CHAPTER TWO

PANCHAYATI RAJ STRUCTURE - AN OVERVIEW
After referring to the main focus of enquiry, objectives conceptualization of the recurring terms and methodology in our study, we now present its structural setting. The present district is now merely a self-sufficient administrative unit, but also a unit for development and planning\(^1\). More precise and detailed information about geographical, economic, socio-political, organisational and administrative conditions of the area are easily available at the district level. Similarly, planning for activities which have a strong local foci (like agriculture and community development) can be more fruitfully undertaken at the district level. All the technical and administrative officers are also available in the district. With the introduction of Panchayati Raj Administration, a substantial interaction between the bureaucrats and the elite has also developed in the districts, for the bureaucrats have started feeling that cooperation of political leaders is essential for

\(^1\) Actually speaking the system (District) has stood the test of time, and even though it was basically designed to meet the colonial needs of the British, it can continue to serve the needs of a welfare state. Please see Administrative Reforms Commission - Study Team on District Administration (Government of India, Delhi, 1966), p. 209
implementing the development schemes initiated by the government.

Whereas for the purpose of revenue and law and order administration, a district is further divided into small units called 'Tehsils', for development purposes, it is divided into self-sufficient micro-units called 'Blocks'. Block is the only unit of development administration where vertical threads of different departments are woven together. The heterogeneity of departmental functions is converted into a homogeneous package to be delivered to the masses at the grass-root level. The creation of Panchayat Samitis as a semi-autonomous body at the block level has further helped in the process of development. The local elite as community representatives and the bureaucrats at the block level work together for implementing plans and policies formulated at the higher levels, through the forum of these samitis. It is easier to analyse their interaction at the block level, because of their constant communication with each other and with the masses.

As such both the 'District' as well as the 'Block' serve as a critical link between the government and the people. High sounding plans and schemes may be laid down by the Government, but their sincere implementation is always judged at these levels.
THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Although the Mehta Committee proposed a three-tier system of Panchayati Raj, there is no uniformity regarding the organisational structure in all the states. The National Development Council at its meeting in January 1958, while approving the principle of giving developmental responsibility to people's representatives below the state level, also recommended the precise manner in which it was to be implemented. It was for the States to decide. Each state was to work out the structure which best suited its conditions best. The structural pattern of Panchayati Raj Administration in Punjab is governed by the Punjab Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad Act 1961, with modifications in the development administration from time to time in the context of Punjab's development commitments.

The formal structure that runs parallel from the highest level of state administration to grass-root levels can thus be classified into two separate parts, i.e. development administration and Panchayati Raj Organisation, the later being linked with the former at and below district level. A model of Development Administration and Panchayati Raj Organisation is given in Figures 1 and 2.

2 - The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee was appointed in 1957 to study and report on the workings of Community Development and National Extension Service. The two basic recommendations of this committee were: (i) there should be administrative decentralization for effective implementation of development programme and (ii) the decentralised administrative system should be under the control of elected bodies. Easminger Douglas; "Panchayati Raj and Decentralisation" The Indian Express - (Chandigarh, March 5, 1979)
FIGURE - 1

Model of development departments as they exist at present in Punjab.

CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE GOVT. PUNJAB

DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENTS

SECRETARY TO THE GOVT. AGRICULTURE, COOP. & PANCHAYAT DEV. COMMISSIONER

REGISTRAR CO-OP SOC.

DIRECTOR AGRICULTURE

DIRECTOR C.D. & PANCHAYATS

DEPUTY DIRECTOR C.D. & PANCHAYATS

ASSISTANT REGISTRAR CO-OP SOC.

DISTRICT CHIEF AGRICULTURE OFFICER

DISTT. DEV. & PANCHAYAT OFFICER

SUB. DIV. OFFICER (CIVIL)

BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

COOPERATIVE SUPERVISOR

AGRI. EXTN. OFFICER

GRAM SEVAKS & GRAM SEVIKAS.
As our study is limited only to district and block administration, it becomes necessary to give first a brief description of administrators at these levels, before we discuss the model of 'Panchayati Raj Organisation'.

THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

The Deputy Commissioner in Punjab continues to be the Chief Coordinator and Head of both the regulatory and development wings of the District administration. Unlike Maharashtra, Punjab has not opted for a dyarchial pattern of administration at the district level, in spite of the attempts, made from time to time, to streamline the structural formation of development administration in the State. The only step taken in this direction was the

3 - In Maharashtra, all the development departments work under the Zila Parishad. The chief executive officer of the Parishad is of the rank of Collector and has administrative control over the staff of the Parishad as well as over all the district level officers of the various departments. The District Collector is kept outside the Zila Parishad.

