

North Asian International Research Journal Consortium

North Asian International Research Journal

Of

Multidisciplinary

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Welcome to NAIRJC

ISSN NO: 2454 - 2326

North Asian International Research Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi, Urdu all research papers submitted to the journal will be double-blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial board. Readers will include investigator in Universities, Research Institutes Government and Industry with research interest in the general subjects

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HISTORY OF PANCHAYTI RAJ IN INDIA

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Introduction:

The Panchayat Raj is a SouthAsian political system mainly in India, Pakistan, and Nepal. "Panchayat" literally means assembly (*ayat*) of five (*panch*) wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the local community. Traditionally, these assemblies settled disputes between individuals and villages. (Rohit Mullick & Neelam Raaj) Panchayat is an oldest concept in India and in a way it is the earliest concept of democracy in history of Civilization. The concept of five elected seniors in a village a form of self-government of the originationTo settle down matters of dispute of community has not found anywhere else in the world, as recorded By Chinese travelers in their diaries.Panchayats have been existence inIndia from verly early times. While empires rose and fall, village panchayats continued to survive giving continuity to Indian village Traditions theVedas,Rigveada in particular, revel that ancient Hindus used to lead a corporate life. Valmiki;s Ramayana, and the Mahabharata have also described existence of such institutions . Actually The inspiration for panchayati Raj is derived from the tradition of punch parmashwar where God speaks Through the five and the official publications speak of village republic.Now we shell review theHistorical background of the panchayat system in india since vedic age.(Malaviya,H.D.1956)

The Vedic Age:

The village, during the vedic age , was administered by a respected official by a council of elders . The Ramayana cities a village leader of great prestige called “Grammani” He was helped in gods singing in praise of him compared him general and “Gramani. The fact the Gramani enjoyed high status in the village can be noted furthermore in that “ at the royal consecration , the king’s entourage of a Gramani, a suta (charioteer) and a Bhagdugha (collector of taxes) (Ibid) During the time of rig Veda (1200 B.C) evidences suggest that self Governing village bodies called “sabhes” exists with the passage of time these bodies become panchayats (council of five persons) panchayats were functional institutions of gress root governance in almost every village . Panchayats as Elected council had large power both executive and judicial land was distributed by panchayats which also collected taxes on behalf of village. Above a number of these village council these was large panchayats as council to supervise and interfere if necessary.(Wikipedia)⁴

As one of Indian historian says:

“Gramani was probably at the head of the village administration. The post carried considerable prestige and described to be the Object of the highest ambition of a vaishya. The king exercised This powers over the villages through the.....Grammani” (Altekar, A.S, (1955)Manu, on the other hand, refers to the village official Gramik. Linke the Ramayana, Manu also mentions village administration and tax collection for the king as the Gramik’s main duties (Malaviya, H.D (1955)

The Mauryan age (324 B.C.-236 B.C.)

Village administration during this period (324 B.C.-236 B.C) was closely linked with agriculture. The village size managed from 100to500 families. Boundaries were demarcated by rivers, hills, forests, ditches, tanks, bunds, and trees situated at one or two krosha (1 krosha equals 2 miles) presumably for mutual protection with neighboring villages. The following, the village administrative staff: (1) the headman (Adhyaksha), (2) the accountants (Sankhayaka), (3) village officials of different grades (stanikas), (4) the village couriers (Jamgha Karika), and the (5) veterinary doctors (Anikastha). In addition, the Chikitseka (in charge of sanitations)and the Ashwa-damask (horse-triner) were also village leaders. All these officials were given land free of rent and taxes but they were not allowed to sell or mortgage the land. (Idbi)Vidyalankar cites the degree of governmental control the village. HE write that despite Chandragupta’s vast empire and centralized region , he never interfered very much with the village communities. The village was self –governed A sketch of village life under the Mauryas is illuminating:

“Every village had its own sabha(assembly which debated all matters Relating to the village; rules helpful to the entire community were farmed, And the offenderswere punishedthrough regulartrials and judgements. The sabha was the centre of the multifarious activities of the village. It disc-Used religious and social matters. It arranged numerous types of entertai Ents

The sabha met under a shady tree. Representatives of village families, the elders, and others experienced folk gathered there. The Indian people live independently in these self-governing villages republics. (Quoted in Malaviya, (1955) During the post-Mauryan period from 200 B.C to A.D. 300, known as the “dark period”, the village continues to be the smallest unit of administration. The headman, assisted by the council of elders, still played a prominent role in village life. (Altekar, A.S. 1955) . In sum, the village under the Mauryas was efficiently organized. The traditional elders found in the Vedic age were still dominant a feature also the Gupta rule.

