Chapter III

Community Development Programmes and Panchayat Raj in Karnataka
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

India is predominantly rural. The people living in rural areas are generally poor, illiterate and socially backward. The labour population of urban also suffers from these ills. There can be no natural prosperity without the progress and development of these people. Therefore there is no other alternative but to enlist the active help and co-operation of these peoples themselves to solve their problems. In other words the community must come forward to point out its problems and ultimately solve them.

To fight against poverty and economic backwardness of rural areas, the five-year plans were formulated. The masses of rural areas are to be aroused out of the morass of lethargy, inaction and consequent poverty through democratic means. The Community Development Programme was therefore devised in 1952 to revitalise
the village life, enlist the participation of rank and file and establish a welfare state. In other words Community Development Programme aim at changing the outlook of 70 million families living in villages.

The Community Development has been defined as “the process by which the efforts of the people are united with those of Governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities to integrate these communities into the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress”.

The main objectives of the Community Development Programmes are:

a) Area development

b) Self help programme

c) Development of the whole community with special emphasis on weaker and under privileged sections.

Area development means the development of the area covered by a block in reference to its various problems in a concerted and coordinated manner.
Self-help programme stresses the idea of creating interest in the people for their development.

Development of the entire community simply means that the weaker sections of the village should also be given due attention. Generally these are left out and so they remain poor, illiterate and uncared for. Under these programmes attempt is made to extend the benefits to all families in a village.

The Community Development Programme was launched on October 2, 1952, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The Community Development Programme was an aided self-help method. It was aided by the Government yet it was self-help way because the communities themselves have to act for their own welfare.

Thus, the community development projects aim at the integral development of the village through the efforts of the villagers and the assistance of the government.

**IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY PROJECTS**

Describing the importance which the community projects have
for rural life, the Planning Commission has written in the Second Five Year plan: "It is a problem, briefly, of changing the outlook of 70 million families living in the countryside, arousing in them enthusiasm for new knowledge and new way of life and filling them with the ambition and the will to live and work for a better life. Extension services and community organisation are among the principal sources of vitality in democratic planning and rural development projects are the means by which, through co-operative self-help and local effort, villages and groups of villages can achieve in increasing measure both social change and economic progress and become partners in the national plan".

Social development projects will involve improvement in all the aspects, social, economic and in the other fields of rural life. The main effects, which development projects have upon rural life, are the following:

1. **Agricultural development:**

Agriculture is the foundation of rural economic life. The happiness and the prosperity of the village depend upon the progress of agriculture. The main cause of the poverty in the Indian villages is the backward condition of agriculture.
The main problems of Indian agriculture are old techniques of agriculture, dearth of new tools, absence of manures and fertilizers, excessive subdivision of land, dearth of the means of irrigation, shortage of good seeds, etc. The community development projects have made efforts to solve all these problems, which beset Indian agriculture. New techniques of farming are exhibited in the villages and manures, seeds, tools and fertilizers are distributed. The community projects also undertook the repairing of old wells, supplementing them by sinking new wells in order that the farmers may have availed the necessary facilities for irrigation. Efforts were made to protect the land from soil erosion and other maladies.²

2. Economic progress:

The greatest problem of rural life in India is its poverty. The community development projects have encouraged cottage industries and handicrafts. Unemployed people were provided with work through auxiliary and useful services. Although these efforts are as yet quite inadequate, it is hoped that a continuous increase in them will lead to rural life in India become more prosperous in the future.
3. Development in respect of animals:

Another major problem and obstacle to progress in the Indian villages is the deplorable condition of the animals which are even today employed in ploughing the fields. The ox is used for this purpose. In order to improve the strain of the species, the community development projects have made use of good oxen. Improved poultry have also been arranged for the development of poultry farming.

4. Development of education:

Most of the people residing in the villages of India are uneducated and illiterate. Without education in the rural areas no progress of any kind whatsoever can possibly be expected. The community development projects have paid the desired and necessary attention to the education of children and adults, men and women. Schools for primary and adult education have been opened. Arrangements have been made for social education. 3.

5. Training for development:

In the villages of India social and economic development cannot take place in the existing circumstances. It was necessary to have people trained and skilled in rural development. Under the community
projects arrangements have been made to train village workers, both male and female, block development officers and other people concerned with the programme of rural development.4

6. Development of the means of transport:

In the villages of India there is a dearth in the means of transport, serious enough to prove a great obstacle to industry and business. The community development projects have repaired the old roads and also managed to construct new roads. At various points small culverts have also been provided. These measures will not only improve business but will also serve to maintain the contact of the villagers with the world at large.

7. Cleanliness:

Dirtiness reigns supreme in the Indian villages. It is the cause of the spread of many kinds of diseases and it lowers the general standard of health. The community development projects have not forgotten to arrange for the purgation of the villages. A considerable length of drains has been constructed and steps have been taken to purify and keep pure the drinking water of the wells.
8. Protection of health and the maintenance of certain standards:

In the villages of India epidemics and many less wide-spread diseases carry off many men, women and children every year due to the almost utter absence of medication and facilities for delivery. The condition of the health of women and children is extremely dissatisfactory. Arrangements have been made for one health center in each development block. Mobile dispensaries have also arranged for. midwives and nurses were also being trained to staff all the new dispensaries.

9. Arrangement for residences:

Most of the houses in the villages are old-fashioned and small. The community development projects have decided to assist the villagers in building houses and also helped them with modern plans and the building methods of good and cheap houses.

10. Social welfare:

The community development projects have also given due attention to social welfare in the villages, making provision for games, variety shows, etc., for the entertainment of the public. Gramophone,
Radio and Cinema provide the villager with entertainment and also serve to enhance his stock of knowledge. 5

Since the launching of the Community Development Programme in 1952 and the introduction of Panchayati Raj later, there were 5026 community development blocks and 2,21,674 village panchayats in India. The endeavor has been to create a suitable climate and provide a viable infrastructure for all round development in the rural areas. The essential specialist services were provided through the extension agency.

