

Panchayati Raj System in India

Rajeev Verma

Lecturer in Pol. Sci. Education Department Haryana

Abstract: *It is now widely accepted that self governing institutions at the local level are essential for national growth & for effective people participation and that they are an integral and indispensable part of the democratic process “Grassroots of democracy”. It is based on small units of government enables people to feed a sense of responsibility & to inculcate the values of democracy. At the same time it also offers a unique opportunity to participate in public offers including development work.*

Keywords: Panchayati Raj, Democracy, Participation, Development, Values, Integral.

What is Panchayati Raj System?

The Panchayati Raj is a South Asian Political System found mainly in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Trinideal & Teabgo and Nepal. It is the oldest system of local government an Indian sub continent and historical mentions date ot the C250 Add period. The word raj means “rule” and Panchayat means assembly of Five (panel) – traditionally panchayats consisted of wise

and respected elders chosen & accepted by the local community however, there were varying forms of such assemblies.

The Leader of the Panchayat was often called the Mukhiya or Sarpanch on elected ro generally acknowledged position. The modern Panchayati Raj of India its gram pachayats are not to be confused with either the traditional system nor with the extra constitutional khap panchayats found in northern India.

Origin of Panchayati Raj Institutions:

1. **Constitution of India :-** Our Constitution brings out the provision for PRI. Art .40 on Directive principles read : The state shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them to function as units of self- government. The provision of the COI is an inspiration for the P.R.I. to bring about self- government at village level. The 73rd Constitutional amendment Act now gives PRI a constitutional status.

2. **Gandhian Philosophy :-** Gandhi Ji concept of self – sufficient village, both economically of politically inspire most of

the political cadres to evolve P.R.I. Provisions regarding P.R.I. in D.P.S.P. reflected his views with regard to grass-root democracy.

3. Five year Plans :- The stimulus for institutions of P.R. systems also came from the administrative necessity of planet development. The First five year plan observed. "He believes that panchayats will be able to perform its civic functions. Satisfactorily only if these are associated with an active process of development in which the village panchayat is itself given an efficient part. The subsequent plans also reflected the broad philosophy of government on P.R.

4. Community Development Programmes :- The CDP were initiated for improving the socio-economic conditions of the villages the execution of the programme was considered a vital respect of the CDP.

Balwant Rai Mehta Committee Report:

Lack of peoples participation in CDP made Balwant Rai Mehta Committee suggest initiation of P.R.I. The committee suggests initiation of P.R.I. The committee felt that there would be a revival of public enthusiasm for community development with the coming of P.R.I.

The committee observed that there was need to discover or create a representation and democratic institution which will sustain the local interest, supervision and care necessary to ensure that expenditure of money upon local objects conform with the needs and wishes of the locality, invest needs and wishes of the locality, invest it with adequate power, assign to it, appropriate finances, which would evoke interest and execute local initiative in the field of development.

The committee recommended that such a body should be statutory, objective comprehensive in its duties functions, equipped with the necessary executive machinery in possession of adequate resources.

Various Patterns of P.R.I

The structure of P.R.I in India varied from state to state and were generated by state legislators which were varied; some states had a 3 tier structure of panchayats at the village, block 4 district level and some had a 2 tier structure at the village block or Distt. Level A few states had only a single tier Panchayat at the village level.

India's experiment with decorative decentralization started in Rajasthan with the format inauguration of panchayati Raj by Jawahar Lal Nehru on act 2,1959 at Nagaur, Rajasthan. The Rajasthan model of PR revolved round the three statutory institutions viz-village panchayats. Panchayat samitis & Zila Parishad.

Performance & Achievement of the P.R.I.:

A bird eye view of how PR institutions have fared in some states would provide valuable insight into the structural and operational aspects of Panchayati Raj.

The PR has many achievements at its disposal one very important result of the PR has been the disappearance of the fear of the officials in the minds of the village people. Now the rural people go to the BDO and talk to him about their problems in confidence. This has been a positive gain in the Indian context where the fear of the authority has dominated the people. PR was created to arouse a spirit of self help and popular participation in the development programme, to provide basic services and to build up the democratic understanding of the people. If the chart depicting the gains the

losses of the PR is prepared, the greatest gain has been the development of feeling of importance among the people of village.

The process of decision making is brought closer to the people making is brought closer to the people through PR. It has also provided a vehicle for the emergence of new leadership at the local level competitive elections have politicized the villagers and the system has enhanced the institutional capacity of local govt. for economic development and democratic participation in the rural areas.

Failures of PR : Causes:

Among the major shortcomings of the PR, as seen in the working in the last three decades, the most significant are :

1. Lack of conceptual clarity :- There was lack of clarity in regard to the concept of PR itself the objectives for which it should stand. Some would treat it just as an administrative agency, others as an extension of democracy at the grass roots level and still others as a charter of rural local govt.
2. Role of Bureaucracy :- Bureaucracy had probably its own role in dissociating the PRI from the development process.

3. Political Will weakens :- An overview of national scene would indicate that the activities of PRI were meager, their resources base weak and the overall attention given to them niggardly. The functioning of PRI thus became discouraging

4. Absence of Coordination There is no Coordination between the line and the horizontal units. Studies indicate that there is great frustration at the Block Level as the BDO and the Extension Officers feel that their functions are routine and not creative.

