

**A PROJECT REPORT
ON
“ PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM”**

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Project Report title “ **PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM** ” the completed by Bhukya. akhila and Ajmeera Kalpana under the guidance of G. Navyasree guest DL in Political science. This work or any part thereof has not been submitted to any other degree or University for any other degree or certificate.



LECTURER



PRINCIPAL

PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM

Democratic Decentralization

The word 'democracy' is derived from the Greek word 'demos' means 'the people'; and 'cracy' means 'rule of'. It is the 'rule of the people'. It is governance of the people, by the people, and for the people. The rule by majority is an important part of this programme. Decentralization means devolution of central power among local units close to the areas served. Where authority devolves by this process on people's institution, it is 'democratic decentralization'.

Meaning - Panchayati Raj

- Panchayati Raj Institutions, the grass root units of local self government have been considered as devices of legal socio and economic transformation in rural India. Involvement of people at the grass root level is the most essential means of bringing about socio-economic development.
- Panchayati Raj is identified as institutional expression of democratic devolution in India. Devolution of power to the panchayats is seen as a means of authorizing people and involving them in decision making process. Local governments being closer to the people can be more open to local needs and can make better use of resources.
- The self-governing system in a country can be ensured only if there is bulk participation in the governance. Therefore, the system of democratic decentralization popularly known as Panchayati Raj System is measured as an instrument to confirm democracy and socio-economic transformation.

Gandhi encouraged that India lives in her villages. Indian independence must begin at the bottom, thus making every village a republic or panchayat, enjoying full powers. He said that true democracy cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the centre. It has to be worked from below by the people of every village. These dreams lead to the inclusion of Article 40 in the Directive Principles of the State Policy of Constitution of India. Almost after five decades of independence, in the year 1993, the Government of India took an innovative step by making Panchayati Raj Institutions a part of the Constitution.

- The system of Panchayati raj has acquired greater significance with the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the constitution of India. The Amendments have become a reality after a long drawn battle, debates, opposition and suspicion that engulfed the people and polity for quite a long time.
- In spite of all those initial setbacks, the 73rd and 74th amendments had given the local government a legitimacy and an authority in the Indian political system. After the 73rd and 74th amendments, much attention has been drawn towards the state-local bodies relationship.

The basic spirit behind the 73rd and 74th constitutional was to strengthen the local bodies through decentralization measures. For successful functioning of local bodies at the grassroots level, it is imperative that the local government should have sufficient power, autonomy and the power of decision making.

The story of Panchayati Raj has been a story of ups and downs.

This project provides a historical account of the village panchayati system in ancient India. And it traces the role of the custom in establishment of Panchayati Raj system in India. After that, it briefly evaluates how the system of Panchayati raj grows into constitutional scheme. This project also gives an overview of the Panchayat raj Institutions. And presents a balanced complete picture of the philosophy, objective, evolution, success, and failures of these institutions in last decades and shows recent trends of the Panchayati raj system.

ROLE OF CUSTOM IN ESTABLISHMENT OF PANCHAYATI RAJ

- Custom occupies an important place in regulation of human conduct in almost all the societies. In fact, it is one of the oldest sources of law-making. It has been generally said that custom is to society what law is to the state. Each one of them is the expression and realization, to the measure of men's insight and ability, of the principles of rights and justice.
- The influence of custom on society is similar to that of law on the state. Role of custom in establishment of Panchayati raj are as follows in a chronological order.

Panchayati Raj in British Period

- It was Lord Mayo, the then viceroy of India (1869 to 1872), who felt the need to decentralize powers in order to bring about administrative efficiency and in the year 1870 introduced the concept of elected representatives in the urban municipalities.
- The revolt of 1857 that had put the imperial finances under considerable strain and it was found necessary to finance local service out of local taxation. Therefore it was out of fiscal compulsion that Lord Mayo's resolution on decentralization came to be adopted.