Rural development is a comprehensive programme of activities which include agricultural growth, development of economic and social infrastructure, fair wages and also housing and house-sites for the landless, village planning, public health, education and functional literacy, communications, etc. It has two important aspects, viz. economic development with a close interaction between different sections and sectors, and economic growth specifically directed to the rural poor. The main thrust of attention in all the special programmes is towards weaker sections, not only in terms of providing incentives for development but also linking of economic activities into a well
planned infrastructure. In this multi-pronged effort involving development and conservation of resources—land, water and human—the objective is to raise the standard of living and quality of life, particularly of the poor. Rural development thus encompasses both spatial and functional integration of all relevant programmes bearing an increased agricultural production and provision of gainful employment to rural people.

A programme of Integrated Rural Development was launched during 1976. This programme lays emphasis on tackling problems of unemployment and under-employment and rural poverty by optimum mobilisation and utilisation of manpower and other resources available in rural areas. Twenty districts in eighteen States have been selected where the schemes were initially operated and agencies have been designated which were responsible for carrying it out. Various programmes of the Department were continually being reoriented to meet the concept of Integrated Rural development with focus on the 'weaker section'.

A new scheme for providing infrastructural facilities in rural areas has been introduced during 1977-78. Special programmes
for the weaker sections like the small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers development programmes, drought-prone areas programme, tribal and hill areas projects, whole village development programme, Integrated Rural Development Programme, agricultural credit and agricultural marketing etc., continued to receive special attention.

PROGRAMME PATTERN

Initially, a community development block covered an area of about 1,300 sq.km with about 300 villages and a population of about 2 lakhs. The pattern was revised from 1 April 1958. A block now covered an area of about 620 sq.km with 110 villages and a population of about 92,000. A block has two active stages of operation, each of the stage covering five years to be followed by post stage II phase. For implementing the programme in the blocks, there was a schematic budget provisions of Rs.12 lakhs for stages I and Rs.5 lakhs for stage II. Supply of funds for the blocks remained mainly the responsibility of the central government till the end of the Third plan (1966). But from the beginning of the Fourth Plan (April 1969), the financial arrangements became the responsibility of the states.
Rural Development has recently become a fashionable slogan for the National Government. To achieve the objective of rural development, several programmes were undertaken new approaches were adopted and experimental or pilot projects were launched in the past. After independence multiple programmes for rural development have been introduced for the reduction of poverty and well being of the rural weak. These programmes are: Community Development Programme (1952), Multipurpose Tribal Development Blocks (1959), Package Programme (1960), High Yielding Variety Programme (1969), Farmer's Training Education (1960), Drought Prone Area Programme (1970), Well Construction Programme (1966), Small Farmers Development Agency (1971), Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Programme (1972), Minimum Need Programme (1972), Command Area Development Programme (1977), Desert Development Programme (1977), Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment Programme (1979), Integrated Rural Development Programme (1979) and Development of Women and Children Rural Areas (1983), DWCRA (1983-84), Shallow Tube Wells and Dug Well (88-89), Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (1989), Employment Assurance Scheme (1993) and NEMMADI(1994). The objectives of these programmes broadly fall into six categories such as income generation, Growth, Target Development, Area Development Education and Welfare.
GENESIS OF PANCHAYATI RAJ IN KARNATAKA

The community development programme was thought to be a model experiment in the decentralisation process. It was expected to bring about rapid rural transformation especially in the field of agriculture. However, it failed, mainly due to excessive bureaucratisation. It failed to motivate or mobilise, the rural people to involve themselves in the development of the country. The term community itself was misleading, when it was seen as a unit denoting a homogeneous entity and failing to take into account the interplay of diverse socio-economic interest groups, sometimes assuming the form of vested interests. To overcome the drawbacks and anomalies of the Community Development Programmes, the Government of India appointed a Committee known as Balwantrai Mehta committee in 1956 to study the whole problem and suggest ways and means for rural development. The committee after thorough study of the rural problems submitted a report in 1957.
RECOMMENDATIONS OF BALWANTARAI MEHATA COMMITTEE

The Committee’s important recommendations are the following:

1. The Government should divest itself completely of certain duties and responsibilities and devote them to a body which will have the entire charge of all development work within its jurisdiction, reserving to itself only the functions of guidance, supervision and higher planning.

2. At the block level, an elected self-governing institution should be set up with its jurisdiction co-terminus with a development block.

3. The panchayat samiti should be constituted by indirect election from the village panchayats.

4. The functions of the panchayat samiti should cover the development of agriculture in all aspects, improvement of cattle, promotion of local industries, public health, welfare work, administration of primary schools, and collection and maintenance of statistics. It should also act as an agent...
of state government in executing special schemes of development entrusted to it. Other functions should be transferred to the panchayat samitis only when they started functioning as efficient democratic institutions.

5. The state government should give to those samitis adequate grants-in-aid conditionally or unconditionally or on matching basis with regard to economically backward areas.

6. All central and state funds spent in block areas should invariably be assigned to the panchayat samiti to be spent directly or indirectly excepting when the samiti recommends direct assistance to an institution.

7. A certain amount of control should inevitably be retained by the government e.g., the power of superseding a panchayat samiti in public interest.

8. The constitution of the panchayat should purely be on an elective basis with the provision for co-option of two women members and one member each from the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.
9. Main sources of income of panchayat will be property or house tax, tax on markets and vehicles, octroi or terminal tax, conservancy tax, water and lighting rates, income from cattle, ponds, grants from panchayat samitis and fees charged from registration of animals sold.

10. The budget of the village panchayat will be subjected to scrutiny and approval of the panchayat samiti, chief officer who will exercise the same power in regard to the village panchayat as the collector in regard to the zilla parishad. No village panchayat should however, be superseded except by the state government which will do so only on the recommendation of the zilla parishad.

