
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF MEDIEVAL BRITISH RAJ AND POST INDEPENDENCE PANCHAYATI RAJ

Patel Savita Ben
Research Scholar
SunRise University, Alwar
Rajasthan

Dr. Tara Singhal
Supervisor
SunRise University, Alwar
Rajasthan

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a panoramic view of Panchayati Raj ever since its inception up to its present stage. This will involve an attempt to describe the pattern be reviewed during different historical periods such as ancient. Medieval British Raj and post independence.

KEYWORDS: Panchayati Raj, Medieval British Raj and post independence

INTRODUCTION

(A)- THE ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL PERIOD:

Vedic India was predominantly rural agricultural and there are many Vedic hymns praying for the prosperity of villages but rarely for town cities. The village and administration, therefore, developed in the early. The Village headman and the Village assembly developed as the core of administrative set up Sabha and Samiti of the Vedic period were popular assembled at the central level and enough authentic evidence has been made available, by now, to prove the existence of republics (gansa) in ancient India.

Prof Diksha (1932) describes that the provincial administration under the Maurayas was fairly well developed and the district and Villages were accepted as units of administration. The autonomy of the Village was more or less full. The central administration did not interference with the rural administration that was in the hands of Villages communities; in to be economically self sufficient and enjoyed complete autonomy.

The extent of local government in ancient India is stressed through references to Gramini, the head of the village who could revenues and act on the advice of the council of elders. In Mahabharata the term Gran Sabha (village union) and in the Jatakas mentioned Gram Sabha (Village Assembly).

Charles Matcalf says, "The old Panchayats were a spontaneous growth from the people and did not depend on say statutory regulations. They served society based on Verna Ashram, Dharm. The gramini village headman of the Vedic India was definitely a hereditary functionary and even other members were chosen through informal procedure. The domination of higher caste in the old Panchayat indicated the emphasis on traditional leadership in the village. The Panchayat of the old time were also conspicuous by the totality of there function. They were basic units of Government of village. Protection against external attack, theft, of internal quarrels and agencies of revenue collection were most important functions and judicial medieval India.

The Mughals interfered a very little with the ancient customs of village government, but they were interested in it only for revenue or law and order. Village was incorporated in their administrative set as a unit of revenue and policy only. The judiciae powers of the Panchayat were curtailed. Gradually, it came under the spell of the feudal lords and become an oligarchic body based on hereditary title of ascriptive base.

THE BRITISH PERIODS:

After seizing an administrative foothold in Bengal during 1765 as the result of victory over combined forces

of the Mughal Emperor and Nawab of Bengal, the East India Company started on territorial conquest in various parts of India. By about the mid- forties of the next century it had become the ruling power all over the country. A highly centralized system of administration was built up in the country. The descendant traditional Panchayat along with several other native institutions began to fade out in the context of political administrative change in the country. New institution begins to be set up. One of these was municipal body.

In 1888 the East India cased to be the ruling power in India the British government took its place formally.

The government of Governor General may pass a resolution and mentioned a need for development, particularly municipal institution. This resolution also mentioned a provision to gradual formation of statutory rural board with civic function.

Twelve year later a liberal minded Governor General Lord Ripan council passed another resolution in council. It declared the primary aim of local- self government set up as political education of people. For rural areas the resolution recommended that district and sub-district boards with two-third elected members and non-official chairpersons should be set up to perform basic civic functions Control of government over these bodies should be from outside rather than in side.

The provinces were asked to implement the resolution in context of prevailing condition there fresh laws were passed in provinces in term of this resolution however were variation in their contents as in same provinces official chairman and majority of non-elected members continued. Elections to sub-district board membership was on the basis of very narrow over the board was quite strong and the comprehensive. Franchise and power of boards were very limited. However, the revolution does country. Madras and Bombay provinces had actively functioning boards.

In 1907, Royal Commission inquired in to structure and working of local self- government. As regards rural-self local self-government in particular. It recommended revamping of sub-district and district boards and also setting up of a network of village Panchayats with informally elected members and with village headman as its chairperson. The Panchayat was to be empowered not one to provide elementary civic service but also to perform minor judicial function. The commission thus recommended a three- tire rural bodies system by additions of village Panchayat to the sub district and district board already in existence in most of the rural areas in provinces.

So, British Government was interested in Panchayati Raj, but the Panchayati Raj bodies or so-called rural local self-government note actively and appropriately performed their duties. Leader use to these bodies in their own interests. Village elite domination captured to these bodies and depressed class remains depressed from political participation in rural politics.

Dr. B.R. Ambedker, thus opposed to Panchayat Raj, because of upper caste person will capture to Panchayat leadership and exploitation of lower caste persons will increase.