The Gupta period (300 to 500 A.D.)

Gupta village government was in many respects similar to that of the Maurya period. The village headman and the accountant were still active under the Guptas. In addition the watchman helped administer the village. Altekar's description is very revealing: The village administration was in changes of a headman designation as Gramayaka or as a Gramadhyaksha. He had a clerk to work assisted in his work by a non-official council. The village councils were known as Janapadas in the Gupta administration. The main responsibilities of the village council were village defence, settlement of dispute, collection of revenue for the government, organization of work for public utility, and acting as trustee for minors (Ibid. P.342). On the judicial function, Majumdar believes that “justice was administered by royal officials. With the help of the village council or assembly. In certain cases the assembly alone sat in judgment and passed sentence” (Majumdar, R.C., 1948). Majumdar also writes that in the far south India the lowest administrative units were the kurram (union of villages) and grama (village) each made its own headman who was assisted by assemblies like Mahasabha... (Ibid., p.195). In summary, the village headman and the accountant, both prominent officials in the Vedic and Mauryan period also played an important part in the village administration. The village council took various forms but retained of the functions found under the Mauryan.

The Mughal rule (1556-1749)

Village organization was not drastically changed under Muslim rule (1556-1749). The self-governing community under the Mauryas and the Guptas was still healthy and vigorous. The traditional officers, headman, accountants and watchmen, were still active notwithstanding the rise and fall of kingdoms and empires. Samant's view on the judicial aspect of panchayats is that village council under Muslim rule had the state support because “we find that even under Muhammadan king's when Muhammadan interests were involved, the decision of a panchayat was enforced by the ruling monarch which is sufficient proof to show that power of the state was always behind the village council. (Samant, S.V. 1957). It can thus be inferred that the very spirit and

form of the panchayat during the Mauryan and Gupta period were still present in the Mughal period. The headman, the accountant, and the watchman, found in earlier, still ruled in this period.

British colonial period (1750-1947)

With the advent of British rule the self contained village communities and their panchayats

Ceased to get sustenance. In course of time, they were replaced by formally constituted institutions of village administration. It is a historical fact that local self-government in India, in the sense of accountable representative institutions was creation of the British.

It was in 1870 that the viceroy, Lord Mayo got a resolution passed by his council for

decentralization of power to bring about administrative efficiency in meeting the demands of the people and to add to the finances of the “ existing imperia resources which will not suffice for the growing needs of the country.(Venkatarangaiya et al,(1969).The British government in india found it increasingly difficult to rule efficiency without popular cooperation and , therefore, the viceroy of India , Lord Ripon, declared the famous resolution of 1882 that local self-government in India must be revived, “as an instrument of political and popular education “ and as an outlet for the ambitious and aspiration engendered by western ideas. Accordingly the provinces were allowed to set up district boards composed of officials and elected village panchayats. The government resolution of 18 May 1882, providing for local members and preside over by a non-official chairperson, is considered to be the Magna carta of local democracy in india. The role of local administration was elevated by introduction of this reselection.