11. The compulsory duties of the village panchayats should include among others provision of water supply, sanitation, lighting, maintenance of roads, land management, collection and maintenance of records and other statistics and the welfare of backward classes. It will also act as an agent of the panchayat samiti in executing any scheme entrusted to it.
12. To ensure necessary coordination between the panchayat samithis, a zilla parishat should be constituted consisting of presidents of these samithis, MLAs and the MPs representing the area under the districts level offices. The collector will be its chairman and one of his officers will act as secretary.6

In January 1959, the National Development Council (NDC) endorsed the introduction of the panchayathi raj. The central government accepted Balwant Roy Mehta Committee's recommendations but it advised the State Governments to implement the recommendations according to their convenience. Immediately after the NDCs approval, the three tier system of panchayat raj was introduced in Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Haryana, Madras(Tamil Nadu), Maharashtra, Karnataka (Mysore), Orissa, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. In Bihar it was set up in a few districts. The block was the panchayat samiti level in most states (called Panchayat Union in Madras) except in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka, which adopted the taluk for it. All the above states formed a zilla parshad at the district level. The way the system worked differed widely from state to state depending on the powers and autonomy they had, and the efficiency
with which they could function. There was great interest in development matters and in the ‘new’ system, but it did not succeed, as production did not go up at all. New programmes such as the Intensive Agricultural District Programme, the Intensive Agricultural Area Programme, and High-Yielding Varieties Programme were started, to make up for lost time and opportunity.\(^7\)

The genesis of Panchayat Raj Institutions in Karnataka dates back to 1862 when a ‘Local Fund’ was established for constructing roads and other subsidiary works. This was further strengthened with the establishment of local fund committee in 1874 under the Presidency of Deputy Commissioner in each district.

In 1902 the Mysore Local Boards Act was passed with a view to remedy the defects and also to revitalise the rural local governments. As a result a three-tier structure of Local self-government was introduced. It provided for Union Panchayats headed by nominated Chairman, Taluk boards with sub-division officer as President and Amaldars as Vice Presidents and district boards with Deputy Commissioner as President. However, in the History of Panchayat Raj of Karnataka the period between 1950-54 was seen as a period
of great significance. During this period, the Government had appointed two review committees to strengthen the working of the then existing district boards and village panchayats. The 'Integration and Coordination Committee' under the Chairmanship of Sri Venkatappa, which submitted its report on 20th June 1950, recommended a 'two tier' system with Group Panachayats and District Boards. The District Boards were composed of members elected indirectly by the elected members of the Panachayats. The major thrust of its suggestion was with regard to co-ordination and integration. Based on these suggestions, the then Government passed the Mysore Village Panchayat and District Boards Act of 1952. Meanwhile, the government had appointed one more committee, the Local Board Enquiry Committee under the Chairmanship of Sri D.Chandrashekaraih, to examine the working of local bodies, which submitted its report in August 1954. The Committee recommended a 'three-tier' structure of local self-government with district boards as the apex, Taluk Boards at the middle and village panchayats at the base. One of the significant recommendations of this committee was that both district boards and taluk boards should function as 'executive bodies' and these bodies should be assisted by a 'special agency' to implement public works. However there was no positive response from the government
and it could not implement the recommendations of the above committee owing mainly to impending reorganisation of the state.

As a result of the NDC’s endorsement of B.R. Mehta report in 1959 the new Panchayat Raj system was introduced in Karnataka State (earlier known as Mysore state) with the passing of the Mysore Village Panchayats and Local Boards Act 1959 (act number 10 of 1959). It was formally inaugurated after the completion of the first panchayat raj elections, by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the then president of India on 21st December 1960.

Though panchayats had been functioning in Mysore state since long, it was through the act of 1959 that the entire state was brought under the uniform pattern of Panchayathi Raj institutions. It naturally repelled all the then existing local government acts governing panchayats in different areas (ex- Bombay area).

STRUCTURAL PATTERN

Panchayat raj system is mainly a three tier structure in 1959 namely, a panchayat at village /group of villages level, taluk
development Board (TDB) at taluk level and district development council (DDC) at district level.

There were 8,411 panchayats including 96 town panchayats, 175 taluk development boards and 19 district development councils in the state.\textsuperscript{11}

**VILLAGE PANCHAYATS:**

As stated above there were 8,411 panchayats in the state. The population covered by the panchayats is 225 lakhs, and a number of villages covered were 29,117. The average population per panchayat comes 2,706, the average number of villages per panchayat was 3.5. The panchayats covered the entire rural population (100\%) in the state.

The village panchayat was a basic institution and was constituted for a revenue village or for a group of revenue villages having a population of not less than 1,500 and not more than 10,000. As per the act a village having the population of not less than 5,000 and annual income of not less than Rs.10,000 shall be declared as town panchayats.\textsuperscript{12}
The provision for town panchayat is a salient feature of the act, as we do not find town panchayats in many states of the Indian union. The panchayat consists of not less than 11 and not more than 19 members. All the members of the panchayats are directly elected from multi member constituencies of 2 or more members on the basis of universal adult franchise. Seats are reserved for the representatives of the SC and STs in proportion to their population in the area and for women whose membership in no case should be less than 2. According to the act, Chairman and vice chairman of the panchayats should be elected from among its members. The term of office of all members is 4 years.

As provided in the act a panchayat shall meet for the transaction of business at least once in a month.