Ripon Resolution (1882)

- In 1882, Ripon abandoned the existing system of local government by the officially nominated people. According to his local self government plan, the local boards were split into smaller units to achieve greater efficiency. In order to ensure popular participation, he introduced an election system for the local boards. The government resolution of 18th, May, 1882, stands as a landmark in the structural evolution of local governments.
- It provided for local boards consisting of a large majority of elected non-official members and presided over by a non-official chairperson. This is considered to be the Magna Carta of local democracy in India. This resolution proposed the establishment of rural local boards where 2/3rd of whose membership was composed of elected representatives.
- He brought in the concept of self-government in urban municipalities. He is treated as the founding father of urban local government. The Royal Commission on Decentralization in 1909 elaborated further the principles of Ripon resolution. But this remained merely on paper. Ripon's scheme did not make much progress in the development of local self government institutions.

Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919

- this backdrop, Montagu Chelmsford reforms were passed in the year 1919. This reform transferred the subject of local government to the domain of provinces. The reform also recommended that as far as possible there should be a complete popular control in local bodies and the largest possible independence for them, of outside control.
- By 1925, eight provinces had passed village panchayat acts. However, these panchayats covered only a limited number of villages with limited functions. But this reform could not get much results far as democratization of panchayats was concerned and lead to a lot of organizational and fiscal constraints.

The Government of India Act 1935

- This is considered as another important stage in the evolution of panchayats in British India. With popularly elected government in the provinces, almost all provincial administrations felt duty bound to enact legislation's for further democratization of local self government institutions, including village panchayats.
- Although the popular government in the provinces governed by the Congress vacated office following the declaration of Second World War in 1939, the position as regards local government institutions remained unchanged till August 1947, when the country attained independence.
- Even though the British government did not have interest in the village autonomy, they were forced to do so, in order to continue their rule in India and moreover to meet financial necessities. The Indian rural republic had flourished till the advent of British. It received a set back during the British rule.
- Self contained village communities and their panchayats ceased to get substance. They were replaced by formally constituted institutions of village administration. In the highly centralized system of British rule, village autonomy seems to have lost.

How the system grows into constitutional scheme

a). Panchayati Raj in Independent India

- ❖ The task of strengthening panchayati raj system fell on the Indian government formed after independence.
- ❖ It was clear that India a country of villages had to strengthen village panchayats to strengthen democracy.
- ❖ Mahatma Gandhi who strongly believed in GgramaSwaraj pleaded for the transfer of power to the rural masses
- ❖ According to him the villages should govern themselves through elected panchayats to become self sufficient. But surprisingly, the draft Constitution prepared in 1948 had no place for Panchayati. Gandhi severely criticized this and called for immediate attention.
- ❖ It is thus, that panchayat finds a place in the Directive Principles of the State Policy. Article 40 of the Directive Principles of the State Policy states that „the states shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them function as units of self governments.

- ❖ The most important aspect to strengthen grass root democracy was neglected by the Constitution makers as Directive Principle of State Policy is not legally binding on the governments.
- ❖ The first organized effort to tackle the problem of rural India was made through Community Development Programme in 1952 and National Extension Service in 1953.
- ❖ The programme was based on an integrated approach to the various aspects of rural development. The objectives were to promote self help and self reliance among the rural people, to generate a process of integrated social, economic and cultural change with the aim of transforming social and political life of the villagers.
- ❖ The programme was based on an integrated approach to the various aspects of rural development. The programme made provisions for appointing Block Development Officers and Village Level Workers .
- ❖ This programme was intended to bring socio economic development of the rural masses on democratic lines, but failed to take off along the expected lines due to the absence of an effective instrument for people"s participation.



Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957)

Three-tier Panchayati Raj system – gram panchayat at village level (direct election), panchayat Samiti at the block level and Zila Parishad at the district level (indirect election).

Ashok Mehta Committee (1977-1978)

Two-tier system and political parties should participate at all levels in the elections.



G V K Rao Committee (1985)

Appointed by the Planning Commission, the committee concluded that the developmental procedures were gradually being taken away from the local self-government institutions, resulting in a system comparable to 'grass without roots'.



L M Singhvi Committee (1986)

73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, 1992.

Committees and Recommendations

Balwant Rai Mehta Committee(1957)

- ❖ Balwantrai Mehta Committee was the first Committee set up in 1957 to look into the problems of democratic decentralization in independent India.