POST- INDEPENDENT PERIOD: (I) VIEW OF POLICY MAKERS:

During the first decade in Independent India. Union Government adopts certain legislative and administrative measures with a view to expanding and developing ruler local-self government. In this connection three main influence to make an impact upon policy makers. These were-

VIEW POINT OF MAHATMA GANDHI: A very significant influence over the public leaders in regard to development of rural local self-government has been of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the India. In his writings and statement he drew attention of the people and government to the urgent need of rebuilding of the village as self –deficient and self –reliant with the village Panchayat playing the central role in

encouraging and supporting productive and creative activities among the people. According to him “ greater power of the Panchayat better for the people as true democracy has to be worked from below by the people ever village.”

PROVISION OF CONSTITUTION: The constitution of India promulgated in January 1950 for setting up a democratic and semi-federal political system, includes a provision of relating to the Panchayat. Though the draft constitution did not include and mention about Panchayats, some prominent member of the constituent assembly, include Gandhian philosophy regarding self- government village, succeeded in getting it included in the final draft. The Article 40 in the chapter, on Directive Principles of State Policy states that “ The state should take steps to organize village Panchayat and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-Government.” This constitution directive has tended to motivate the union Government and State Government, to think about adoption of measures for development of the panchayat in the century. During first decade in independent India fresh laws were passed in many States to democratize the structure develop more and expand the spatial coverage of the Panchayat.

ALL INDIA PANCHAYAT PARISHAD:

In 1958, all India Panchayat parishad was set-up as a non-official and non-party organization by Balwant Rai Metha and others. It begins to establish state level Panchayat Parshad as well. The Parishad has proved a forum to member of Panchayati Raj institutions to meet thought for discussions of issues of common interest and exchange of their experience. It has also sponsored non-official research studies in regard to organization and working of Panchayati Raj. It has organized a number of seminars to focus attention on problem and achievements to Panchayati Raj to focus attention on problem and achievements to Panchayati Raj and the need to improve the working of the existing Panchayati Raj Institutions.

However, it began to realize by be Government and Panchayati Raj Leadership that creation internal actors and environment factors were constraining qualitative standards and tempo of Panchayati Raj in legally in egalitarian and traditional rural society. Cooperation between Panchayati Raj institution District Administration, Municipal Institution Cooperative and Voluntary Agencies concerned with local development processes, was not yet appropriately strong, in short the result achieved during the period of five years were modest of the states of the states and poor in other states. Only in few states, as Gujarat, Maharashtra, these were very satisfactory.

IMPLEMENTATION OF 73rd CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ACT

In three states Panchayat election held in 1994, under direction of 73rd Amendment Act, in eight states held in 1995 and belated in one states in 1996. Other states held Panchayat election after this. Now some states as U.P. Rajasthan etc. Constituted Panchayat second time.

NUMBER AND SIZE OF PANCHAYAT: The number of the Panchayat has increased in very recent years. According to an estimate Gram, Panchayat have increased from 217300 to 225000, Panchayat Samities from 4256 to 5100 and Zila Paris had from 375 to 475. These numbers may go up further as very large districts in some states are beginning to be divides in to medium ones.

The population covered by the different levels of Panchayat various with in a state and more so across the states. An average population covered by the Gram Panchayat in 700 to 21601. Average population covered by Panchayat Samiti in 2800 to 2.9 million.

PANCHAYATI RAJ IN UTTAR PARDESH: (A) PANCHAYAT RAJ SYSTEM:

U.P. Panchayat Raj Act 1947 was signed by Governor General of 7th December 1947 and Panchayat established from 15th August 1947. In the constitution of the independent India suitable provisions were

made for Panchayati Raj in the article 40, for the first time 35000 Panchayat representing 5.40 crores people started functioning in U.P. on August 15,1949 and about 8000 Panchayati were formed which were later (1955) known as Nyaya Panchayats.

The year 1960-61 was a prominent year for the progress of Panchayats. In this year as per directive of the government of India, the U.P. Kshetra Smiti and Zila Parishad Act 1961 were enforced and Gaon Sabhas, Kshetra Samitis and Zila Parishad were tied as single unit. Election procedure of election of the chief of Gram Sabha and Nyaya Panchayats was changed a secret balloting method was decided for the Pradhan. According to the 73rd amendment Act 1994 of the Indian constitution, U.P. Panchayat Law (Amendment) Bill 1994 was passed. According to the constitution amendment three tier Panchayats i.e. Gram Panchayat, Kshetra Panchayat and Zila Panchayats were accorded statutory status.

CONCLUSION

Number of studies has been completed on Panchayati Raj System and the rural leadership. The power structure in the rural setting was depend only on caste, class, education and age. Although these factor playing an important role for the rural leadership but 73rd constitutional amendment occurring the change in the traditional Panchayati Raj System. The 73rd constitutional amendment focuses on reservation of seats, people participation, gender justice, women empowerment and development on grass root level. Consequently a great change has been seen through the new Panchayati Raj System.

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