Every panchayat was required to constitute three committees by election, to carry on the functions entrusted to them under the act. These committees are:

1) Agricultural committee

2) Health committee

3) Village industries committee.
As regards functions of panchayats, they have been categorised into obligatory and discretionary. This is a traditional way of classifying functions of local bodies in India. For a most satisfactory classification however, this can be further broadly categorised into civic, regulatory and developmental functions. The obligatory functions of the village panchayats include, village roads, tanks, street lighting, sanitation and conservancy, control of epidemics, and promotion and development of economic conditions with reference to Agriculture. The discretionary functions of the panchayats cover a broad range affecting life and property of the village community in general. They include civic functions like medical relief, markets, statistics and the developmental functions like co-operations, veterinary relief, and welfare of schedule castes. Yet the other functions that panchayats performed are called "agency functions, assigned by the TDB or the state govt. the regulatory powers of the panchayats are also quiet extensive. The panchayats can make byelaws on a wide range of matters concerning sanitation, buildings, markets etc.,

Under provision of a sec. Panchayats are entitled to get 30 per cent of land revenue collection of a village. They are also entitled to get 10% land revenue collections as discretionary grant.
according to an official note (tentative on the income and expenditure of panchayats in Karnataka, during the year 1976-77 out of Rs.4.2376.406 released to the TDBs and panchayats (calculated on an average of land revenue collection for 5 years) a sum of Rs.1,6950,560 is released to the panchayats. This on an average, works out to Rs.2016/- per panchayat.) The panchayats can levy taxes on lands, buildings (excluding agricultural lands). Taxes can also be levied on professions, trades, calling and employments. Further, panchayats can levy taxes on fairs, festivals, entertainments, vehicles (other than motor vehicles) and fee on the bus stands, markets cart stands, and water works vesting in panchayats.15

The executive officer attached to the panchayats is known as panchayat secretary.

TALUK DEVELOPMENT BOARDS:

As stated earlier, there were 175 taluk development boards in the state. According to an estimation and in March 1975, the average number of grama panchayats per TDB comes to 47.5. Taluk Developments were established for every taluk with members directly elected to it. TDBs were not linked with village panchayats. The
statutory linkage therefore was missing between them. The strength of each TDB was 15 per taluk with a population of less than 1 lakh, and 19 for a population of lakh and above. Seats were reserved for scheduled castes and women. Members of Legislative Assembly whose constituencies lie within the taluk and Members of the Legislative Council were entitled to take part in the proceedings and also vote in the meetings. The term of office of the elected members was 4 years.

The elected members choose their president and vice president as in the case of village panchayat.

Every TDB was required to constitute 3 committees:

1. Standing Committee.

2. Audit Committee.


The TDB has been assigned certain obligatory functions and the chief among them are: Public roads, Public wells, Primary school
buildings, Hospitals including veterinary, markets, Rest houses, Public health, Organization of Agricultural and Industrial exhibitions, Rural Publicity and Propaganda, Social education and Promotion and Development of Economic conditions with special reference to agriculture.\textsuperscript{16}

The discretionary functions include: primary and secondary education, co-operative societies, Industries and Commerce, and Amelioration of the Scheduled Castes.\textsuperscript{17}

With the approval of the State Government they can organise famine relief works, Public transport facilities, Industrial trade or occupational institutions in the taluk. Many programmes under CD and 5 year plans were also administered by TDBs in accordance with the order of the State Government. These programmes generally relate to agriculture, animal husbandry, development of village forests, minor irrigation, industries, sericulture and welfare of SCs.

All the land revenue collection was being given to taluk boards and panchayats in the ratio of 60:40.\textsuperscript{18}

TDBs mostly depend on govt. grants of various nature as they have a highly restricted and narrow tax base.\textsuperscript{19}
The Act has assigned two taxes to be imposed by them. They can levy a duty on the transfer of immovable property in the shape of an additional stamp duty and a tax on animals brought for sale at the markets at a rate not exceeding 25 paise per animal.20

The Tahsildhar of the taluk was the chief executive officer of the taluk board. However, where a development block was established in the taluk, the BDO was designated as the CEO of TDB.

DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL:

In the Panchayat Raj structure, at the highest level there was the DDC. There were 19 DDCs corresponding to 19 districts in the state. Its composition is (1) Deputy Commissioner of the District (2) MPs and MLAs and MLCs whose constituencies lie within the district (3) Presidents of the TDBs in the District (4) Officers of the government working in district (not exceeding 15 as nominated by govt.) (5) Members of SC nominated by govt. (6) A woman nominated by govt.21

The Deputy Commissioner of the district was the ex-officio president of the DDC. The Secretary of the DDC is appointed by the govt.(DDA).
It is clear, therefore, that the DDC was partly manned by elected (indirectly) representatives and partly by the govt. nominees. Furthermore, the very fact that the president of the DDC was the Deputy Commissioner of the District, the DDC becomes a bureaucratic organisation rather than an organisation of the elected representatives of the people.

The DDC was simply a co-coordinating and supervisory body with no executive functions. The functions of the DDC are:

a) Scrutiny and approval of the budget of the taluk boards.

b) Reviewing the work of the taluk boards.

c) Affording guidance or assistance to taluk board when it is sought.

d) Co-ordination of the work in the taluk boards where the work program pertains to more than one taluk or has repercussions on the work carried on or on conditions outside the taluk and

e) Any other duty that may be entrusted to by govt. relating to the work of the taluk boards.²²
The DDC has the power to appoint committees to deal with the report on any matter referred to them. It was also required to prepare its annual report by consolidating the annual reports of TDBs and forward it to the govt. The DDC has not been assigned any independent source of revenue. No provision was made in the Act for the constitution of a fund at the district level. It depends entirely upon the govt. for its meager expenditure. An analysis of the structural pattern of the Panchayat Raj system will remain incomplete if the mention of the Gram Sabha is not made.

GRAMA SABHA:

Though the term Grama Sabha as such was not used in the Act of 1959, it provides for a meeting of all the adults in the village to consider and approve the village panchayats administrative reports and budgets. But no fixed quorum was provided. The relevant provision reads as “a panchayat shall convene in such manner and at such time as may be prescribed a meeting of the adult residents of the village and the statement of the accounts together with the report of the administration for the preceding year and the programme of work proposed for the following year shall be read out and explained at such meeting”.

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The statutory status accorded and the extent of importance attached to the institution of Grama Sabha need no explanation, the aforesaid provision is quite indicative.24

ASHOK MEHTHA REPORT

Due to non-performance of the Panachayat Raj institutions in the 1970's a feeling started developing that Panchayat Raj is like God that failed. In 1977 the Janata party government headed by Morarji Desai appointed a well-known scholar and a socialist leader Ashok Mehatha to look into the maladies of Panchayat Raj Institutions and suggest the ways, so that they could function as an effective institution of rural development. The main task of the committee was to suggest measures to strengthen the Panchayat Raj institutions so as to enable a decentralised planning and development to be effective.