- ❖ The Committee was asked to report on community development projects.
- ❖ The Committee made far reaching recommendations in the direction of democratic decentralization and rural reconstruction.
- ❖ It pointed out that the community development programme was not successful because it failed to evoke local initiative and that in the absence of local initiative and local interest, development would not be possible.
- ❖ The committee laid down five fundamental principles.
- ❖ There should be three tier structures of local self government bodies from village to the district level and these bodies should be linked together
- ❖ There should be genuine transfer of power and responsibility to these bodies to enable them to discharge their responsibility. Adequate resources should be transferred to these bodies to enable them to discharge their responsibilities.

Ashok Mehta Committee (1977)

- ❖ In this backdrop in 1977, the Janata government appointed a Committee with Ashok Mehta as chairman and was entrusted with the task of enquiring into the causes responsible for the poor performance of Panchayati Raj Institutions.
- ❖ It was also asked to suggest measures to strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions. The committee suggested two tier system of Panchayati Raj consisting of Zilla Parishads at the district level and Mandal Panchayats at the grass root level as against three tier system suggested by the Balwantrai Mehta Committee. The committee recommended constitutional protection to the Panchayati Raj Institutions and further decentralization of power at all levels.

- ❖ During 1980's, two important Committees were appointed to look into local governments. GVK Rao Committee in 1985 and Dr. L.M. Singhvi Committee in 1986.
- ❖ The GVK Rao committee recommended the revival of Panchayati Raj Institutions such that greater responsibility of planning, implementation, and monitoring of rural development programmes could be assigned to them.
- ❖ L.M. Singhvi Committee recommended that the Panchayati Institutionalization should be constitutionally recognized and protected. New chapter in the constitution should be provided to define their powers and functions and free and fair election to be conducted through the election commission.
- ❖ Committee recommended for the appointment of finance commission and all the rural development programmes are entrusted to the Panchayati Raj Institutions by amending schedule VII of the constitution.

Recent Trends in Panchayati Raj

73rd Amendment Act, 1992

Following these circumstances, Rajiv Gandhi the then Prime Minister of India, introduced the 64th Amendment bill on local government on the 15th May, 1989 in the Parliament, but it failed to get the required support. A second attempt was made in September 1990 to pass the bill in the Parliament. The bill however was not even taken up for consideration. In September 1991, a fresh bill on Panchayati Raj was introduced by the Congress government under P.V Narasimha Rao, then prime minister. It was passed in 1992 as the 73rd Amendment Act 1992 with minor modifications and came into force on 24th April 1993.

Structure And Features of Panchayati Raj Institutions

- The structure of Panchayati Raj (PR) varies from state to state. Main structure and features of Panchayati Raj institutions are as

a) The Three-tier System of Panchayat (Articles of 243A, B & C

The constitution amendment provides for a three-tier system of panchayat at village level, block/ taluk and district levels. Smaller states with population less than twenty lakhs may have their own option whether or not to keep the intermediate level. The panchayats would have the power of self-governance. There will be gram sabha in each villages comprising all the adult members registered as voters in the panchayat area.

b) Power, Functions and Responsibilities (Articles 243 G & H)

The legislature of each state, may by law, endow the panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary in order to enable them to function as institutes of self-government . They should be entrusted with powers and responsibilities so as to prepare , plan and implement schemes for development and social justice in rural India.

Specific responsibilities will be assigned for different tiers regarding the distribution of subjects listed in eleventh schedule.

The amendment also calls for creation of a 'Fund' specifically for panchayats (perhaps on the lines of consolidated fund of the state) so as to manage inflow and out flow of money dealt within that fund.

c) State Finance commission (Article 243 I)

Each state government should constitute a finance commission for every five years to review the financial position of the panchayats and suggest guidelines to state governments on the basis of which adequate financial resources could be provided to panchayats to carry out the development activities entrusted to them. The commission is also required to suggest measures for the improvement of financial position of the panchayats.

d) Election to Panchayats (Articles 243 E, F & K)

All the three-tiers of the panchayats shall have direct election. Further, chair persons of the village panchayats can become members of intermediate/ block level panchayats and the chairpersons of the intermediate/ block level panchayats can become members of district panchayats. Members of Parliament, legislative assembly and councils could become members of panchayats at the intermediate and district

