CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF
DECENTRALIZATION OF POWERS
IN PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM
ON
RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF AMRAVATI TALUKA
(AN ANALYTICAL REVIEW FROM 1962 TO 1972)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 It is a study of three Panchayat Samitis namely (1) Amravati Panchayat Samiti (2) Bhatkuli Panchayat Samiti and (3) Nandgaon Khandeshwar Panchayat Samiti in Amravati Zilla Parishad. The new system of democratic decentralization of powers has been created and introduced in the State of Maharashtra with effect from 1st of May 1962 as per Maharashtra Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis Act 1961.

BACKGROUND OF FIVE YEAR PLAN

1.2 As soon as India became free from the bondage of slavery, we adopted the democratic constitution for our country. For socio-economic and political development, the Five Year Plan was started. The object of Five Year Plan was to awaken the rural masses in particular and the Indian community in general and raise their standard of living by providing facilities of education, health and sanitation.
and for providing aid to agricultural and industrial
development and help the individual and community to
achieve richer and fuller life.

1.3 To achieve the objectives of Five Year Plan, the
National Extension service and community development blocks
were started and through these institutions the schemes of
Five Year Plan were implemented with the intention to break
the age old inertia of and to bring about an awakening in the
villages of our country which constitutes 80.13 percent
of our population.

APPRECIATION OF FIVE YEAR PLANS

1.4 While commenting on Community Development Programme
in India, Prof. Toynbee described it as, "one of the most
beneficent revolutions in the peasantry's life that have
been known, so far, to history"; and Shri Jawaharlal
Nehru, stressing the importance of Community Development,
said, "The Community Development are the bright, vital and
the dynamic sparks, all over India, from which radiate rays
of energy, hope and enthusiasm." The series of projects under
the first Five Year Plan aroused tremendous enthusiasm in
the public and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru termed
these projects of Community Developments under Five Year
Plans in stirring terms while inaugurating Community
Development Projects on 2nd of October 1952, The Gandhi

1. Prof. Toynbee - "America and world revolution"
published by the Oxford University Press, London,
Page 9-10.
Jayanti Day, in the following words, "The work, we are about to start today, is in the service of the Motherland, in the service of land of which we are all part. We should serve her with hard work, with the sweat of our brow. If necessary, we shall shed our blood so that millions of our countrymen may go forward and that there may be an end to their trials and tribulations." ²

AN EARLY ENTHUSIASM FADED

1.5 These words are reminiscent of the early enthusiasm and freedom urge which was working behind it. But while implementing the plan, the questions posed were how to make the individual a builder of his village and that of India in a larger sense? How to invest the people with the sense of partnership, with an eagerness to do things?

The important task, before the government, was to convince the people that their programme was to overcome their apathy and resistance acquired as a result of previous experiences with government officials.

NEW PROBLEMS OF ADMINISTRATION

1.6 However, the rapid expansion of development projects presented new problems before the administration, which at that time consisted of an administrators and his staff.

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2. Address at the inauguration of Community Project on 2nd October 1952, "Jawaharlal Nehru on Community Development" (Publication Division) Page 22.
The Headquarters staff had to be expanded considerably to cope with growing size of the programmes. The time honoured rules and rigid departmental barriers were providing obstacles in the way of successful accomplishment of new tasks which called for flexibility, prompt decision, assumption of responsibility and team action.

To ensure speedier implementation and to involve State Governments, powers were delegated to the State Governments to make inter-item adjustments in the schematic budget within prescribed limits. The State Governments, in turn, delegated more and more powers to the development commissioners, Collectors and Block Development Officers to issue administrative sanction to the projects coming within the range of schematic budget and exercise certain other powers over expenditure control.

**SHORT COMINGS IN IMPLEMENTING PLANS**

1.7 (1) The technical departments, however, were allowed to respond.

(2) This caused considerable delay in taking final decisions, even though, administrative sanctions had long been issued.

(3) The importance of proper system of coordination for the rationalisation of demands upon the time and the energy of the multipurpose functionary working at the village levels and the need to ensure team work were realised now.
1.8 (a) The controversy arose in the sphere of programme Planning and the issue of "targets" to be achieved was bounced in the air by the self named heretics and remained a lively issue throughout.

(b) The targets in the development plan were denounced on the ground that they led to over emphasis upon physical achievements at the cost of non physical objectives.

Thus, the question of felt needs versus real needs also attracted attention.

(c) And with the growth of ideas about planning from below, the controversy assumed a more of theoretical character than of practical significance.

(d) The administration was also criticised for lack of coordination with non official organizations and slow progress in implementation and planning.

Mr. N. R. Malkarni writing in Kurukshetra criticised the existing cadre of Block Development Officers and their training and further described the attitude of the technical departments and said, "Their attitude is one of amused interest mixed with a little of world-wise cynicism and more of official aloofness."
NEED TO CHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

1.9 Thus the need for changing administrative structure and organization was felt and this issue was discussed in the Fifth Development Commissioners' Conference (May 1956). While discussing this issue, one of the Administrators observed, "We cannot go far from where we have arrived unless we have wider partnership with technical departments, wider partnership with people's institutions and wider partnership with political institutions of the country."

PEOPLE'S PROGRAMME WITH GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION

1.10 Hence, it was felt an indispensable step to switch over from, "Government programme with people's participation" to "People's programme with Government participation." This beginning of changes on the programme side, on the administrative side and on the organizational side were initiated, and in view of this, the need to appoint an expert committee to, "Examine the organization and functions of the non-official institutions (such as Block Development Committees) with a view to recommending a future pattern of local self-government of various levels" was felt.
EMERGENCE OF DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALIZATION

1.11 In view of the heavy allocation for the Second Five Year Plan, the National Development Council appointed a committee on plan projects, (popularly known as Balwant Rai Mehta Committee) to study the working of community Development and National Extension service and make suitable recommendations with regard to economy and efficiency to achieve plan objectives.

