Chapter II

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India is regarded as land of villages. Nearly 73% of population lives in villages. Hence, it is overwhelmingly called as Rural India. It is not an exaggeration, since, most of the population depend on agriculture for livelihood. Hence Indian economy is called as Agro based economy. Rural India is marked by agriculture, socio-economic backwardness, illiteracy, diseases, low level of communication, poverty etc. It is the primary responsibility of the Panchayat Raj, in consultation with the State Government to improve or reconstruct or develop villages through various schemes. Panachayat Raj at the district level is one such local self-government unit for rural development.

"There are three important streams related to rural development namely Government initiative, popular movement for rural development and peasant struggles. These have helped to identify certain problem areas and workout certain approaches while underscoring the importance and urgency of rural development."
The increasing commercialisation of agriculture, renewed emphasis on rural industrialisation and upgradation of skills fisheries, piggeries, poultries land above all, milk farming, electrification and energisation of dug wells and tube-wells and considerable enhancement of minor irrigation facilities are some of the developments which would make it possible to view the development prospects of rural India. Development of rural India is a two-way flow-process with satisfactory local finances and technical expertise and institutional supervision flowing to the villages and individual villagers belonging to all sections of the rural economy and rural society on the one hand, and on the other hand, local or village produced output, flowing out of one rural locality to other rural localities as well as to non-rural localities. Thus, Panchayat Raj institutions have to be equipped to undertake 'development management' under conditions of rapid changes, continuous growth and sustained innovations in all spheres of rural life. A phenomenal increase in spatial scatter of rural development is envisaged by the Ashoka Mehta Committee Report because of the emerging dynamics of development and increasing rural orientation of plan investments. It has increased beyond the capacity of the existing machinery for development administration and in the future the existing 'State
Village Pipelines' of administration will not be adequate for implementation of much larger, and more varied and pervasive programmes. Further, the rural India in the days ahead will have “a developmental momentum which has been steadily gaining strength since the fifties propelling the rural economy towards economic diversification” the objective of which is purposeful social change and rural development. “The impact of science and technology in agriculture, allied sectors and in small industries is such that a large number of individual families are drawn into its vortex. This underscores high-level technical support to them and local level organisation.”

Panchayat Raj system was conceived for rural development through local participation representing local aspirations and local expectations. Alien and universal models of development have proved to be futile everywhere. The Indian situation demands regional solutions for regional problems. With its varied lop sidedness, functional disparities and distinct provincial circumstances, India needs an institutional organisation, which responds actively to all such requirements and helps to surmount them. Panchayati Raj institutions have been considered, despite their incremental growth, for successful implementation of rural development programmes.
In India, the terminology like Panchayat Raj and rural development is co-terminus as well as co-intensive. Indian polity envisages semi-federal structure- i.e. Union Government at the national level, responsible for formulation and execution of law is of national importance, State Government is responsible for state laws, within which the Panchayat Raj falls. The constitution does not mention Panchayat Raj for district administration. The Directive Principles of State Policy of Part IV of Indian Constitution envisages the establishment of Panchayat Raj institutions for people's participation in rural development. Even after the acceptance of Balwantrai Mehta Committee report on Panchayati Raj, the Union Government has left to the States the introduction of local bodies according to their convenience.

The concept of welfare state and the new social order based on justice envisaged in the new constitution is responsible for increasing by all leaps and bounds the functions, duties and responsibility of district administration. As a result the Deputy Commissioner (prior to the introduction of Panchayat Raj) of the District as its head was concerned not only with the age old functioning relating to revenue collection and maintenance of law and order
but also with a variety of social welfare oriented and development oriented functions that aim at changing the social and economic aspects of human life for the better. The advent of Panchayat Raj institutions at the district level are of momentous significance. This experiment was launched upon with the object of associating the masses actively and spontaneously with the implementation of rural development programmes, to provide and sustain rural local leadership that became essential for ensuing the effective implementation of the rural development programmes and to give necessary powers and responsibilities to local people to take decisions and implement the same. These were, among others, the most important objectives that led to the introduction of Panchayat Raj set up – an institutional mechanism destined to bring about remarkable changes.

