief of administration is an officer of the IAS cadre.

Functions

- Ensure that rural residents have access to necessary services and amenities.
- Provide farmers with better seeds and educate them on new farming methods
- Establish and maintain libraries and schools in rural areas
- Launch community hospitals and primary care clinics, as well as immunisation campaigns to prevent epidemics.
- Implement strategies for the advancement of the designated castes and tribes; manage ashram shalas for Adivasi children; establish free hostels for them.
- Encourage business people to launch small businesses and put rural employment programmes into action.
- Build and maintain roads, bridges, and other public facilities
- Provide employment

Sources of income

- Local taxes are imposed on things like water, pilgrimage sites, local mandirs (temples), and markets.
- A fixed grant from the State Government based on the land revenue and funds allotted to the Parishad's projects and programmes.

Village level panchayat

A Sarpanchas is the elected head of a gramme panchayat, a village-level administrative body. The members of the Gram Sabha choose the gramme panchayat members for a five-year term.

Reservation for women in pris in India

The Union Cabinet of the Government of India authorised a 50 per cent reservation for women in PRIs on August 27, 2009. (Panchayati Raj Institutions). There is a 50 per cent reservation for women in PRIs in the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Tripura, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Bihar, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh. Women run for office in these Panchayats in large numbers. Women currently make up all elected officials in Kodassery Panchayat in Kerala.

For roughly five years, Community Development was carried out in the nation (1952-1957). In 1957, the government established the Balwantrai Mehta Committee to assess the effectiveness of the Community Development Program. This committee discovered that there was a decline in involvement, and the outcomes were depressing.

It was stated that community development cannot be successfully achieved unless the people are given the support they need to take the initiative in creating and implementing their own programme. Based on this fundamental reasoning, the Committee advocated a three-tier Panchayat Raj system. Fundamentally, it is a democratic decentralisation process. It was underlined that village representatives participate in the administrative structure at several levels, such as village, taluka, and district, which includes:

- i) Village Panchayat,
- ii) Panchayat Samiti and
- iii) Zilla Parishad were included in Statutory Act, 1958.

These organisations make up the three tiers of the Panchayat Raj system. It provided the official framework for people's representatives to carry out their duties of policy decision-making, resource mobilisation for rural people, and independent planning, implementation, and evaluation of official programmes. This was accomplished through the decentralisation process used to construct the Panchayat Raj System.

Democratic decentralisation disseminated the power and authority to the various levels as Local Self-Government units to take care of their regional problem solving process with significant public engagement.

The first minister for cooperation and panchayati raj in India's Union Cabinet was S. K. Dey, who served from 1905 to 1989. In independent India, Mr. Dey is remembered as the leader and manager of community development. He insisted that every hamlet should enjoy the benefits of democracy and was adamant that government employees cannot practise democracy.

Mr. Dey was given control of rural development in the newly independent India by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru because of his dynamism and dedication to fostering grassroots democracy. Mr. Dey left his position in the ministry upon Nehru's passing and devoted himself to developing the nation's Panchayati Raj institutions. The Community Development Programme (1953), which would eventually serve as the foundation for Community Development Blocks throughout the nation, was his personal initiative while serving as minister. The foundation of Mr. Dey's philosophy of community development was his conviction that the community could help itself rather than viewing "the government as Mai-Baap." A three-pronged strategy—growth of the area, integrated administration, and development of the individual and the community—defines Mr. Dey's approach of community development. At Etawah University of Pennsylvania, the first Community Development Project was started in 1948. There were 55 similar initiatives launched nationwide in 1952. In light of their success, the Community Development Programme was expanded to include all of the nation's blocks.

Mr. Dey created the idea of an agro-industrial township in 1949 for rural development. This model's main selling point was how it combined an emphasis on industrial and agricultural growth. The surrounding villages would offer assistance to the township in the form of goods and services. It would run on a foundation of collaboration and be self-sufficient. In 1950, the "Mazdoori Manzil" project in Nilokheri, Haryana, became a reality. Seven thousand Pakistani destitute refugees benefited from the scheme. This concept, in Mr. Dey's opinion, is the welfare state in action.

Nehru was impressed with the design and referred to it as the "Mecca of Development" while urging the establishment of numerous such Nilokheri centres throughout the nation. Unfortunately, Nilokheri has fallen into obscurity over the years and lacks even the most basic amenities like education, water, and health care. Rabindranath Tagore's Shantiniketan experiment for rural development and Gandhi's idea of rural construction, which placed a strong emphasis on self-sufficiency and physical labour, both appear to have had an impact on S.K. Dey. It might also be seen as a model for rural development that combines Gandhism, Marxism, and liberalism. Its emphasis on individual freedom appears to have come from liberalism, its emphasis on the right and responsibility to labour comes from Marxism, and its emphasis on small-scale cottage and village enterprises comes from Gandhi-ism.

Mr. Dey was in the Balwantrai Mehta Committee, which was established in 1957 to investigate the Community Development Program. The Committee evaluated the program's success in harnessing local efforts and in developing institutions to assure continuity in the process of improving the economic and social circumstances in rural areas.

The Committee argued for a robust Panchayati Raj system by holding that community development would only be substantial and long-lasting if the community was involved in the planning, decision-making, and implementation processes. According to the Balwantrai Mehta Committee, Panchayati Raj Institutions play a fundamental role in rural development and are essential for the accomplishment of national extension programmes and community development initiatives.

In his work "Panchayat-i-Raj, a Synthesis," Mr. Dey described in great detail how the Panchayati Raj has philosophical overtones. He explains how the Panchayati Raj served as a crucial bridge between the individual and the larger world. In order for democracy to flow from the Parliament to the Gram Sabha, Mr. Dey described a close interaction between the Lok Sabha and the Gram Sabha. Mr. Dey pleaded with state governments to prioritise creating PRIs in their respective states. All states had passed PRI legislation by the 1960s, and there were more than 2,17,300 Panchayats in existence.

Additionally, Mr. Dey made a significant contribution to the formation of the National Development Council. Mr. Dey's leadership of "Kuruksheetra," the monthly publication of the Ministry of Rural Development, has made a significant contribution to the area of development journalism.

Mr. Dey, who contributed significantly to nation-building for more than 40 years after Independence, was a unique combination of a philosopher and a practitioner. Social scientists, administrators, political leaders, and other participants in the project for rural development and decentralised rural governance should pay special attention to his innovative contribution to the idea and execution of Panchayati Raj.

The implementation of the panchayat raj system in several states marks a new stage in the development of local self-government institutions as agents of national development. The panchayat raj institutions in Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and West Bengal have given a fairly good account of themselves in various functional spheres—economic, social, political, and administrative—and are well on their way to strengthening their positions in the

countryside—all within the short life span of less than two decades. Ten years have passed since the new panchayat raj setup in Karnataka was introduced and began operating at the village, taluk, and zilla levels.

The goal of this new decentralisation framework is to increase effective, widespread participation in local issues, including Central Government functions that are carried out locally. Such involvement not only improves the individual's dignity and sense of community at all levels, but it also gives government programmes life and gives local governments a way to control them. It improves local needs adaptation and responsiveness of the programmes. Additionally, through participating, community people may be inspired to act more independently and to contribute more fully to government programmes.

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