The publication of the findings of Balwant Rai Committee and their subsequent acceptance by the National Development Council marked the beginning of a new phase—"The phase of Democratic Decentralization."

THE MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEHTA COMMITTEE

(a) Programme Priorities

The committee was of the opinion that in regard to priorities the emphasis should be given to the more demanding aspects of economic development such as agriculture, drinking water supply, rural industries etc.

(b) Three-Tier-system

The committee proposed a three-tier-system of local self-governing bodies upon which all the development work within their jurisdiction should be devolved.
(1) At the village level the panchayat should be formed on an elective basis with reservation for women and scheduled castes scheduled tribes. The panchayat should be entrusted with the responsibility of water supply, sanitation, lighting, maintenance of roads, land management, collection and maintenance of records and other statistics.

The Panchayat should be authorised to raise its resources through property tax, vehical tax, octri, water and lighting charges, cattle pound and should also have other grants.

The budget of the village panchayat should be subject to the approval of the Panchayat Samiti.

(ii) At the block level, the Panchayat Samiti should be set up on an elective basis. Its functions should include the functions being performed by the block, namely, improvement of agriculture and cattle, promotion of health, education and industries. Besides the above, it should also maintain statistical and other types of useful information.

The Panchayat Samiti might derive its income from grants, cess on land-revenue, professional tax, pilgrim tax, surcharge on transfer of immovable property etc.

The block may act as an agency of the state government in executing the assigned jobs.
The departmental funds should be pooled together in the block budget which should be approved by Zilla Parishad. The present arrangement of dual control—namely, technical and administrative control by district officers and the Block Development Officers respectively should be maintained.

(iii) At the district level, a Zilla Parishad comprised of the presidents of Panchayat Samitis, M.D.As and M.Ps and all district level officers of Development Department should be constituted with the Collector as the Chairman.

(e) Working of Plans

The states should be allowed to lay down broad objectives, general patterns, and the extent of technical assistance they could make available. The people's local representatives with the assistance of the block staff should implement the plan. The state governments themselves must evolve the schematic budget within the limits of the grants and broad priorities prescribed by the centre.

All other departmental grants, loans, peoples contributions should be integrated with the block budget.
(d) **Three-Tier-System and Panchayati Raj**

The core of the Mehta Committee recommendations was the establishment of a three-tier-system of local self-government with full powers to assume responsibility for local development.

Thus the year 1959 marks the revolutionary step in the development of the institutions of Rural Local Self-Government in the country and this process is known as "Democratic Decentralization" and the same is called as "Panchayat Raj".

The recommendations of Mehta Committee gave a stimulus all over the country to an active consideration of the problem of decentralization through democratic bodies. The state of Rajasthan was the first to launch Panchayat Raj on 2nd October 1959 and Andhra Pradesh followed in November 1959 and since then other states have passed the suitable legislation. The Maharashtra State also followed the suit.

**INTRODUCTION OF PANCHAYAT RAJ IN MAHARASHTRA**

1.12 In pursuance of the recommendations of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee, in regard to the setting up of Panchayati Raj (Democratic Decentralisation) in the country, it was now necessary for Maharashtra State to consider whether these responsibilities could be entrusted to a statutory body. With a view to considering this question in all its aspects and making an exhaustive study
of the matter, the Maharashtra Government vide its resolution No. DCD-106C-8 dated 27th June 1960 set up a committee under the chairmanship of Shri Vasantrao Naik, the then Revenue Minister and the Ex-Chief Minister of the state.

PURPOSE OF DECENTRALIZATION OF POWERS

1.13 According to Naik Committee, "the fundamental purpose of decentralization of power should be to train the local leadership to assume higher responsibilities and to serve the people with maximum efficiency and economy and with minimum vexation, so as to meet their growing needs with their resources at their disposal, giving priority where it is legitimately due."

With this purpose in view the Naik Committee made the following main recommendations for establishing the Panchayat Raj system in the Maharashtra State.

(1) According to Mehta Committee, the block was the appropriate level for delegation of decentralized powers whereas Naik Committee recommended that such powers be recommended at district level for (a) district body is the best operative unit of local administration. (b) it alone will be capable of providing the requisite resources, necessary administrative and technical personnel and equipment required for a properly coordinated development
of the district. (c) The committee felt it imperative to establish a strong executive body at district level.

(2) The Naik Committee further recommended establishment of Block Committee or Panchayat Samiti with sufficient powers to the Chairman and making him the ex-officio member of Zilla Parishad or district council, thus making the Block Committee (Panchayat Samiti) as an organic link between the village Panchayat and Zilla Parishad (at district level).

(3) The Mehta Committee recommended ex-officio membership on Zilla Parishad to the members of legislature and parliament and almost all states have implemented this recommendation whereas the Naik Committee opposed such ex-officio membership to them on the following grounds.

(1) The Naik Committee felt that presence of members of parliament and state legislature will discourage free and frank discussions on local issues and thus inhibit the emergence and growth of local leadership. This is the peculiar character of Zilla Parishads Act in Maharashtra State.

(11) The Naik Committee recommended the committee system of working at district level for immediate decision and proper execution and supervision.
1.14 All these recommendations were accepted and thus Maharashtra Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti Act 1961 was passed and Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti known as Panchayat Raj bodies were established in the State with effect from 1st May 1962.

1.15 After reviewing the background of establishment of Panchayat Raj system in our country and specially in Maharashtra, in this chapter, methodology adopted for this study is described in the next chapter.

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