As far as functioning of Panchayati Raj institutions in various states is concerned, the general picture that emerges out of some Panchayati Raj studies made by scholars was not encouraging. Barring a few states such as Maharashtra and Gujarat, Panchayat Raj
Institutions by and large have not been able to achieve their stipulated objectives. Economically they are proving burden on the state purse, as their own ‘extractive capability’ is extremely limited.

Misutilisation of grants, misappropriation of public money, innumerable audit irregularities, corrupt practices in local bureaucracy and among local politicians, ‘instrumental use’ of linkages with high-ups in administration and politics for serving individual or group or cast group interests are some of the commonly alleged charges against the working of Panchayati Raj institutions in many states.

Political environment in the country as a whole and in the states in particular where Panchayat Raj Institutions operate had not been congenial in the recent past for their growth as local self-government. Instead of facilitating further devolution and dispersal of power and responsibility to these institutions, political and administrative forces stripped them of many powers and functions. During the period of national emergency bureaucracy got upper hand and these institutions lost much of their vitality and significance. Panchayat Raj in many states appeared to be taking last breath on the death bed of history; centralising forces became too strong to resist with.
National emergency ended, Lok Sabha and Assembly polls have changed the political spectrum of the country. With the coming of the Janata in power at the centre and in many states hopes for restoring democracy at all the levels in the political system, have been strong. The two phases of restoring democracy at the centre and in the states are over. Now, it is high time that the problem of revitalising grass roots democracy should attract the serious attention of the Janata government at the centre and in the states, which will be completing the third and the final phase of restoring democracy. It is all the more necessary because ‘decentralisation of power and authority’ has been one of the planks of the Janata during Lok Sabha and Assembly polls, and it is committed to it.

The terms of reference were so wide in scope that they covered almost all-important aspects of Panchayati Raj, including development administration and decentralised planning. That is why the report of the committee submitted in August 1978, covered the entire gamut of Panchayati Raj in as many as 301 pages, covering 132 recommendations.

The committee’s principal thesis is the functional necessity for decentralisation of administration. It is called ‘new approach’
towards Panchayat Raj. "The formulation of structure, functions and the utilisation of financial administrative and human resources on Panchayati Raj Institutions should, in our opinion, be determined on the emerging functional necessity of management of rural development". One may feel that such a philosophy or 'approach' – conceives of Panchayati Raj in somewhat narrow terms. "It gives one a feeling that Panchayati Raj is a mere administrative contrivance whose justification lies only in terms of rural development". It may have been more secular if Panchayati Raj, or rural local government, is regarded like its counterparts at the state and central levels, as a system of governing, having a measure of autonomy in the matter of its functioning and existing in its own right. The Committee is a too closely focused definition of rural local government and it needs to be liberalised and made more open-minded.

A new approach towards the Panchayat Raj Institutions was claimed namely in concentric circles as they interacted and depend on one another. The entire functions and resources of Panchayat Raj Institutions had to be determined on the emerging functional necessity of management of rural development. The committee was more content to lay down a spectrum of possibilities than making
routine proposals. It attempted to conceptualise afresh on Panchayat Raj Institutions in the changing contest.

"Panchayat Raj, like democracy at the national and state levels, is both an end and a means. As an end, it is an inevitable extension of democracy; as a means, it would continue to be responsible for discharging obligations entrusted to it by the national and state governments in spheres not yet transferred to its exclusive jurisdiction…"

"The establishment of democratic bodies below the state level is an imperative from the political and socio-development perspectives”.

The Report with firm conviction proposed to transfer a substantial quantum of powers from the state to local bodies. This will naturally alter the present distribution of powers between the union and states. Hence it said that “some provision in the constitution deserves a careful consideration of the Government of India”.

The Panchayat Raj Institutions in the coming decades would have to be equipped to undertake democratic development under conditions of rapid changes, continuous change and sustained
innovations in all spheres of rural life. The Committee strongly recommended that while more functions were transferred to Panchayat Raj Institutions, the State Government ought to concern itself with refinement of policies like credit, rural production units etc.

The Committee for reasons of viability proposed a two tier system namely, Zilla Parishad and Mandal Panchayat. At both the levels the elected element has to be the accepted principle.

The Committee, for reasons not very clear in the Report, said that Panchayat Raj Institutions could play an important role in the sphere of municipal and welfare functions by supplementing the state plan outlays, in this regard. They laid much stress on Mandal Panachayats as points or centers of growth. It was conceived as a base level organisation. It may be viewed that the Committee's proposal in this respect was to replace the then existing "block level" by Mandal Panchayats, thus integrating both the community development and local governmental unit. Similarly some of the functions of state government are to be fully transferred to Zilla Parishad and the district will have to become a strategic level for planning.
FINANCIAL RESOURCES

On the question of strengthening the resource base of Panchayat Raj Institutions, the Committee struck a lofty note:

".....it requires to be emphasized that any proposals for financial devolution of financial decentralisation should not emanate from a traditional approach but from our basic commitment to the logical imperatives of the dynamics of development which clearly postulate the entrustment of a deal of developmental functions at the district level, with the Mandal Panachayat playing a key implementational role".

(1) Besides budgetary devolution from the state government the PRI must be able to mobilise enough resources of their own. No democratic institution can continue its operational vitality by depending upon external resources.

(2) The thesis "No taxation but only representation" deserves to be discouraged.

(3) The Report proposed that a selected list of taxation powers be given to PRI and out of the same, some should be made compulsory, as for example tax on land and buildings.
The Committee held that the taxation powers assigned to PRI must be limited and specific and also must not operate inequitously.

The profession of weaker sections has to be shared from direct taxation.

Besides the usual taxes presently levied it was proposed that fees/taxes for service like lighting, sanitation, water supply etc. be also imposed. The State Government can prescribe the upper and lower limits of taxes.

