



Research Article

## Panchayat System of Independent India

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### Abstract

In India, the Panchayatiraj system is not purely a post-independence phenomenon. In fact, the dominant political institution in rural India has been the village panchayat for centuries. In ancient India, panchayats were usually elected councils with the Sabha and judicial powers. Foreign domination, especially Mughal and British, and the natural and forced social and economic changes had undermined the significance of the village panchayats. In the pre-independence period, however, the panchayats were instruments for the dominance of the upper castes over the rest of the rural masses, which furthered the divide based on either the social and economic status or the caste hierarchy.

The evolution of the Panchayati Raj System, however, got a fillip after the attainment of independence and the drafting of the Constitution of India. The Constitution of India in Article 40 enjoined: "The state shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government". There were several committees appointed by the Government of India to study the implementation of self-government at the rural level and also recommend steps in achieving this goal.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Gandhiji wrote, "To me forever, and I have told many times that India cannot be found in a few cities, but in the village" Gandhiji further said that the independence of India will start from the lower level, which is why every village will be fully empowered as a republic or panchayat in the government. It is not difficult to say that the concept of Mahatma Gandhi's "Gram Swaraj" was widely supported by the people. This support he had gained during the British imperialist struggle. Gandhiji believed that it is possible to establish real democracy through decentralisation only. When he knows that the draft of the constitution panchayat is not mentioned, and he reacted in the " Harijon Newspaper ".

He said, "I must confess that I have not been able to follow the proceedings of the constitution assembly. There is no mention or direction about village panchayats and decentralisation in the foreshadowed constitution. It is certainly an omission calling for immediate attention, if our independence is to reflect the people's voice".

The result of Mahatma Gandhi's protest was widespread. When the final draft constitution was presented to the constituent assembly, many members opposed Ambedkar's opinion about the panchayat system. On November 4, 1948, Ambedkar presented a draft constitution in the constituent assembly. Many members were disappointed in the lecture he gave while presenting the draft constitution (Village Swaraj and Politics related). Ambedkar was criticised by many members, like H.V. Kamath, N.G. Ranga. On the other hand, many members tried to save him from criticism, AlladhiKrishnaswamiAyar, N.Madhav Rao, etc.

Ambedkar referred to the villages as regional ditch, ignorance, narrow mentality and communalism. Draft constitution panchayat has been excluded as the reason he mentioned that the village general republics/tantrums have degenerated in India. I am surprised/ astonished that they condemn provincialism and communalism; they have come forward as supporters. What is there in village in the village without regionalism, ignorance, constraint and communalism? I am happy that the people of the draft constitution have been terminated as a single person or unit.

H.V. Kamath opposes Ambedkar's comments. He said the Father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, Patel, Subhas ch. Bose was teaching us about our rural life. He expressed fear that if we have no sympathy for village and rural life, then the country's development is not possible. The issue of world peace, security and development is not only in India but in the whole world, needs to be decentralised and establish which state system will be developed.

Finally, when the debate was indeed, three amendments proposals were presented in the constitution meeting. But when the three proposals were cancelled on November 22, 1948, A.K. Santhanam submitted an amendment to the constitution. Only six members took part in this debate. Without any controversy, Ambedkar voted for this constitutional amendment proposal.

At the end, the amendment proposal was placed in the directive principles of state policy under Article 40 of the original

constitution. As a result, the responsibility of the formation of rural panchayat has to be taken solely by the state government (or was not forced). The reason does not apply to the court in accordance with Article 40. In the fourth chapter of the constitution, the 40 is said to be related to the panchayat, "The state shall take steps to organise village panchayat and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as a unit to self-government".

In 1992, the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment to the Constitution of the panchayat system the constitution, 243 no. The article has been included.

