

Dynamics of Panchayati Raj in India: An Overview

Dr. Harshvir

Lecturer in Political Science

Abstract: *Today it is a well known fact that local self government institutions are essential for national growth & for effective people participation. Moreover, they are an integral and indispensable part of the democratic process and they represent grassroots level 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. These institutions were started with the announcement of Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru on 02 Oct. 1959 in Nagaur District of Rajasthan. However, this was in the sequence of Balwant Rai Mehta committee which was strengthened in 1992 through the implementation of 73rd amendment act. The present research paper highlights some key aspects and dynamic process of Panchayati Raj System in India.*

Keywords: Panchayati Raj, Grass Root Democracy, People Participation, 73rd Amendment Act.

Introduction: However, 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 of 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 in 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.

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 life 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.

The CDP was initiated for improving the socio-economic conditions of the villages the execution of the programme was considered a vital respect of the CDP. Lack of peoples participation in CDP made Balwant Rai Mehta Committee suggest initiation of PRI. The committee suggests initiation of PRI. The committee felt that there would be a revival of public enthusiasm for community development with the coming of PRI. 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 confirm with the 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.

Structure of Panchayati Raj: The structure of PRI in India varied from state to state and 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 district level. A few states had only a single tier Panchayat at the village level. India’s experiment with democratic 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 vi2-village panchayats. Panchayat samifis & Zila Parshad. This structure may be seen in the 73rd amendment act.

Achievements of Panchayati Raj: A bird eye view of Row 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 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 for self help and popular participation in the development programmer, to provide basic services and to build up the democratic understanding of the people.

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 Panchayati Raj : Among the major shortcoming of the PR, as seen in the

working in the east three decades, the most significant are :

- **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.
- **Role of Bureaucracy** :- Bureaucracy had probably its own role in dissociating the PRI from the development process.
- **Lack of Political Will**:- 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
- **Lack 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 Panchayati Raj: 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.

73rd Amendment & New Panchayati Raj:

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 PRIs at the Village, Intermediate and district 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. Levels 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 New Act: The new amendment act implemented the Article 40 of the DPSP and it has 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 : -

- The PRI are endowed with a constitutional states making PR election as regular feature every five year.
- The amendment introduces the 11th schedule in the constitution which contains a list of 29 functions developed on the panchayati Raj bodies.
- Reservation of seats has been provided for four categories of the

population – namely, SC's, ST's, OBC's and women – for different tiers of PR institutions.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

Conclusion: To conclude the debate we can trace out that 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. For democracy to be successful at the national level, the grassroot 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] J. Bhagyalakshmi, “Panchyati Raj Empowering the People”, *Yojana*, Vol. 42 (7), July 1998.
- [2] Saroj Malik, “Gram Swaraj in India”, *Third Concept*, Vol. 16 (181), March 2002.
- [3] Shamsher Singh Malik, *The New Panchayati Raj*, Alekh Publishers, Jaipur, 2002.
- [4] Noor Mohammad & Shahid Mohammad, “Empowerment of Panchyati Raj Institutions Through 73rd Amendment: Myth and Reality”, *Indian Journal of Politics*, Vol. 37 (3), July – Sept. 2003
- [5] D. Bandhopadhyay & Amitava Mukherjee, *New Issues in Panchayati Raj*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2004.
- [6] A.S. Narang, *Indian Government and Politics*, Geetajali Publishing House, New Delhi, 2012.
- [7] B. L Pharia and Pukhraj Jain, *Indian Government and Politics*, Sahitya Bhawan, Agra, 2016.