In this context the Committee recommended a complete transfer of land revenue to the Panchayat Raj Institutions in a phased manner over a period of five years taking into account the buoyancy of other taxes.

Public properties like village forests, gomal lands, porombokes etc. be transferred to the Mandal Panchayats in order to enhance their income.

Permanent annual grant of Rs.2.50 per head of population be assigned to Mandal Panchayats.
(10) All Plan and Project funds be given to the Panchayats.

This phase culminated in the appointment of Asoka Mehta Committee submitted its report in 1978. The major recommendations of the committee were:

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In the panchayati raj structure, there should be a two tier set up i.e., a district level zilla parishad and a mandal panchayat covering a population of 15,000 to 20,000.

2. With the two-tier structure, the committee also suggested ultimate abolition of the block as a unit of development administration.

3. All development functions relating to a district, which are now performed by the state government, should be placed under zilla parishad.

4. The term of panchayati raj institutions should be four years. Direct election to these bodies should be held simultaneously.
5. Political parties could participate in the panchayati raj elections.

6. Elections to panchayati raj bodies should be conducted by the Chief electoral officers of the states in consultation with the election commission.

7. Nyaya panchayat should be kept separate from the development panchayats.

8. Panchayati raj bodies should normally not be superseded, but if super session becomes necessary election should be held within six months.

9. Representation for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in all Panchayat bodies should be on the basis of their population.

10. There should be complete transfer of land revenue collections to Panchayati raj institutions over a period of five years.

11. A permanent annual grant of not less than Rs. 2.50 per capita should be made to the mandal panchayats.
DRAW BACKS OF ASHOK MEHTA COMMITTEE REPORT

Unlike the many aspects on the subject, the Ashok Mehta Committee findings gave a firm binding to the local government and the ongoing rural developmental process. The process of integration was well designed and structured. The basic principles were optimistically elaborated. Though the district as a unit of enforcement of planning was at work, yet the administrative details were new. The District Planning organisation owes its blue print to the recommendation of the Committee. However, the Committee's opinion about the Rural Government Finance Commission is not very necessary was a controversial one. At least for reasons of equity and obtaining extent advice, it should have been proposed. The experience of many states in this regard bears evidence of the Municipal Finance Commission. Streamlining the financial relations between the state and local governments and of equal treatment of PRI inter se grant equalisation too poses problems to government. Lastly the Commission in its passionate commitment to local government overlooked their ability to bear the developmental load, as perceived by them. Sheer optimism is no substitute for capability for management and execution.
The suggestion for the creation of Mandal Panchayats (which are to be the implementing bodies) as second tiers in the model, covering a population of 15,000 to 20,000 is a new and novel one. A Mandal Panchayat (a unit of cluster of villages), as argued, would alone be able to ensure a balance between technological requirements and possibilities of popular participation in decision-making.

This radical recommendation is likely to raise many eyebrows. A reaction may be noted thus, “In Asoka Mehta two-tier structure of Zilla Parisahds and Mandal Panchayats, the Gram Panchayats and village as a unit are casualties. Villagers come in contact with Gram Panchayat directly; therefore, making it more effective and useful should have been attempted. Efforts all through have been to strengthen the grass root level but the present committee has thought it wise to shift the power and focus of activities to cluster of villages or Mandals. To talk of decentralisation from the state to the Zilla Parishad level but to recommend the shift of power and activity from a village to a cluster of villages appear to be contradictory in spirit”.
With regard to the constitutional sanctity for the Panchayati Raj institutions, the Asoka Mehta Committee expressed its desire to request the Union Government to give due consideration to this proposal. In 1987 and 1988, the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi held a series of conferences where district collectors were summoned and the theme was on 'responsive administration'. The views of these officers were further discussed with the state chief secretaries, and the consensus, which the Central Government formed out of these deliberations, to decentralise functions, power and authority to the local government and to strengthen it. Originally, only Panchayati Raj was in the Centre's mind for reform, but later it decided to amend the Constitution further to cover the municipal arm of the local government also. Two bills - Sixty Fourth and Sixty-Fifth Amendment bills were accordingly introduced in the monsoon session of Indian Parliament. The year 1989 has thus been a memorable year for local government in India in the sense that the Central Government initiated concrete measures to revamp the country's rural as well as urban local governmental system even though the attempt remained abortive.
The Karnataka zilla parishads, taluk panchayati samitis, Mandal panchayats and Nyaya panchayats bill 1983, had to wait for more than 2 years to get the Presidents assent. Only in July 1985, Presidents assent was given. The act came into force from August 1985.25

The experiment in Panchayat Raj Institutions by the Government of Karnataka was variously described as “power to the people”, “trend setter for the establishment of a three tier govt.”, “end of an administrative state”, “federalising the state polity”. As a part of the revival of that academic interest, an attempt is made here to examine the changes made in the organisational structures of these bodies in Karnataka. Three specific areas identified for comparison are (a) levels of units (b) composition and (c) power and position. Karnataka adopted 4 tier structure i.e. Grama Sabha, at the level of Revenue village, Mandal panchayat, for a group of villages of 8 to 12 thousand population (4000 in sparsely populated areas) Taluk panchayat samithi for every taluka and zilla parishad for every district. Grama sabha, which consists of all the voters, has only responsibilities without power. It represents Gandhian
euphemism and Rousseau’s popular will. The taluk panchayat samithis are advisory bodies having only reviving powers. It is a compromise made by the govt. to opposition party about the new institutional structures from both the ruling party and outside. In the new set up zilla parishads and Mandal panchayats are directly elected bodies. They are entrusted with executive responsibilities. In practice it is a two-tier structure mainly based on the recommendations of Asoka Mehta committee. Asoka Mehta committee considered village a non-viable unit and taluka a too distant unit from the people. They suggested Mandal panchayat, which can fulfill the criteria of nearness to the people and administrative viability.

Karnataka follows a system of direct election of members and indirect election of political executive; the political executive also can be removed by the members.