4 - The Rajinder Singh Committee (1964), the Punjab Administrative Reforms Commission (1966) and the Badal Committee (1969) recommended the separation of development administration from General Administration on Maharashtrian pattern. A Cabinet Sub-Committee in June 1977 also recommended the same. The final decision, however, once again was deferred by the Punjab Cabinet to bring about the required changes in the Panchayat Raj Organization, as based on earlier recommendations.

The Tribune (Chandigarh, May 9, 1978)
creation of a separate Directorate of Community Development and Panchayati Raj in August 1974. On the other hand, the role and functions of the Deputy Commissioner has constantly been increasing. In Intensive Agricultural District Programme (I.A.D.P.) Districts, he was given additional powers on the assumption that for quick and speedy action, fullest possible authority should be vested in the Officer on the spot. Similarly, under the programme for increased agricultural production, it was recommended that Collector should be the Chairman of the District Agricultural Production Committee and should also be responsible for the coordination of the activities of all the departments concerned with the agricultural production. The result is, that with the introduction of any new development scheme in the district, not only his position as the Chief Coordinator is not disturbed, but he is also provided with additional powers and functions.

The Deputy Commissioner in Punjab has no direct control over the Zila Parishad, where he acts only in the capacity of an ex-officio member of the Parishad\(^5\). However, as an

\(^5\) - The Deputy Commissioner in Punjab along with that of Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Orissa and Rajasthan is only an ex-officio member of the Zila Parishad - but without a right to vote. On the other hand, in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, he is the Chairman of District Development Council. In Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra & West Bengal, he is outside the Zila Parishad.
agent of the State Government, he exercises effective supervision over the Zila Parishad. The Deputy Commissioner also initiates the annual confidential reports of the District and Block Development Officers. He also distributes work among them along with other officers of the district.

DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT AND PANCHAYAT OFFICER

As the District Development and Panchayat Officer the incumbent in Punjab is not senior or equivalent to the Deputy Commissioner (like Maharashtra), nor does he head a separate wing of development administration in the district. Similarly, he is not even an IAS Officer (as in Gujarat) manning the post. The District Development and Panchayat Officer in Punjab is a State D & P.S. (Development and Panchayat Service) Officer, working directly under the Deputy Commissioner of the district. He is expected to perform all such duties as assigned to

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6 - The Deputy Commissioner exercises effective supervision over Zila Parishad in case the Zila Parishad is superseded by the Government. Then, he acts as an Administrator of the Zila Parishad. The Deputy Commissioner can also ask for any document, statement, accounts, reports etc. as he thinks fit. He can also inspect the Zila Parishad.
him by the Deputy Commissioner. With the creation of a separate Directorate of Community Development and Panchayti Raj in 1974, the District Development and Panchayat Officer has also become the district representative of the development department. He receives from and communicates to his department through circulars and reports all the development activities of his district. Thus the District Development and Panchayat Officer in Punjab is mainly concerned with the implementation of plans and policies sponsored by the government, through the Development Department. He works under the joint supervision of the Deputy Commissioner and the State Development Department.

SECRETARY ZILA PARISHAD

The Zila Parishad, being a parallel democratic organ at the district level, requires the services of an expert

7 - Extra functions given to DDPO by the Deputy Commissioner, in Punjab include - low-housing scheme, loans for low-income group and middle-income group applicants, allotment of plots to landless, small savings, local bodies including Marketing Committees and Municipal Committees and Rural Integration Development Programme. Though the overall Incharge is the Additional Deputy Commissioner, yet the work is done through DDPO. For this purpose, he is provided with additional staff from the district quota - (Source: District Development and Panchayat Office, Ludhiana)
to guide and help it in the implementation of various development projects. The State Government, therefore, loans to Zila Parishad, the services of a senior officer of the development department. The designation of the Officer is Secretary, Zila Parishad. The position and status of Secretary, Zila Parishad is different in various states. In Maharashtra, he is of the rank of a District Collector, and is the head of the development wing of the district administration. In some other States, he is equivalent to the rank of Additional District Collector. In Punjab, however, his post is equivalent to that of District Development and Panchayat Officer. The post of Secretary Zila Parishad and District Development and Panchayat Officer is therefore interchangeable because the Secretary Zila Parishad is also a government employee, loaned to the Zila Parishad.