In 1907, the government constituted a royal commission on decentralization which, in its report released in 1909, elaborated further the principles enunciated in the Ripon reselections. The commission recommended the “it is most desirable alike in the interests of decentralization and in order associate the people with the local tasks of administration, that an attempt should be made to constitution and develop village panchayats for the administration of local villageaffairs.(Malaviya.H.D.1957). Although the commission visualized certain difficulties in the success of such an effort, like “Caste and religious disputes” or the influence of the landlord with large estates which “may present free action by the tenantry” it agreed that these difficulties were “far from Insurmountable”

In the same year (1909) the twenty-fourth session of the congress at Lahore adopted a resolution urging the government to take early steps , “ to make all local vedic form village panchayats upwards elective with elected non-offical chairmen” and to support them with adequate financial aid.(Ibdi.,p.215-16). The Montagu Chemsford Reforms of 1919, under the proposed scheme of diarchy, made local self-government a “transferred subject” This meant that local self-govt. Was brought under the domain of india ministers in the province To be make local self-govern36ment both fully representative and responsible, the reform had suggested that there should be, as far as possible, complete popular independence for them of outside control.(Khanna. R.L.1972). By

1925, eight provinces had passed panchayat acts and by 1926, six native states had also passed panchayat laws.(Wikipedia)⁴Notwithstanding this professed for objective of the Montagu-chemsford scheme, it did not make the panchayat institutions truly democratic and vibrant instruments of self –govt. At the level of the village, due to various constraints, both orginastions and fiscal. Still, in almost all provionces and a number of native states acts were passed for the establishment of village panchayats.

The 1935 Government of India act, and the inauguration of provincial autonomy under it marked another improtent stage in the evolution of panchayats in the country. With popularly elected govts. In the the provinces, almost all provincial administrations felt duty-bound to enact legislations for further democratization of local self-govt. Institutions, including the village panchayats. Although the popular govts in the provionces governed by the congress vacated office following the declaration of the Second World War in 1939, the position as regards local self –govt. institutions remained unchanging till August 1947 when the country attained independence.

Post-Independence Period: The Rise and Decline till 1977 Panchayats and Planning:

The Indian planning commission has entrusted the panchayats with new responsibilities. The panchayats are now the agencies for the execution of developmental plans and policies. The panchayts new role in in national development is made clear in the first, second, and third five year plans of india

.Panchayats and the first five year plan:

The first five-year plan stresses that the success of rural development largely depends on an active units in the village. This unit should represent the community as a whole. With govt. support, this agency could also effectively unite the people in common project for village welfare. For this purpose, the village panchayat was to be the foundation of entire administrative structure for national development.(Govt of india.1957)

The first five year plan, therefore, visualized the village panchayats assuming responsibility for functions such as:

1. Framinng programmes of production for the village.
2. Framing budgt requirements of supplies and finance for carrying out the programmes;
3. Acting as the channel through which govt. assistance, other than assistance which is given through agencies like co-operatives, reaches the village;
4. Securing minimum standards of cultivation to be observed in the village with a view to increasing production;

5. Bringing wasteland under cultivation;
6. Arranging for the cultivation of lands not cultivated or managed by the owners;
7. Assisting the implementation of reform measuring the village.(Govt of india.1952)

Under the second Five Year Plan, the scope of panchayat was extended from that of units of self-govt. to units of development; and specific measures were recommended for building up active panchayats in order to secure the borther aims of:

- 1.Coprehensive village planning talking into account the needs of the entire village community, in particular of the weaker sections like tenants, cultivators, landless workers and others;
2. Bringing about a more just and integrated social structure in rural areas;
3. The development of a new type of leadership in village society; and
4. Completing the pattern of district administration envisaged in the community development

Programmers.

At the beginning of the first five-year plan, according to information made available by the planning commission some 83,000 panchayats existed in Indian villages. By the end of march 1954, their number rose to 98,250 covering more than half of the villages of the country .(Govt of India.1956). Panchayats and the third five year plan. (Planning Commission,Govt of india.) The third five year plan that legislation for democratic decentralization (Panchayati Raj) at the village, block, and the district level, has already been enacted in a number of states. Other states will also pass laws for democratic decentralization. The draft outline considered democratic decentralization as “a must significant step forward”it is regarded as the “function of a genral approuch suggested in the first andsecond five year plans. The draft outlines reports: The National Development council agreed that the foundation of any democratic structure had to be democracy in the village. The two institutions which made effective village democracy possible were the village panchayat and the village co-operative. Major responsibility for development work implementation at the block level is placed on the panchayat and the samiti. This body works closely with the village panchayat and zilla parishad, the unit of the district level. Four criteria have been set for successful project through democratic decentralization at the district and block levels. (Third five year plan.)