In Karnataka the zilla parishads and mandal panchayats were given enormous powers to plan and execute developmental activities. The planning of developmental activities was entrusted to zilla parishads. The developmental bureaucracy at the district level was placed under the control of zilla parishad. A senior officer of IAS cadre with the designation of chief secretary is appointed as the
administrative head of zilla parishad. And he has to work under adyaksha of zilla parishad. The adyaksha is given the status of state minister and upadyaksha is given the status of Deputy minister. Another significant feature of the Karnataka system is the integration of all developmental activities at the district level and bringing them under the umbrella of the elected body. The special agencies like DRDA were merged with zilla parishad. The financial devolution is yet another important feature of the system. Nearly 40% of plan funds have been transferred to zilla parishad. Every year it is expected that around 900 crores would be transferred to zilla parishads. Each zilla parishad will have 40 – 50 crores to meet its plan expenditure. The finance commission for zilla parishad is created to decide the distribution of resources between the state and zilla parishads. The three distinct features of the powers and position of panchayat raj bodies in Karnataka are (a) responsibility for all developmental functions including state and central sponsored programmes. (b) Bureaucracy under the control of representative bodies and (c) devolution of financial resources and powers to meet their responsibilities. The powers and finances given to the panchayathi raj institutions in Karnataka, indicates the direction of changes towards the emergence of a third level of Government at the district level. Karnataka also created state development council on the lines of National development council,
with membership to all the chairman of the zilla parishad with chief minister as the chairman. We find many promising features in Karnataka experiment aimed at de-centralisation of power.\textsuperscript{26}

\textbf{73\textsuperscript{rd} CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ACT 1992}

In 1988, Sarkaria Commission was set up under the Chairmanship of R.S. Sarkaria to look into the working of the Panchayati Raj Institutions and the basic question of Centre-State relations. The Committee recommended that the local self-institutions like Zilla Parishad, Municipal Corporations should be significantly strengthened both financially and functionally. The Committee also suggested similar provisions for the local self-Governments including Panchayati Raj institutions as are found in Articles 172 and 174, which make it compulsory for the National Parliament or State Legislative Assemblies to fix the duration for five years.

There was an imperative need to enshrine the basic features of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the constitution itself to provide them certainty, continuity and strength. Accordingly the Constitutional 73\textsuperscript{rd} Amendment Act 1992 came into force with effect from 24\textsuperscript{th} April 1993. It lays the foundation of a strong and vibrant Panchayati
Raj Institutions in the country. The salient features of this Act are as follows:

1. All the states (wherever applicable) to amend their Panchayat Raj Acts in accordance with these new constitutional provisions within the stipulated time i.e. by 23\textsuperscript{rd} April 1994.

2. Establishment of Panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels.

3. Panchayati Raj institutions to function as institutions of self governance and to be endowed with power and authority to formulate and implement schemes for economic development and social justice.

4. To hold regular elections once in every five years.

5. Direct elections at village, block and district levels, elections of chairpersons indirectly (except at village level).

6. Reservation of seats for Scheduled castes/Scheduled Tribes in proportion of their population.
7. Reservation of one-third seats for women.


9. State empowered to provide reservation in favour of backward class of citizens.

The new congress Government headed by Sri. P.V.Narasimha Rao studying the dismal situation in many states of the country, regarding the lack of political commitment on the part of the party in power of strengthening the PR and the non holding of elections, super session of PRIs, enacted the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act 1992, making it mandatory to establish a directly elected three tier structure of PRIs. The states under the act were required to modify their existing PR legislation and replace them with the requirements incorporated in the constitution amendment act in view of this development. The Karnataka state Government enacted altogether a fresh piece of legislation called the Karnataka Panchayath Raj Act 1993.
PANCHAYATH RAJ ACT 1993

Under the new act of 1993 a three-tier PR system has been established in the state with elected bodies at the Village, Taluk, and Zilla levels. The act provided for Grama Panchayats (GP) at the village level a Taluk Panchayat (TP) at the Taluk level and zilla panchayat (ZP) at the district level with direct election to all the three bodies. It stipulates that election to grama panchayats should not be on party lines. The elections are to be conducted by the newly created State Election Commission constituted under the act.

GRAM PANCHAYATHS:

The state Government has formed 5,640 Grama Panchayats for which elections were held in December 1993. The average population for each Grama Panchayat is 5,300 as compared to about 10,000 in each case of mandal panchayats according to 1991 census.

TALUK PANCHAYATS:

For each Taluk a Taluk Panchayat has been constituted. It consists of elected members at the rate of one member for every 10,000 population or part there of. However, taluks having a population of not exceeding one lakh will have 11 elected members.
ZILLA PANCHAYATS:

There were 20 Zilla Panchayats in the state (Now it is 27 ZPs). Each zilla panchayat shall consist of elected members at the rate of one each member for every 40,000 population and part there of (1 member for 30,000 population in Chickmagalur and North Kannada districts and one member for 18,000 population in Kodagu district). The MLA and MPs representing part of that area and the MLCs and Rajya Sabha members who are electors in the district are ex-officio members. Besides all the adyakshas of Taluk Panchayat are also ex-officio members of Zilla Panchayats.

Under the act practically all the programmes of various departments - both plan and non-plan in the state have been entrusted to the PR bodies. The TPs have been rightly accorded primacy as the implementing agency for practically all schemes, which fall within the geographical boundaries of the taluk.

FUNCTIONS OF GRAMA PANCHAYATS:

The grama panchayats have to perform a large number of functions, which was listed in the 1993 act. The important ones are:-
1. Maintenance of drinking water schemes.

2. Providing street lights.

3. Rural sanitation.

4. House site distribution within gramathana limits.

5. Construction and maintenance of village roads, drains, and primary school buildings.

6. Adult education.

7. Afforestation.

8. Maintenance of Gomal or vacant land and other Government lands entrusted to it.

9. Village libraries and reading rooms.

10. Monitoring the public distribution system.

11. Construction and maintenance of cattle pounds, slaughterhouses, public parks, play ground etc.,
FUNCTIONS OF TALUK PANCHAYAT:
The important functions are listed below.