The main functions of the Secretary, Zila Parishad are to assist and guide the Chairman and other members of the Zila Parishad. He comes under the administrative jurisdiction of the Deputy Commissioner only when the Zila Parishad as a body is superseded and the Deputy Commissioner acts as the Administrator, Zila Parishad. It is indeed a paradoxical situation with District
Development and Panchayat Officer appearing to be over burdened with work, while Secretary Zila Parishad is not. Perhaps it is due to the ineffective powers and role of the Zila Parishad in the development process of the district.

SUB DIVISIONAL OFFICER (CIVIL)

The position of the Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil) in relation to Panchayat Samiti is similar to that of the Deputy Commissioner in relation to Zila Parishad. He is also an ex-officio member of the Panchayat Samiti, and is expected to act as a guide and advisor of the Samiti. Concerning developmental activities he acts as an spokesman of the Deputy Commissioner. The general feeling among the Sub-Divisional Officers is that they have no effective role to play, particularly in these bodies, and in the development process in general.8

BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

The staffing pattern in the Blocks which existed

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8 - Recently, the Punjab Government has withdrawn from the Chairman, Panchayat Samitis, the powers of writing the Annual Confidential Reports of the Block Development Officers, and also sanctioning their leave etc. These powers have since been transferred to the Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil) vide Punjab Government Memo No.7285-IACL-78/6362 dated 17.5.1978. This has made S.D.O's more effective in development administration.
under the Community Development Programme was taken over intact under the Panchayati Raj Administration. With the introduction of I.A.D.P. (Intensive Agricultural District Programme) in some districts, only some additional staff like that of Agricultural Extension Officer, Cooperative Supervisor and Village Level Workers in the concerned Districts was introduced. A change was, however, brought in the position of the Block Development Officer. Previously, he occupied a pivotal position in the Block hierarchy as the Leader of the team of extension officers and was mainly responsible for formulating programmes and achieving targets. Under the new system, he and his staff are mainly responsible for implementing the decisions and resolutions of the Panchayat Samitis. The Block Development Officer at present has to perform a multi-functional job. As the Head of his office, he serves as a link between the Panchayat Samiti and the various government departments. He communicates to the Government various returns and reports about the activities of the samitis. He also hands on to the Samitis the information and instructions received from the government. He prepares an annual budget for the consideration of the Panchayat Samiti and
sends a copy of it to the Zila Parishad and the State Government. He inspects the financial position of the Panchayats with regard to the levy of taxes and their recovery, realisation of loans and maintenance of regular accounts.

As the leader of the administrative team, the Block Development Officer has the responsibility of implementing various development programmes of the Samiti. He also coordinates the activities of his technical staff and the concerned departments. He convenes regular meetings of his staff to assess the progress of various schemes and programmes, to understand the difficulties in implementing them, and to acquaint them with the instructions received from various departments. He supervises confidential reports of his Extension Officers and forwards them to the respective district level officers.

Vide Article 21 of Punjab Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad Act of 1961, the Block Development Officer has also been made the Executive Officer of the Panchayat Samiti and placed under the administrative control of the Chairman, Panchayat Samiti. As the Executive Officer of the Panchayat Samiti, the Block Development Officer is
responsible for issuing notices of the meetings of Panchayat Samitis or its Standing Committees. He attends the meetings and records and circulates the proceedings of the Standing Committees. He also attends the meetings of the Samiti though he has no voting right. However, he can advise the Samiti about the legality and consequences of their decisions.

Besides, the Block Development Officer has also to perform such duties as are assigned to him by the government in general and the Deputy Commissioner in particular, from time to time.

9 - Recently, Punjab Government issued instructions that BDO's must devote their entire time for doubling agricultural production of the state. Since the BDO also continues to be the Head of the Office and also the Executive Officer of the Panchayat Samiti, a major portion of his time is devoted to non-agricultural work. A study in this context has shown that out of 365 days in a year, he has generally to devote 308 days on non-agricultural work, the rest - 57 days on agriculture. Study conducted by India International Centre New Delhi, on the work load of Block Development and Panchayat Officer in Punjab state - in action for rural change - readings in Indian Community Development (Edited - Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, New Delhi, 1970), p.242-248
The post of the Block Development Officer in Punjab is a gazetted post in the grade of Rs.350-850. Initially, persons from other departments were recruited to this post. At present there is a separate cadre for these officers, and the B.D.O. is now treated as an officer of Development Department.

THE PANCHAYATI RAJ STRUCTURE

Based upon the recommendations of Mehta Committee, the Panchayati Raj Organisation in Punjab is structured on a three tier system, with Panchayats at the base, Panchayat Samitis in the middle and the Zila Parishad at its apex. While Panchayats are regulated by the Gram Panchayats Act of 1952 (as amended upto December 1953) the Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishad's functions are regulated under the Punjab Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad Act of 1961 (as amended upto December, 1973). A model of Panchayati Raj Organisation is given in Figure 2.
Figure-2

Model of Panchayati Raj Organisation as they exist at present in Punjab.