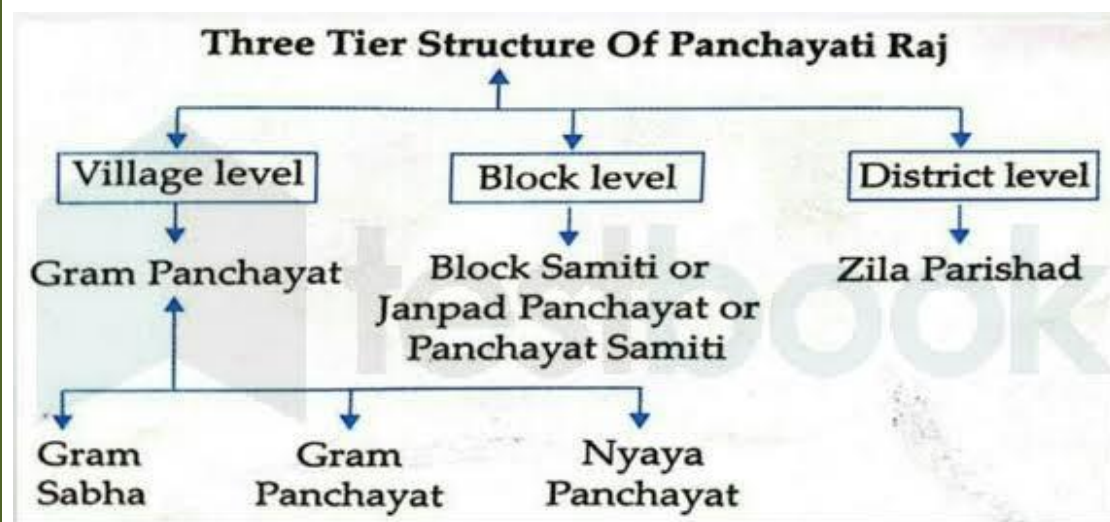
levels. But their foundational status in the panchayath proceeding, voting are left to be decided by the respective legislature of the states.

Reservation of Seats in Panchayats (Article 243 D)

In all panchayats, seats would be reserved for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in proportion to their population. In the same way, the offices of the chair persons of the various tiers of panchayats would also be reserved for them. Not less than one-third of the total number of reserved seats would be provided to women belonging to SCs and STs. One-third of the total number of seats will be reserved for women and in the same manner one-third of the offices of the chairpersons would also be reserved for women.

District planning committee

Under Article 243(ZO) of 74th constitutional amendment act 1992, the state government are required to constitute District Planning Committee in order to facilitate the process of decentralized planning.



Gram Sabha

- ❖ Gram Sabha is considered as the centre of democratic power in the village.
- ❖ Under Article 243(b) of the constitution, Gram Sabha is defined as a body consisting of all persons registered as voters in the electoral roll

relating to the village within the area of the panchayat at the village level.

- ❖ Article 243(A) stipulates that Gram Sabha may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the legislature of a state may, by law, provide.
- ❖ The working group on decentralization and Panchayati raj institutions has stated that “ Gram Sabha is not only an institution articulating the needs and aspirations of the community participation.
- ❖ Truly empowered Gram Sabha can prevent abuse of power by the panchayat. They could also assist the panchayats to implement development programmes. They could act as watchdog to protect community interests and maintain law and order.
- ❖ It is also alleged that due to panchayat elections, a ‘cold war’ atmosphere overcomes among various sections of the village people. Some studies made on the Panchayati Raj system revealed that functional tensions are on the increase and this can be seen during elections and panchayat meetings.
- ❖ People in the villages should actively participate in the development activities regarding social justice, agriculture, irrigation, animal husbandry, public health, education, etc. In a nutshell, the whole idea of this scheme is based on the statement that rural development is for the rural people, of the rural people, and by the rural peoples themselves. It is based on self-help, as an old saying ‘God help those who help themselves’.
- ❖ This scheme of rural development confers on the rural people the power of decision-making regarding developmental activities. This is democracy at the grassroots.
- ❖ It will ‘decentralize’ democracy. This system has got a very important role to play in the social, economic and cultural life of the village community of India.