1. The way each panchayat samiti and panchayat mobilizations local manpower and other resources and elicits cooperation from people.
2. District administration’s responsibility at all level for making supplies and services available at the right time according to the accepted programmes and for prevention loss due to worse on misapplication of funds.
3. Panchayat samitis and panchayats should stress increased agricultural production.

4. Panchayat samitis and panchayats should emphasise measure to raise the standard of living of the under privileged sections to level of better off groups in area. To fulfil the objectives of the third plan, many states have evolved their own decentralization Patterns to suitable to local conditions. It is apparent that in the past, there has not only been a tendency to increase the number of panchayats, but also to confer upon them as much development function as possible. But contrary to expectations, the record of their performances had not been appreciable in any state. The taxation Enquiry commission was of the view that although the panchayat acts contained impressive lists of functions both obligatory and discretionary, yet very few of them had ritually been translated into practice. (Taxation Enquiry commission report. Vol.3.p.34). The programme Evaluation organization admitted that in most of the evaluation centers the panchayats role in developmental activities was negligible; in few cases they made cast contribution to project in their villages. (Fourth Evaluation Report. Vol.1.p.15). The Mehta committee also found that response of panchayats to the community development and National Extension service was not appreciable (Govt of india.1957. committee on plan project). These observation were later confirmed by the fifth report of the programme Evaluation Organization in 1957 based on the survey of panchayats in almost all states the report maintained that "additional responsibility, specially for development works, should not be imposed on the panchayats at least for some time to come (Fifth Evaluation Report.p.153.) There were many observes who doubted whether in the existing evaluation the panchayat was the type of institution best suited for the development and promotion of productive, distributive and other essential socio-economic activities in the rural areas, as district from specific projects of development as roads and minor irrigation tanks. (Thorner, Daniel). It was realized later that rural economic development through the existing village panchayats was attempted in vain. It was still discouraging to note that although the inauguration of the blocks placed funds specially for the amenities program at the disposal of panchayats, even then they could not attend to even the most elementary civic amenities programmes. Their role in economic development remained quite negligible. (Fifth Evaluation Report, p.127-29.)

Community Development Programme (CPD).

The community Development Programme was inaugurated on October 2, 1952. Fifty-five Community project were launched. Each project are comprised of about 300 villages, covering an area of 450 to 500sq. miles, i.e. about 1,50,000 acres with a population of about 2,00,000 persons. A project area was divided into three development blocks of hundred villages, each with a population of about 65,000 persons. Each block was divided into about twenty groups, each containing five villages. Each group of villages was being served by a Gram sevak (the village level worker). Of the five villages, one generally become the headquarters of the Gram-Sevak. The programme launched in 1952 extended to wider area at the end of the first five year plan. 603 National Extension service blocks, and 533 community development blocks. Covering 1, 57,000 villages and a population of 88.8 million people were created. Nearly one out of every three villages in India was brought within the orbit of this programme. The basic premise on which Community Development programme rests is to motivate the rural people to undertake self-reliantly community based approach to improvement of economic and social condition of their life and environment. The govt is expected to provide general guidance and technical

cun financial assistance for reinforcing the community prompted programmes of activities as need be. A new basic administrative unit below the district level, named as development block, was created in an increasingly number to cover most parts of the country. At the village level panchayats were given responsibility for motivating rural community based development activities and also for implementation of minor development schemes under these programmes. District board, how ever were hardly given any substantive role in the implementation of these progarammes. During the first three years the inception of community Development programme there was an increasing interest and even enthusiasm among the govt departments and several sections of rural people in local planning and co-ordinated implementation of development section under it. But this enthusiasm was short lived and began to peter out in course of time. Often programmes beagn to get increasingly bureaucratized elite domination and excessively politicized. Corruption, malpractices facouritism and wastage of funds began to mar its efficiency and its public image. But it did however succeed to an extent in promoting developmental psyche sections and also developmental activity of growing scope among several sections of rural people in an increasing number of villages

Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957)

The National Development Council appointed a study team in 1956 under the chairmanship of Shri Balwant Rai Mehta, to review critically the community development projects and National Extension service and suggest measures needed for effecting economy and improving efficiency in their implementation the team was also asked to examine ; the extent to which community development movement has succeeded in utilizing local initiatives and reading institutions to ensure continutly the process of improving economic and social conditions in rural areas.(Khanna.B.S.1994). The team found that one of the least successful attempt of the community development and national Extension service work is its attempt to evoke popular initiative. (Ibid.,p.12). The Team therefore suggested that the concept of democratic decentralization should from the basis for the planning and implementation of The Community Development Programmes with which National Extension service should be merged.

The terms of reference of the team were:

- (i). the content of programme and priorities assigned to different fields or activity within it;
- (ii). The arrangement for the execution of the programme with special reference to
 - (a). Intensification of activities in the sphere of agricultural production.
 - (b). Co-ordination between
 - 1. The different ministries/departments at centre;

2. The centre and the state

3. The different agencies, within the communist projects administrations and other state govt.

Organizations and department;

4. The organizational structure and methods of work with a view to securing a greater speed in the Dispatch of business;

(iii).the assessment of the requirement of personal for community project and national extension Service and examination of existing training facilities for in order to need the growing requirements of personnel for extending the coverage of the programme.

(iv).the assessment of the extent to which the movement has succeeded in utilizing local initiative and in Creating institutions to ensure continuity in the process of improving economic and social conditions in rural areas

(v).the methods adopted for reporting upon the result attained by the community project and national extension service.

(vi) Any other recommendation that the term may like to make in order to ensure economy and Efficiency in the working of the community project and the national Extension service. The team, Popularly known as Balwaqnt Rai Committee, submitted its reports on November 24, 1957.

The report was divided into 18 sections, each section dealing with a particular aspect of the problem. The main features of the recommendation of the team were establishment of a three tier panchayat Raj system , village panchayat, panchayat samiti, and zilla parishad ; demarcation of functions of the village panchayat samiti assignment of services of income to the panchayat samiti and village panchayat, setting up of a permanent cadre of trained personal for running the panchayati system. The main thrust of recommendations was to decentralize power and To make panchayat samiti which would be co-extensive with the Development Block, the pivot of all developmental activities. The most important of the recommendations of the team was termed “democratic decentralization”.The team was of the definite opinion that the time had arrived in india when the Govt. of india and the state govts must repose greater faith and trust in the people for their own welfare. They suggested that the basic unit of democratic decentralization should be located that at the block / samiti level. The team envisaged directly elected panchayats for every village as a group of village, an executive body called panchayat samiti for a block with directly elected and co-opted members and an advisory body called Zilla parishad at district level constituted indirectly, mainly through ex-officio members from lower ties and others with the collection as chairman. The National Development council (NDC) accepted the recommendation of three tier system of democratic decentralization for development administration. The recommendations as appered by the NDC were communicated to the states for implementation in the middle of 1958. The central council of local self-govt. at its fifth meeting at Hyderebad in 1959, considered the action taken by the states to implement the decision of the National Development Council and recommended that” while the broad pattern the fundamental

may be uniform, there should not be any rigidity in pattern. In fact the country is so large and panchayati Raj (democratic decentralization) is so complex a subject with far-reaching consequences, that there is the fullest scope important is the genuine transfer of power to the people. If this is ensured, form and a pattern may necessarily vary according to the conditions prevailing in different states.

Following the lines of this recommendation, the states have been left free to try out varying ways of the democratic decentralization subject to their adhering to the basic pattern of an organically linked up three-tier local self-governing bodies from the village to the district. All state union territories (U.T) have enacted law for the establishment of panchayati raj institution except in the states of union territory of Lakshadweep. A three-tier system has been adopted in 12 states and one and two union territories there is only another of Gram panchayat in 4 states and 4 union territories. (Mukesh Sharma.(2002)

K. Santhanam Committee(1963):

One of the prime areas of concern in this long debate on panchayati raj institutions was fiscal decentralization. The K. Santhanam Committee was appointed to look solely at the issue of PRI finance, in 1963. The fiscal capacity of PRIs tends to be limited, as rich resources of revenue are pre-empted by higher levels of government, and issue is still debated today. The Committee was asked to determine issue related to sanctioning of grants to PRIs by the state government. Evolving mutual financial relations between the three tiers of PRIs, gifts and donation, handing over revenue in full or part to PRIs.