### Recommendations of the Balwanta Rai Mehta Committee in the Formation of Panchayat in Independent India:

The committee was given the responsibility of recommending the introduction of panchayatiraj. That's right, after independence, most of the state governments of India started the panchayatiraj system. Some measures were taken in response to the Mehta committee's report. The committee submitted its report on January 16, 1957. According to this report, the panchayat at the three-tier level is mentioned in India.

These three levels are the gram panchayat at the village level, panchayat samiti at the block level and Zilla Parishad at the district level. It is said that these three stages of panchayatiraj will be interconnected.

### Recommendations:

1. Gram panchayat will be at the three-tier level.
2. Gram panchayat will be formed directly with elected members.
3. Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad will be formed with indirectly elected members.
4. All these plans and development activities will be entrusted to this organisation.
5. Panchayat Samiti will executive agency, but ZillaParishad will advise, connect, and oversee the agency.
6. The District Collector will be the chairman of the ZillaParishad.
7. All these democratic organisations have to give appropriate powers and responsibilities.
8. The future of more than the authority of the system will need to be.
9. Assign assets to these organisations for carrying out and performing duties.

The work of this committee was reviewed by the work of the community development programme (1952). In January 1958, the National Development Council took the recommendations of the Balwanta Rai Mehta Committee.

In the Indian federation, the panchayat raj system was first introduced in Rajasthan. After Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh took this step. Then, in 1960, most of the states were involved in this system.

**Study Teams and Committees:**

Since 1960, many study teams, committees and working groups have been appointed to examine the various aspects of the functioning of the panchayat Raj system. They are mentioned below in a chronological order, along with the names of the chairman in brackets.

1. 1960, Committee on Rationalisation of Panchayat Statistics (V.R. Rao)
2. 1961, Working Group on Panchayat and Cooperatives (S.D. Mishra)
3. 1961, Study Team on Panchayat Raj Administration (V. Iswaran)
4. 1962, Study Team on Nyaya Panchayat (G.R.Rajgopal)
5. 1963, Study Team on the position of Gram Sabha in Panchayat Raj Movement (R.R. Diwarkar)
6. 1963, Study Group on Budgeting and Accounting Procedure of Panchayat Raj Institutions (M.Rama Krishnayya)
7. 1963, Study Team on Panchayat Raj Finances (K. Santhanam)
8. 1965, Committee on Panchayat Raj Elections (K. Santhanam)
9. 1965, Study Team on the Audit and Accounts of Panchayat Raj Bodies (R.K. Khanna)
10. 1966, Committee on Panchayat Raj Training Centres (G. Ramachandran)
11. 1969, Study Team on Involvement, Community Development Agency and Panchayat Raj Institutions in the Implementation of Basic Land Reform Measures (V.Ramanathan)
12. 1972, Working Group for Formulation of Fifty-Five-Year Plan on Community Development and Panchayat Raj (N.Ramakrishnayya)
13. 1976, Committee on Community Development and Panchayat Raj (Smt. Daya Choubey)

**Reasons for the Failure of the First-Generation Panchayat System:**

The Panchayat system started based on the recommendation of the Balwanta Rai Mehata Committee in the entire India, its fall began. It may be said that the recommendations of this committee started with great hopes and desires. At the beginning of the panchayat system, Nehru said that the true roots of Indian democracy are in the panchayat system. But in a short time, that hope-desire became hopeless. The rise and fall of the first-stage panchayat system can be divided into three categories. It may be mentioned that this figure has emerged in the Ashok Mehta Committee report.

**The phase of fall can be divided into three parts:**

1. Rising stage (1959-64)
2. Stability stage (1965-67)
3. Fall phase (1969-77)

There is debate about the rise and fall of the first phase of the panchayat system. It is universally acknowledged that the

panchayat system began to fall in the late half of the seventies. The reasons for the failure of the first phase of the panchayat system are relevant.