The phenomenal changes brought by the introduction of Panchayat Raj institutions deserve to be looked at from two angles-

1. The entire gamut of district administration and
The role of Deputy Commissioner in the radically changed new environment. The underlying policy of development plans and other allied programmes led to the introduction of three tier Panchayat Raj in the district.

Accordingly there emerged the village panchayats at the gross root of the hierarchy of the new set up, secondly, there emerged Taluk Boards whose territorial limits practically coincided with the revenue taluk and Community Development Blocks and thirdly, the District Development Council with the Deputy Commissioner is its ex-officio chairman. This organisational set up in the sphere of Panchayat Raj institutions added new dimension to the administration. Consequently the rural development administration came to acquire a great deal of significance.

Today, the objective of Panchayat Raj institutions has become multi-dimensional. Panachayathi Raj institutions are playing an important role in social, welfare, economic development and political life. They are also working for modernisation and development oriented village leadership. As a result, active involvement of people in their programmes has increased. The role of
Panchayathi Raj institutions in various fields in rural development can be described as follows:

A. SOCIAL LIFE

1. Social reforms

2. Spreading education to increase the literacy level.

3. Panchayats are running a number of programmes for child welfare.

4. Providing mid-day meals in schools.

5. To tackle the problem of bonded labour.

6. For the welfare of women, Panchayats are implementing number of welfare programmes.

7. Implement prohibition of liquor and other intoxicants.

8. Settling of controversies and disputes.
B. PUBLIC WELFARE

1. Improvement in public welfare.

2. Cleanliness – related jobs

3. Transport facilities.

4. Entertainment facilities.

5. Help during natural calamities.


C. ECONOMIC LIFE

1. Improvement in agriculture.

2. Irrigational facilities.

3. Development of village industry.

4. Improving breeds of animals.
5. Encouraging animal husbandry.

6. Improving condition of landless labour.

7. Developing co-operative institutions.

8. Development of handicraft and small-scale industry.

9. Areas for fodder, parks etc.

10. Afforestation.

11. Decide buying and selling.

12. Maintenance of public properties.

13. Ranging markets.

D. POLITICAL LIFE

1. Developing leadership in the village.

2. Political awareness among the people of villages.
3. Promoting peace and security.

4. Helping administration.

5. Providing justice.

6. Explaining importance of vote and right to vote.

7. Educating people about the meaning of citizenship.

8. Training them to solve their problems themselves.


10. To see that leadership has representation from all sections of the society.


There is a very close ideological link between the objectives and goals of the state enshrined in the constitution of India and developments planning that was resorted to in the post Independence
era. In fact a perusal of the plan documents will not fail to amplify that how far the goals and objectives of the state enshrined in the constitution of India were responsible for influencing and shaping the objectives of development plans. The three tier panchayat raj bodies that came into force in 1960 were a logical by product of development plans and such other ambitious nation building programmes that were embarked upon. Earlier to Panchayat Raj Act, the Indian Government had instituted certain agencies such as the Community Development Programme and National Extension Services in 1952 as an experiment for the development of Rural India. These schemes were a part of First Five year Plan. But these schemes failed to evince any interest among the villagers. The dismal feature of the said projects compelled the authorities to give a serious thinking to find out as to what were the pertinent causes that were responsible for the extremely poor progress. Accordingly, the Union Government constituted Balwantrai Mehta team to probe into the failure of Community Development Programme.

The study team pointed out the necessity of prompting the people and inducing them to participate on a large scale in the execution of these development programmes and schemes. The
acceptance of the suggestions and findings of the study team by the authorities concerned went a long way in ushering in the era of panchayat raj bodies.¹²

The necessary ideological drive for introducing the panchayat raj bodies actually came from the constitution itself. Article 40 in Part IV entitled the Directive Principles of State Policy explicitly refers to the organisation of village panchayat and necessary powers and functions to be conferred on it to enable the same to function as a unit of rural local self-government. Apart from this constitutional drive the advent of development planning that brought in its wake such nation building programmes and schemes as the community development project and national extension service schemes, and implementation of these programmes and the experiences gained by authorities in this regard were in a way responsible for preparing the ground for inaugurating the era of Panchayat Raj institutions that was destined to bring about far-reaching changes in the sphere of administration.