The Committee recommended the following.

1. Panchayats should have special powers to levy special tax on land revenues and house taxes.etc.,
2. People should not be burdened with too many demands (taxes),
3. All grants and subventions at the state level should be mobilized and sent in a consolidated form to various PRIs,
4. A panchayat Raj Finance Corporation should be set up to look into the financial resource of PRIs at all levels, provide loans and financial assistance to these grassroots level governments and also provide non-financial requirements of villages. These issues have been debated over the last three decades and have been taken up by the state finance commission which are required to select taxes for assignments and sharing, identifying the principles for such sharing and assignment, determine the level of grants and recommend the final distribution of state's transfers to local authorities.(Wikipedia)⁴

The bold experiment of democratic decentralisation of power has not proved to be a success due to many debilitating factors- political, finance, functional and administrative. When the basic promise of panchayat Raj institutions as units of self-govt. was lost, these institutions also lost their capability to fulfil the promise of

developments. The matter was reviewed again during the janta rule at the centre by the Ashok Mehta committee in 1977-78 where is discussed next:-

Ashok Mehta Committee's Recommendation (1977-78):

The Ashok Mehta Committee in 1977 marked a turning point in the concept and practice of panchayat raj. The Ashok Mehta committee was set up to enquire into the working of panchayati raj institutions and to suggest then so as to enable a decentralized system of planning and development to be effective. The committee's report (1978) is a landmark document which seeks to make panchayat an organic, integrated part of our democratic process. The panchayati raj institutions, which came into being in certain states after the Ashok Mehta Committee's recommendations could be considered the second generation panchayati.

The committee's main recommendations were:-

- (a). More genuine and effective devolution of power to panchayati raj should take place:
- (b). primary units in panchayati raj system should be zilla parishad and not the panchayati samiti, as the parishad has better leadership and resources (administrative and financial) to play a substantial development role,
- (c). the Mandal panchayat with appropriate powers and resources and covering a smaller area than development block and larger one than village panchayat, should replace the panchayat samiti and the panchayat as it would be more effective in management of development resources;
- (d). administrative wing of zilla parishad in particular and also that of Mandal panchayat should be suitably stopped and appropriately led by well qualified senior civil servants,
- (e). below the Mandal Panchayat there should be village committee including substantially weak Section of people functions allocated to it by the Mandal panchayat;
- (f). in order to bring appropriate coordination between rural development and urban development, municipal bodies should have representation in Zilla parishad and Mandal panchayat;
- (g) political parties should take part in elections to panchayati raj and participate in its working as this would emerge and make it more coherent in working and;
- (h). for improving the capabilities and reorienting the attitudes of people's representatives as well as of bureaucracy within panchayati raj a massive programme and training be set up in place of the existing limited one. Though the recommendations of the committee were not accepted by the union govt. due to change again the ruling party within it, some of these did exercise varying influence upon the working of panchayati raj in a few states. Some years later (1983-85) Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh rendered their respective panchayati raj system under this influence, by and large.

G.V.K. Rao Committee (1985):

A committee to review the existing Administrative Arrangements for Rural Developments and poverty (CAARD) was constituted on 25th March under the chairmanship of Dr.G.V.K. Rao, Ex-member, planning commission, to review the existing administrative arrangement for rural development and poverty alleviation programmes and to recommend an appropriate structural mechanism to ensure that they are planned in an integrated manner and effectively implemented. (Mukesh Sharma.2002)

1. PRIs have to be activated and provided with all the required support to become effective organizations,
2. PRIs at the district level and below and should be assigned the work of planning, implementation and monitoring of rural development programmes, and
3. The block development office should be the spinal cord of the rural development process.