Political Dynamics of PR:

PR has played a significant role at local levels in bringing about a greater interfusion of Local Level and trans Local politics in various states. The widening of the political horizons of the rural people can, indeed, be regarded as one of the most important political consequences of the PR because as Compared to other agents of the political change (eg. mass media, political elite) it operates on the principle of **adult franchise** and involves entire rural population in its working to an extent which no other rural institution can match.

PR in India has turned out to be powerful engine of political change and the working of PRI's has been permeated with micro as well as macro politics. At the micro Level, the introduction of PR had the following principal effects:-

- 1 Eclipse of traditional panchayats
- 2 Politicization of village factionalism
- 3 Emergence of neo-traditional political motivations & calculations
- 4 At the **macro-level**, the PR has produced several political Consequences including:-

- (i) Establishment of vote nexus between Local level leadership & political leaders at the state& district Level.
- (ii) Ruralization of political leaders in state & district politics.
- (iii) Emergence of Local Counter weights to district and state level political bosses.

NEW PR SYSTEM : 73rd Amendment & After

Part IX of the Constitution, inserted by 73rd Amendment Act, 1992, containing articles 243 to 243-0 relates to the panchayats. The passage of 73rd Amendment Act marks a new era in the federal democratic set up of the country and

provides constitutional status to the PRI's. The Act has institutionalized the PRd's at the Village, Intermediate and distt levels, as the third tier of governance. The aim was to combine social justice with devolution, with an emphasis on reservations for deprived classes of the population in panchayats including of the leadership positions. Consequent upon the enactment of the Act, almost all the states/uts have enacted their legislation. As a result about 2,32,855 panchayats at village level 6094 at intermediate level and 63 panchayats at the Distt. Level have been constituted in the country. These panchayats are being manned by about 28,18,018 elected representatives of panchayats at all levels.

Significance of the amendment : -

The amendment implements the Art 40 of the DPSP and have upgraded them from non-justifiable to justifiable part of the constitution and has put constitutional obligation upon states to enact the PR Act as per prevision 1 of the part IX. However, states have been given enough freedom to take their geographical, politico – administrative and other conditions into account while adopting the PR system.

Salient features : -

1. The PRI are endowed with a constitutional states making PR election as regular feature every five year.
2. The amendment introduces the 11th schedule in the constricton which contains a list of 29 functions developed on the panchayati Raj bodies.
3. Reservation of seats has been provided for four categories of the population – namely, SC's, ST's, OBC's and women – for different tires of PR institutions.
4. The amendment constitutes a state Finance commission on the pattern of National Finance commission to institutionalize the financial stability of the Panchayat Raj bodies and augment their financial resources.
5. Provision of regular and periodic election is yet another unique feature of the 730d Act, which sustains invigorates the grassroots democracy, The election is to be conducted by a state election commission which is to function dependently of the executive.

6. The accounts of the PR institutions are to be audited by a separate and independent audit organization under the control of state govt. This is to safeguard the accounting probity of the local govt.

7. An important component of the 1992 amendment is its emphases on district level planning which is a significant move, to monitor and incorporable felt needs & aspirations of the local community in schemes & development.

Comment –

The positive impact of 73rd amendment act in rural India is clearly visible as it was changed power equations significantly. Elections to the panchayats in in most states are being field regularly.

Still, this Act lacks the proper definition of the role of bureaucracy. It does not clearly define the role & state govt. On practical level, people are illiterate in India & they are actually not aware & these novel features. The panchayats are dominated by affluent & in some parts of the Country. The three tiers of PR have still very limited financial powers and their viability is entirely dependent upon the political will of the states.

Conclusion:

For democracy to be successful at the national level, the grassroots organizations have to be strong. The local authorities have to respond to the felt needs of the people. The Citizens have faith in the efficacy of the administrative system so that distance between people and the govt. is reduced. In developing Countries, it is the govt., which initiates and implements development programmes. It must gain support of the people in the discharge of these programmes, particularly at the cutting edge. In spite of all these provisions the fact still remains that PRI have still to go a long way. Any amount of legal reforms will not have any impact and bring desired results unless there is sincere political will to achieve them.

References:

- [1] C.V. Raghavulu E.R. Narayana “ Reforms in PR ”.
- [2] S.N. Mishra, PR, Bureaucracy & Development New Delhi, 1986.
- [3] Report of the Committee on PRI’s, GOI & Deptt. Of Rural Development 1978.
- [4] Rajani Kothari “ Politics in India “ 1970.



- [5] S.N. Mishra “ PR Institutions:- 73rd Amend Act & After ”.
- [6] IAS Notes – Public Administration by Pawan Kumar.
- [7] Concise Handbook & Indian Polity- IAST PCS General Studies! M ‘m’ M Series.
- [8] IAS Point Notes: A G.K Today venture for will Service Examination.
- [9] [https:// en. Wikipedia.org>wiki>](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panchayati_Raj_System) Panchayati Raj System.
- [10] Indian Adminstration :- B.L. Fadia & Dr. Kuldeep Fadia.