Zila Parishad

Elected Wing

Chairman
Zila Parishad

V.C.
Members

Secretary
Zila Parishad

Panchayat Samiti

Chairman
Panchayats

V.C.
Members

Block
Dev. Officer
[B.D.O.]

Panchayats

Sarpanches
Panches

Sarpanches assisted
by Panchayat Secretary
In the present study the Panchayats are not the subject of our discussion, for the scope of this study is limited only to the formation and functioning of Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads only.

PANCHAYAT SAMITIS

The central idea of creating Panchayat Samitis was that as a democratic institution at the grass-root level, it should take charge of all aspects of 'development' and 'planning' in its area. It was suggested that Samiti should be made a unit for block development and planning.

The members of the Samiti (who have been termed as the elite for the present study) have already been discussed earlier. They include elected, coopted, ex-officio and associated members. The elected members of the Panchayat Samiti are indirectly elected through an electoral college, consisting of the members of various Panchayats of the area. The provision for coopted members belonging to scheduled castes and women members is common to all the states.¹⁰

¹⁰ - Special interests like co-op societies and marketing committees as coopted members of Panchayat samiti, have now been withdrawn by the Punjab Government.
The term of the Samiti is for three years. The Samiti elects its own Chairman and Vice-chairman. They are elected by the elected and coopted members of the Samiti. The Samiti also elects its own standing committees. The tenure of these committees including the chairman of the committees is also three years.

The Panchayat Samiti and its Standing Committees are the formal decision-making bodies. The Chairman sees that the decisions are implemented.

The functions of the Samiti, apart from being the agent of Community Development Programme and an instrument of Planning and Social Welfare, also include certain supervisory and delegatory functions. For example, the samiti has to supervise and guide the work of the Panchayats and ensure that the Panchayats execute the programmes properly. The Samiti has also to supervise the work of its staff and to ensure that the resolution and decisions of the Samiti are duly implemented. The delegated functions include all those functions which are assigned to it by the State Government, where the Samiti works in the capacity of a local agent of the State Government.
ZILA PARISHADS

The Zila Parishad is at the apex of the three-tier system of the Panchayati Raj Organisation. It is a primarily coordinating body, advising and supervising the activities of the Panchayats and Panchayat Samitis. The powers and functions of the members of the Zila Parishad (the elite in the present context) have already been discussed. The Parishad elects its own Chairman and Vice-Chairman, who are not necessarily the members of the Zila Parishad. The functions of the Zila Parishad are not uniform in all the States. In states like Rajasthan and Punjab, it functions as an advisory and supervisory body. In Punjab, it also supervises certain additional construction work for which it receives funds from the Marketing Committees and the State Government. On the other hand, in States like Maharashtra, Zila Parishads are also vested with executive power, and the Samitis act as only the regional committees of the Parishad. The Parishad is also treated as the basic unit of planning, development and
administration.

The success of Maharashtra pattern, however, prompted many other states to adopt a similar pattern. In Rajasthan, Sadiq Ali Report observed, that "a significant change is necessary in the functions and powers of the Zila Parishads in order to activise and vitalise them" and suggested that they should be allotted certain original executive functions. In Punjab, as far back as 1962, the then Financial Commissioner (Revenue), Shri A.L. Flectcher strongly advocated the strengthening of Zila Parishads on the Maharashtra pattern. The Rajinder Singh Committee (1964).

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11 - While Balwant Rai Mehta Committee discarded the district as the proper unit of decentralisation, the V.P. Naik Committee in Maharashtra suggested that a vast majority of schemes and functions of local nature can be performed effectively only at the district level. Report of Committee on Democratic Decentralisation, Cooperation and Rural Development (Govt. of Maharashtra, Bombay Chairman V. Naik - known as Naik Report)

the Punjab Administrative Commission Report (1966) and the Badal Committee Report (1969) also recommended the same pattern. Soon after Assembly elections in 1977, a cabinet sub-committee too recommended the abolition of Panchayat Samitis and the strengthening of the Zila Parishads. A final decision in Punjab has yet to be taken.

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13 - We are, therefore, of the opinion that a Zila Parishad on Maharashtra pattern suitably constituted and invested with adequate powers and personnels and provided with necessary funds will have all the advantages of an autonomous executive body without its disadvantages.

14 - *The Tribune* (Chandigarh, May 9, 1978)