L.M.Singhvi Committee (1986)

L.M. Singhvi Committee studied panchayati raj. The Gram sabha was considered as the base of a decentralized democracy, and PRIs viewed as institutions of self-governance which would actually facilitate the participation of people in the process of planning and development. It recommended.

1. Local self –government should be constitutionally recognized, protected and preserved by the Inclusion of new chapter in the constitution.

2.non-involvement of political parties in panchayat elections.The suggestions of giving panchayats constitutional status was oppose by the sarkaria commission , but the idea , however, gained momentum in the late 1980s especially because of the endorsement by the late prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, who introduced the 64th constitutional Amendment bill in 1989. The 64th Amendment bill was prepared and introduced in the lower house of parliament. But it got defeated in the Rajay Sabha as non-convincing. He lost the general election too. In 1989, the National Front introduced the 74th constitutional Amendment Bill, which could not become an Act because of the dissolution of the Ninth Lok sabha. All these various suggestion and recommendations and means of strengthening PRIs were considered while formulating the new constitutional Act. (Wikipedia)⁴

The Committees important recommendations relating to panchayati raj are as follows:

1. Panchayati RAJ Institutions (PRIs) have to be activated and given all the needed support so that they can become effective organizations for handling people’s problems elections to these bodies should be held regularly.

2. The district should be the basic unit for policy planning and programme implementation. The Zilla parishad should, therefore become the principal body for the management of all development programmes which can be handled at that level.

3. The president of the Zilla parishad can be directly elected for a term conterminous with the zilla parishad, or for one year each on the Mayoral pattern. The work of the zilla parishad should be done by a number of sub-committees, elected on the basis of proportional representation so that participative democracy could be developed and encouraged.

4. Panchayati Raj Institution at the district level and below should be assigned an important role in respect of planning, implementation and monitoring of rural decentralized planning.

5. Some of the planning functions at the state level may have to be transferred to the district level for effective decentralized planning.

6. In this connection, the committee recommends the introduction of the concept of district budget. It is desirable that it is brought into being as quickly as possible.

7. The district plan should include all the recourses available; both in the plan and non-plan as

Institutional.

8. It is necessary for the banking institutions, including the co-operatives, to ensure that the credit requirement of the rural poor are adequately met. Such facilities should also cover the legitimate consumption credit requirements of the poor.

9. The process of economic development itself should be designed so as to reduce poverty. The Implementation of land reforms has to be done with grater vigour so as to ultimately ensure that the land goes to the tiller.

10. The committee recommends that a very senior officer of the rank of chief secretary designated as development commissioner be in charge of development administration at the state level.

11. The committee is of the view that development administration at the district level has to be as major activity involving significant responsibilities.

12. The committee, therefore, recommends that a post of district development commissioner (DDC) be created to look after and coordinate all the development activities in district.

13. The committee recommends that the block development officer should be the anchor of the entire rural development process. For this purpose, the status of this office should be upgraded. The Chief Executive officer of the block (tehsil) may be designated as Assistant Development Commissioner (ADC). The ADC should be an officer of the status of a sub-divisional officer.

14. There should be Gram Sabha for each village consisting of all votes of the village. There should meet as often as necessary but the interval between any two consecutive meetings should not be more than 6 months. The

meeting should be provided over by the chairman on in his absence, the Vice-Chairman of the gram panchayat at mandal panchayat as the case may be the identification of beneficiaries under poverty alleviation pro-grammes like IRDP, MRER, RLEGP etc.should be done in gram sabha meeting. The panchayat should place before the gram sabha a report on development programmes taken up for the village during the previous year and proposals for the current year for the consideration. The gram sabha can give proposals for new programmes also help in organizing various activities in the village. The recommendaqtion of the gram sabha should be given due consideration by the gram/mandal panchayat samiti and zilla parishad.The panchayat samiti and the gram/mandal panchayat should have a sub-committee, consisting mainly of women members , for considering and implementing programmes and scheme for the welfare of woman and children, including about education.(Mukesh Sharma.2002)