It may be recalled in this context that the agonizing appraisal of the implementation of the development programmes
during 1952-57 undertaken by the Balwantrai Mehta Study Team rightly suggested that in the case of any developmental programmes and schemes devised for the welfare of people, the people concerned should actively involve themselves in the implementation of such programmes, and that they must be given necessary power and responsibilities to take decisions and implement the same. In the interest of smooth, efficient and meaningful implementation of development plans and programmes, the committee suggested the device of democratic de-centralisation and to effectualise, it suggested the creation of a three-tier panchayat raj set up. The State Government agreed with this scheme which was endorsed by the Union Government and National Development Council. In this respect the State of Karnataka did not lag behind the other states in taking necessary steps for introducing the three-tier panchayat raj bodies in the state. The enactment of Mysore village Panchayats and Taluk Boards Act, 1959, prepared the ground for introducing in the state in the three-tier structure.\textsuperscript{13} they were 1) Village Panchayats 2) Taluk Board and 3) District Development Council.\textsuperscript{14} Prior to the introduction of the Panchayati Raj bodies, there was no such thing as a separate administrative set up to maintain the rural areas. It is no exaggeration to say that rural development
administration that became the fait accompli in the post independence era was shaped, among others, by the impact of development planning and advent of the three-tier panchayat raj bodies.\textsuperscript{15}

Of the three different types of panchayat raj institutions namely Village Panchayat, Taluk Board and the District Development Council that came into being in the state, the District Development Council stood at the apex of Panchayat Raj. The district development council was an ex-officio body and not directly elected. Village panchayats constitute the first tier in the hierarchy of the three-tier panchayat raj set up in the district.

The Panchayat Raj set up that was introduced in the State in 1960 under Mysore Local Boards and Village Panchayat Act 1959 lasted till 1983. The advent of non-congress Government in Karnataka for the first time in the political annals of state in the post independence period constituted an event of considerable significance to be analysed only by referring to the very pertinent development that took place in the field of Panchayat Raj set up in the state \textsuperscript{16}. It may be recalled in this connection that the advent of the first non-congress Government in the State
was preceded by a report on the working of the decentralised
democratic set up submitted by Ashok Mehta Committee and its introducing a two-tier Panchayat Raj set up in the State. The State Government led by Ramakrishna Hegde of Janata Party readily accepted the recommendations made by Ashok Mehta Committee, which paved the way for the enactment of comprehensive legislative enactment called the Karnataka Mandal Panchayat and Zilla Parishads Act, 1985. The kind of Panchayat Raj set up brought into being by this new enactment, though avowedly was a two-tier set up, between Mandal Panchayats and Zilla Parishads at the district level, there also came into being the Taluk Panchayat Samiti at Taluk level. The new structure, administrative set up, functions, power and resources proved to be meaningful, satisfactory and purposeful. It establishes beyond doubt that this new venture in the sphere of panchayat raj set up proved a considerable improvement over erstwhile set up.17

The new panchayat raj or remodeled panchayat raj set up lessened the burden of Deputy Commissioner in the working of Panchayat raj. The policy makers at the higher level might have thought that new panchayat raj set up need a proper and reasonably
adequate development bureaucratic set up and it would not be possible for the new panchayat raj bodies to function properly to achieve goals and objectives of rural development. An analysis and careful study of the development bureaucratic set up that has come into being at the Zilla Parishad level clearly establishes that as far as the kind of administrative machinery that has been brought into being under the new set up it was not enough to cope with the developmental activities, duties and responsibilities of Zilla Parishads. Similarly at the mandal panchayat level there exists a development functionary styled as Mandal Panchayat Officer. He is the head of the development bureaucracy that exists at the mandal level. It does not mean the kind of development bureaucratic set up that has come into being in the new set up is comprehensive enough.