In the first phase, the panchayat system, for the reasons that broke, the success of the panchayat system depends on the elimination of the causes. Experts analysed the causes of the failure of the panchayat system over eighty years. The experts were L.C Jain, Ram Reddy, Iqbal Narayan, and Professor Pravat Dutta. We can express the results of the research of various experts related to the cause of the failure. The reasons are: 1. Socio-economic environment, 2. Lack of political will, 3. Bureaucratic impediments, 4. Centric politics, 5. Structural design errors, 6. Lack of constitutional recognition.

**Ashok Mehta Committee:**

Rapid socio-economic developments have repeatedly been realised for the development of the panchayat system. Because of the failure of the first phase of the panchayat system is seen. We know the change in the background of India's national politics in 1977. At this time, the "Janata Government" was established in Indian central politics. After the establishment of the Janata Government in the centre, a committee under Ashok Mehta was formed to revive the panchayat system. This committee was formed in December 1977. Ashok Mehta Committee submitted its report to the government on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1978.

The members of this committee were: Prakash Singh Badal, M.G. Ramachandran, B. Shibraman, E.M.S. Nambudripad, S.K. Dube, Iqbal Narayan, etc.

**The main recommendations of the committee were:**

1. The three-tier system of Panchayat Raj should be replaced by the two-tier system: Zilla Parishad at the district level, and below it, the Mandal Panchayat consisting of a group of villages covering a population of 15000 to 20000.
2. A district should be the first point for decentralisation under popular supervision below the state level.
3. Zilla Parishad should be the executive body and made responsible for planning at the district level.
4. There should be an official participation of political parties at all levels of panchayat elections.
5. The panchayat Raj institutions should have compulsory powers of taxation to mobilise their own financial resources.
6. There should be a regular social audit by a district-level agency and by a committee of legislators to check whether the funds allotted for the vulnerable social and economic groups are actually spent on them.
7. The State Government should not supersede the Panchayat Raj institutions. In case of an imperative supersession, an election should be held in 6 months from the date of supersession.

8. The Nyaya Panchayat should be kept as a separate body from that of development panchayats. They should be presided over by a qualified judge.
9. The Chief Election Officer of the state, in consultation with the Chief Election Commissioner, should organise and conduct the Panchayat Raj Elections.
10. Development functions should be transferred to the Zilla Parishad, and all development staff should work under its control and supervision.
11. The voluntary agencies should play an important role in mobilising the support of the people for Panchayat Raj.
12. A minister for Panchayat Raj should be appointed in the state council of ministers to look after the affairs of the Panchayat Raj institutions.
13. Seats for SC and STs should be reserved based on their populations.
14. Constitutional recognition should be accorded to the Panchayat Raj institutions. This would give them the requisite status and an assurance of continuous functioning.

#### **G.V.K Rao Committee:**

After the Congress came to power in 1980, there was not much effort to form the panchayat. This committee was formed on 31st March in 1985. This committee was led by G.V.K Rao. This committee is also known as the CAARD committee. The main purpose of this committee was to determine the role of panchayat and determine its relationship with the administration of rural development. This committee emphasized decentralization of the district level and emphasized the formation of Zilla Parishad in district. The committee advised to set up more than one (many) committee for the management of the Zilla Parishad.

#### **Its main recommendations are:**

1. Set the Zilla Parishad criteria. The state government will help the money based on the criteria. Establishment of state finance commission of every five years.
2. Formation of State Development Council. This council will consist of the other ministers of the state government and chairman of the district council leadership by the Chief Minister. The State Development Council's work will be approved by the district planning as well as approval of the state's financial planning.
3. This committee speaks of the formation of a three-tier panchayat. Under the "Zilla Parishad" below block level panchayat samiti and every village recommended the formation of gram panchayat.
4. This committee has been asked to constitute each stage of panchayat, it has been said that, reservation for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and women is reserved for women.
5. NGO should be included in the development plan.
6. The recommendation of this committee is to say that the district magistrate will be given the responsibility of the

executive officer of the Zilla Parishad. The district magistrate will play the role of "District Development Council" president in all the states where the Zilla Parishad was not formed.