1. Maintenance of agriculture and horticulture farms and nurseries.

2. Training of farmers and extension activities.

3. Implementation of community and individual irrigation works.

4. Maintaining veterinary services and improvement of breed of cattle's, poultry and other livestocks.

5. Promotion of rural cottage industries.

FUNCTIONS OF ZILLA PANCHAYAT:
The functions of zilla panchayat normally included those programmes, which cater to the needs of more than one taluk and certain other major activities. The important functions are as follows:-

1. Establishment and maintenance of agriculture, horticulture and commercial farms.
2. Organising agricultural fairs and exhibitions, construction and renovation.

3. Maintenance of minor irrigation works.


5. Development of ground water resources.

6. Improvement of breed of cattle, poultry and other livestock's.


8. Establishment and management of training cum production centers and organising marketing facilities.


10. Construction and maintenance of district roads.
The 1993 PR act attracted criticism from various quarters. A considerable part of the criticism stemmed from what is perceived to be the over riding power given to bureaucracy over the elected bodies. It has been mentioned that the 1983 act, in this regard, was more progressive with greater autonomy to PRI s. This concept of the 1983 act was discussed in the state legislature and has also been the subject of suggestions by activists in the field of PR and democratic de-centralisation and the elected representatives of ZPs and TPs having regard to this criticism, the Government constituted an expert committee to review the Act (Karnataka act in 1993) under the chairmanship of Dr. K.S.Krishnaswamy in February 1995. Subsequently, Sri. P.R.Naik IAS (Retd.) was appointed as chairman of the committee. The committee took evidence from all persons who were active in the PR movement and representatives of the PRIs, NGOs, academics and administrators. The major recommendations of this committee inter-alia, are as under,

(a) When there is a default in the performance of duty by PRIs only the next higher PRI (or) Government in the case Zilla Panchayat should order performance of such duty.
(b) The Adhyakhs of the Zilla Panchyat should be declared, as the executive head. The position should be the same with regard to the Adhyaksha of the Taluk Panchayat. The chief executive officer/executive officer shall exercise his powers subject to the general powers of the adhyaksha.

(c) The district planning process should move away from the current methodology of dealing separately with each of the social development sectors such as health, education, social welfare, water and sanitation to a system of integrated area planning starting from the grama sabha. A beginning may be made in this direction in selected taluk panchayats and grama panchayats.

(d) Women members of the PRIs should be represented on all standing committees, as far as possible, at 1/3 of the total committee membership.

(e) A state panchayat council should be constituted under the act and should be chaired by the Chief Minister. Any alteration in the activities assigned to the three tiers, as also in the rules of business, should be discussed by the council. The council should address itself to policy issues and avoid individual complaints of omission or commission.
It was noted that the committee had drawn heavily on the provisions contained in the 1983 act, regarding the supremacy of the elected bodies while making several recommendations for rejuvenation and revitalisation of PR. In particular, they observed that the elected body should be supreme in order to reduce scope for bureaucratic interference, which can at times, be prompted by political considerations. It was their recommendation that in a three-tier structure, it is the higher body, which should really supervise the working of the lower body and take appropriate action in case there has been failure of omission in the discharge of the functions entrusted to the lower body. According to the committee, the role of the govt. officials within the PRIs should be facilitative and executive rather than authoritative. In order to put on a sound footing, the system working in the PRIs, the committee has rightly felt the need for framing rules of business by each institution. Another point, which has also been adequately treated by the committee, relates to organisational linkage between higher-level bodies and lower level bodies. The underlying principle is that the PRIs should be able to adopt a self-regulatory mechanism so that the authority goes well with accountability. Another important recommendation which has been made by the committee and which can cause political
ripples is the abolition of the area development boards, which have been constituted by the govt. The committee has rightly observed that there is no place for such boards when the PRIs in the district can take care of all the development works in the district as the principle development agency. The National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad, which conducted a case study of Mysore zilla panchayat, has observed that the Karnataka model is the best model. However, it may be stated that it is rather early to assess and evaluate the working and performance of the PRIs as they have functioned for over a decade.27

The introduction of panchayat raj system in various states represents a new beginning in the evolution of the local-self govt. institutions as agencies of nation building. Within the short life span of less than two decades, the panchayat raj institutions in Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat and West Bengal have given a fairly good account of themselves in various functional spheres – economic, social, political and administrative – and are well on their way to strengthening their positions in the countryside.
It is a decade since the new panchayat raj setup was ushered in and started in functioning at village level, taluk level, and Zilla levels in Karnataka. An important reason behind this new framework of decentralisation is to develop more effective, popular participation in local affairs, including activities of the Central Govt. that are carried out locally. Such participation not only enhance the dignity of the individual and the sense of community at all levels, but also adds vitality to governmental programmes and provides a means for local control over them. It makes the programmes more responsive and better adapted to local needs. Moreover, through participation, members of the community may be induced to do more on their own initiative and to make a fuller contribution to government programmes.
REFERENCE


4. Ibid.


11. Figures as on 31st March ‘1976 for details, see Panchayat Raj at a glance, statistics 1974-75 Govt. of India, Department of Rural Development, New Delhi, Dec.1976.

12. The Act of 1959 , Chapter II Sec. 3(3).

13. The Act of 1959 Chapter III elaborates functions of Panchayats, Obligatory functions are listed in Sec.42 and discretionary functions in Sec.43.

14. The Act of 1959 Sec.78(1).

15. The Act of 1959 Sec.73.

16. The Act of 1959, Chapter 8th Sec.130.

17. The Act of 1959 Chapter VIII Sec.131.


20. The Act of 1959 Chapter IX, Sec.164(1) a&b.


22. The Act of 1959, Chapter X Sec. 189.

23. The Act of 1959 Chapter IV Sec. 83(4).


25. M.G.Krishnan, Panchayat Raj in India, pp.45.


27. Ramanathan: Landmarks in Karnataka Administration pp 43-56.

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