The District administration needs no elaborate reiteration but in the context of the impact of development planning on administration and the resultant advent of the Panchayat Raj system district as the unit of development administration has the right to acquire a great deal of momentum, administrative relevance and respectability. No doubt for the purposes of administrative
convenience, the district has been divided into revenue sub divisions and taluks and taluks into revenue circles and villages. The territorial unit of district has come to acquire in the context of the growing momentum of the implementation of development schemes and programmes. It is needless for any researcher to probe deep into numerous details relating to the district as a basic territorial unit in the context of development administration. It is common knowledge that ever since 1951, a considerable part of programmes and functional items or ingredients in successive development plans in India revolved around rural development and various aspects connected with rural development.

Karnataka Government has transferred planning as well as all developmental functions and personnel at and below the district level to the elective panchayati raj institutions along with sufficient resources. The regulatory functions like law and order, revenue administration were not transferred but remained with State Government. The State government decided to keep regulatory functions away from gross root politics. The Deputy Commissioner deals with regulatory functions. Elections are allowed to be fought on party lines. Involvement thus of larger number of elected party

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members in development functions from the lowest level to the apex body is intended to give them valuable experience in later assuming power and responsibilities of great complexity at the state and central levels.

The district level heads of various functional departments like agriculture, health, education, public works, industries etc are made the secretaries of the relevant standing committees of Zilla Parishads presided over by the elected members of the Z.P. for day-to-day transaction of development functions. There are provisions too for an inter district council and State finance commission to take care of the problems of inter-districts co-ordination and adequate devolution of finances from the state to the districts.

In 1987 and 1988, the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi held a series of conferences where the district collectors were summoned and they were on 'responsive administration'. It seems that he was the first Prime Minister to have a direct interaction with district collectors. The views of these officers were further discussed with the State Chief Secretaries and the consensus, which the Central Government form out of these deliberations was to decentralise
functions, and power and authority to the local government and to strengthen it. It was decided to amend the constitution in this respect. The year 1989 has been a memorable year of local self government in India in the sense that the Central Government initiated concrete measures to revamp the country's rural governmental system even though the attempt remained abortive.

The constitution (64th Amendment) bill introduced in the Lok Sabha in July 1989 provides constitutional status to Panchayat Raj institutions. The draft bill makes the establishment of Panchayat Raj institutions mandatory. The Amendment Bill provides three tier structures of Panchayat Raj at the village, intermediate and district levels. But it could not become law of the land because the Rajya Sabha rejected it.

Three years later, the same Congress government led by P.V.Narasimha Rao provided constitutional status to Panchayat Raj bodies through 73rd Amendment Act.

Following the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993 was enacted. This Act provided for the
establishment of a uniform three-tier system of Panchayat Raj. The 1993 Act, in terms of structure and content, hardly makes any direct reference to the previous 1959 or 1983 Acts. With the enactment of the 1993 Act, the three-tier system with Zilla Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat and Gram Panchayat has been commissioned in the state for promoting economic development in rural areas and ensuring social justice to rural people, particularly weaker sections.

With the Janata Government once again coming back to power in 1994, there have been slight amendments to the 1993 Act formulated by the Congress Government. While the 1993 Act had given executive powers to the officials, the Legislative Assembly has passed the Karnataka Panchayat Raj (Amendment) bill 1996 on March 5, 1996, conferring status of executive head on the Presidents of Zilla Panchayats and Taluk Panchayats (section 152 and 193) and directing Chief Executive Officer, Executive Officer, and Taluk Panchayat, to function to the general power of superintendence and control of the Presidents of these bodies. However the functions of the Z.P Adhyaksha have been left undefined and the post is deprived of the earlier status of Minister of state to the government. It will take some more time for Chief Executive Officers to share administrative powers with the Adhyakshas, while Adhyakshas are struggling to reconcile with the new scheme of things.
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