

P R E F A C E

India is essentially a rural country, and Uttar Pradesh typifies the country in this particular respect. Since the very ancient times, the rural side of this region has played a prominent part in building up traditions of rural administration. The history of Panchayati Raj is an ancient institution, but the term Panchayati Raj denotes three tier structure at the district, block and village level, is modern. It aims at making democracy real by bringing the activities of millions into the functioning of democracy. It is a system of 'grass-root democracy' which seeks to link the individual family in remotest village with the governments of the state and the centre. Thus, the importance of Panchayat Raj cannot be over-emphasised in the present day set-up of Indian democracy. In the words of Dr. Zakir Husain "with the introduction of Panchayat Raj we have laid the foundation for extension of democratic form of government down to a village level. The end of this process is to realise the basic objectives of an enlightened political community - liberty, equality and welfare."

A critical and objective study of such programmes would help a great deal in bringing about a re-orientation of these programmes at the three levels - Zila Parishad, Kshetra Samiti and village Panchayat. It is with this end in view that a modest attempt has been made to make an exhaustive study of the Panchayati Raj programmes in Uttar Pradesh with special reference to their operation in Aligarh district.

The subject matter has been classified into six Chapters. Chapter I makes a historical study of growth and development of Panchayati Raj institutions. It traces the growth of the earlier ideas and efforts towards rural uplift, specially after Independence when the Panchayats were included in the Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution. Democratic Decentralization which has been proposed by the ODPF Team as a new method to enlist people's participation. In consequence, Panchayats have been given due place in Five Year Plans, both of Central and State Governments. It is proved that Uttar Pradesh gave a lead in this direction by passing the U.P. Panchayat Raj Act, 1947 and U.P. Kshettra Samitis and Zila Parishads Adhiniyam, 1961.

Chapter II deals with the organization and working of Panchayati Raj in Uttar Pradesh with special reference to Aligarh district. In this connection, I had to undertake the field study of selected blocks and villages.

Chapter III deals with the administrative problems of these bodies at the district, block and village level. The study reveals that a gap is created due to the gradually increasing requirements of the government and paucity of trained personnel. The training facilities are inadequate and it is necessary to organize exhaustive training courses for Panchayat officials and non-officials.

Chapter IV discussed the financial implications and income patterns. The sources at the disposal of these institutions are not regular and definite. Due to the paucity of funds, these bodies are unable to carry out their assigned duties satisfactorily.

Chapter V deals with the role of political parties. It points out that continuous interference of political parties in the day-to-day functioning of these bodies have slowed down the process of achieving its objectives. They have vitiated the village life in search of their personal gains.

Chapter VI examines the leadership pattern and political awakening. It was expected that the introduction of Panchayati Raj will be helpful in throwing up a sound leadership in the village and thereby fill the gap created by the abolition of amildari system. On the contrary, it divided the villagers into factions and litigations. No Pradhans, Pramukhs and other members are elected on consideration of merit but due to factional manipulations leaving behind undesirable trends.

At the end of the Thesis, a conclusion has been given, which gives an over-all appraisal and suggests suitable remedies. It indicates that the existing Panchayati Raj schemes have not made substantial and favourable impact on the villagers because they have not been able to solve the problems of villagers and carry out constructive development programmes. Finally, I have ventured to suggest some reforms, namely, the small size of these bodies, election of Pramukhs and Adhyakshas by

an electoral college, training programmes for the Panchayat Raj functionaries, compulsory taxes, development of remunerative assets, avoidance of political parties, active participation by members etc.

In preparing this thesis, I have drawn material from case study, field investigations and printed material. The field study for this project included a detailed study of 30 villages and 10 blocks in Aligarh district. In selecting these blocks and villages, certain factors, like physical situations, size and composition of its population etc. were taken into account. Questionnaire were issued to elicit public opinion on the administrative aspects of Panchayati Raj system in the villages and also to have a first hand knowledge of the working of the system. The data collected by means of questionnaires is enclosed at the end of the thesis in the form of Appendix. As it is not possible to include information on all the villages surveyed, a detailed review of the study of seven villages and seven blocks is included in this work. Each village is situated in a different block and the blocks are scattered all around the district. In most cases I went to the villages without any previous intimation, introduced myself and explained the purpose of my visit and then settled down to a long talk in groups or individually. I had a set of questionnaire and adopted questionnaire-cum-interview method.

I do not claim any great originality in the discussion of the role of Panchayati Raj in general. However, in making a critical study of the organisational structure, and working of Panchayati Raj in Uttar

Pradesh, with special reference to Aligarh district in this thesis, I hope to have thrown new light on the subject and have suggested some useful reforms to make these institutions an effective instrument of democracy on the one hand and as an agency for economic development on the other. Most of the Tables have been compiled by me. A few of them have, however, been reproduced from the existing publications. A complete list is given in the Appendices and Bibliography.

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