73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and Its Implications:

It has been widely recognized by the Govt. public leaders, intelligentsia that the panchayati Raj Institutions have not been able to “acquire the status and dignity of viable and responsive people’s bodies. The main reasons mentioned by the Govt and others for this are “absence of regular elections, prolonged supersession’s insufficient representation of weaker sections like scheduled castes , scheduled tribes and women inadequate devolution of powers and lack of financial resources.(Ibid.p.34). The Union govt. therefore has started recently the imperative need to “enshrine in the constitution certain basic and essential features of the panchayati raj institution to impart certainly, continuity and strength to them. For this purpose, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 has been passed by the Union parliament. In the Constitution, part IX and schedule IX have been inserted to contain certain provisions for the panchayats from the village, the sub-divisional and district level. These provisions are summarized here:

1. Panchayats will be institutions of self-govt.
2. There will be a gram sabha for each village or group of villages comprising all the aduld members registered as voters in the panchayat area.
3. There shall be a three-tier system of panchayats at village, intermediate block/taluk and district level. Smaller states with population below 20 lakh will have the opinion not to have an intermediate level panchayat.
4. Seats in panchayats at all the three levels shall be filled by direct election in addition, Chairpersons of village panchayats can be made members of the panchayats at intermediate level and chairpersons of panchayats of intermediate level can be members of panchayats at the district level.
5. Members of parliament, M.L.As and M.L.Cs could also be members of panchayat at the intermediate or the district level.

6. In all the panchayats, seats would be reserved for S.C.s and S.Ts in proportion to their population offices of the chairperson of the panchayats at all level shall be reserved in favour of S.Cs and S.Ts in proportion to their population in the state.

7. One third of the total number of seats will be reserved for women. One third of seats reserved for S.C.s and S.Ts will be reserved for women. One –third offices of chairpersons of panchayats at all level shell also are reserved for women.

8. State legislatures have the likely to provid reservation of seats and offices of chairperson in Panchayats in favour of backward classes.

9. Every panchayat shall have a uniform five years term and elections to constitute new bodies shell be completed before the expiry of the term. In the event of dissoulution, elections will be compulsorily held with six months. The reconstituted panchayat will serve for the remaining period of the five year term.

10. It will not be possible to dissolve the existing panchayats dry amending any act before the expiry of directions.

11. A person who is disqualified under any law for election to the legislature of the state or under any law of the state will not be entitled to become a member of panchayats.

12. An independent election commission will be established in the state for superintendence, direction and context of the electoral process and preparation of electoral rolls.

13. Specific responsibilities will be entrusted to panchayat to prepare plans for economic development and social justice in respect of 29 subjects listed in the eleventh schedule. The 74th Amendment provide for a district planning committee to consolidation the plan prepared by the panchayats andMunicipalities.

14. The panchayats will receive adequate funds for carrying out their functions. Grants from state Govts.Will constitute on important source of funding but state govts also expected to assign the revenue of certin taxes, to the panchayat. In some cases, the panchayat will also be permitted to collect and certain the revenue it raises.15. In each state a Finance Commission will be establish to determine the principle on the basis of which adequate financial resources be ensured for panchayat.(Mukesh sherma.2002).

At present, there are about 3 million elected representatives at all level of the panchayat one-third of which are women. These members represent more than 2.4 lakh Gram panchayats, about 6,000 intermediate level tiers and more than 500 district panchayats. Spread over the length and breadth of the country, the new panchayats cover about 96 percent of Indian's more than 5.8 lakh villages and nearly 99.6 percent of rural population. This is the largest experiment in decentralization of governance in the history of humanity. The Constitution visualises panchayats as institutions of self-governance. However, giving due consideration to the federal structure of our polity, most of the financial powers and authorities to be endowed on panchayats have been left at the discretion of concerned state legislatures. Consequently, the powers and functions vested in PRIs vary from state to state. These provisions combine representative and direct democracy into a synergy and are expected to result in an

extension and deepening of democracy in India. Hence, panchayats have journeyed from an institution with the culture of India to attain constitutional status.

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