#### **1.2.4.7 L.M Singhvi Committee:**

Based on the report of Ashok Mehta Committee, the second-generation panchayat systems succeeded in such states Karnataka, Kerala. Especially the success of the West Bengal panchayat system influenced the policy makers. Since the mid-90's, national policy makers took an initiative to revive the panchayat system for political, administrative and economic reasons.

After Rajiv Gandhi became the prime minister, he formed a committee headed by L.M Singhvi in 1986. The report of the L.M. Singhvi Committee in the history of Indian local government development was significant in many respects.

L.M. Singhvi Committee first presented the panchayat system in the context of Local Government.

#### **Its main recommendations are:**

1. This committee has identified the panchayat system as the main unit of "Local- Self Government". The constitution proposed to amend the panchayat to include the main constitution. According to the committee, the panchayat raj system will be established as a third-level government through constitutional recognition of the panchayat institutions.
2. L.M. Singhvi committee spoke about the formation of three-tier panchayat system namely Gram panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad. There was a proposal for the formation of panchayat through direct voting at each level. The committee was in favour of the election of the National Election Commission to manage the regular, independent, neutral panchayat elections.
3. The committee considered the Gram Sabha as the basis of the democratic republic.
4. This committee recommends reservation for seats for women scheduled castes and scheduled tribes people's in all stage of panchayat.
5. Finance commission advised to take appropriate action on the panchayat institutions to get enough money.
6. This committee has proposed to create a "Model Law" on panchayat.

#### **Report of the Sarkaria Commission on Panchayat system:**

On 9th June 1983, a commission was set up to determine the centre-state relationship led by the retired Supreme Court justice R.A. Sarkaria. Two members were included in this committee. They are B. Shivaraman and Dr. S.R Sen.

The report of this commission was submitted to the government in 1988. In order to strengthen the Sarkaria Commission financially in the panchayat, it was recommended to set up a state finance commission. Sarkaria Commission amended constitution to recommend panchayat system to be included in the main constitution.

While reviewing the question of decentralization of power and the process of planning, the Sarkaria Commission reviewed the panchayat system with considerable importance. According to the recommendations of the commission, the Zilla Parishad and the elected municipal corporation need to be strengthened in financial and functional terms. There is a need to have time to 'election' and 'session' of this institution. The central government should consult with the state governments and agree to the national level agreement on the work of the panchayat.

### Conclusion: Recommendation of the Administrative Reforms Commission on Panchayat Raj System:

On 31st August 2005, the Indian govt. constituted the Second Administrative Reforms Commission. The commission has submitted six reports to the Government so far. The six reports submitted to the Govt. in October 2007, according to the framework of the local administration; the commission has considered the question of the decentralization of the administration very seriously. According to the administrative reforms commission seems the rural and urban areas area complementary to each other, the district council should be formed in every district by elected representatives from the local areas. The district council will implement the activities of this district planning committee. The administrative reforms commission felt that the district planning committee should be abolished. The commission also feels that the members of the Lok Sabha and the members of the legislative assembly are not required. To become member of the local government, it is necessary to provide the specific duties at all the levels of panchayat raj and municipality. According to the second administrative reforms commission, it needs to distribute the work which is not similar of central and state level. The administrative commission recommended that the panchayat raj will appoint the staff as per their own decision. The state govt. will not be empowered to cancel panchayat power as per suggestion of the commission. The commission also recommended that the panchayat raj will increase the advantage and capability of economic collection of the local govt. regularly. The development project of MLA and MP should be abolished regarding the administrative commission.

### CONCLUSION

The journey of Panchayat system in India reflects the country's long historical development of participatory democracy and its constitutional commitment to empowering citizens at the rural masses. From the Sabas of the Vedic age to Gram Panchayats after in 1992, the system has come a long way. While structural, financial, and operational challenges remain, the Panchayati Raj system continues to be a vital role and significance of rural development.

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