CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

India is a country with a billion people, seventy percent of people live in rural India. Among them, most of the people are very poor, who lead their life without land. India is also the biggest democratic country in the world, which means that representatives are elected to Parliament and the State Legislatures by large number of people. This leads to a highly centralised and non-accountable system of governance. The only way to change this scenario is to strengthen the Panchayati Raj institutions working at the level of the village (the smallest unit of development), the taluk (intermediate level) and the district. These are the decentralised bodies that are intended directly to the people who live approximately at 500,000 villages of India. The Panchayati Raj institutions are meant to promote grass root democracy and development. They are meant to initiate a process of ‘development from below’ and replace the highly centralised method of ‘development from above’.

Panchayaties have been the backbone of the Indian villages since the beginning of recorded history. India has a sequenced history of Panchayati Raj starting from a self-sufficient and self-governing village
communities that survived by the rise and fall of empires in the past to the modern legalized institutions of governance at the third tier provided with Constitutional support. The Panchayati Raj is a South Asian political system situated mainly in India, Pakistan and Nepal. ‘Panchayati’ literally means Assembly (yat) of Five (panch) wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the village community. Traditionally, they settled disputes which take place between individuals and villages. Modern Indian government has decentralised several administrative functions the village level, for empowering elected gram panchayaties. Gram panchayaties are not to be confused with the unelected khap panchayaties (or caste panchayaties) found in some parts of India.

The philosophy of Panchayati Raj is deeply rooted into tradition and culture of rural India and is not a new concept. Panchayati Raj provided a system of self governance at the village level, however, it did not have a constitutional status. The prime objectives of the three tier Panchayati Raj System are to curb poverty, uplift standard of living of people in the rural areas, and enhance a healthy and wealthy society by creating awareness among them about hygiene, sanitation and eradication of illiteracy.²
In the Ancient City States of Greece, the people directly used to participate in the governance of their territory. In modern nation-states such participation is obviously impossible and representatives directly elected by the people and they undertake the responsibilities of government. India from times immemorial had a genius for finding via media solutions to every problem. Thus ancient India combined the principle of direct democracy with the authority of the king and fostered Panchayaties in each village to look after their affairs.

The Panchayati system of governance, wherein, a small village was an independent political entity and acted as an administrative unit, is unique to India. The word ‘Panchayati’ means governing by five persons. It is found that reference in the ancient scriptures, taking us back to Vedic times, and continued for centuries to govern, guide and direct the daily lives of the people. Panchayaties had judicial and magisterial powers too and made villages autonomous with full authority with their jurisdiction. The Panchayati is the best suitable to the Indian social customs in as much as Indian society believed in devolution of powers, decentralisation of the authority and upliftment of the self, family, community, village and so on. India is perhaps the only country in the world today, which can
boast of a continuity of its pride history, culture, religion and society for spanning thousands of years.

Every village consists of members of communities which is regulated by the Village Panchayati. All problems of a community are discussed in the Panchayati and the decision of the Panch is consider as final. Panchayati members are the representatives of the public whose main aim is to evolve a system of democratic decentralization and people’s participation with a view to ensure rapid, speedy socio-economic progress and provide adequate justice.

The creation of the Panchayati Raj with the object of entrusting the authority and responsibility for development was hailed not only as an innovation but also as a revolution.

Panchayaties in India are an ancient heritage. Generally, the Panchayati is used to be the arbitrator in intra-village and, sometimes, inter-village level feuds. Panchayati is also used to be the main organisational forum for the village-level cultural functions. For a long time, Metcalfe's classical phrase 'village communities are little republics' used to enlighten as well as reflect the spirit of scholars and political leaders who laid stress on the autonomous and self-regulating character of
the little communities. Even Karl Marx, with his economic approach, would treat the little communities as 'units of production', and showed surprise at the resilience and self-dependent character of the village communities in India.

Panchayati Raj has moulded the people to acquire political awareness. It has brought tremendous changes in the rural life and society. Panchayati Raj Institutions provide inducements to the people to involve in socio-economic, developmental and welfare projects of the rural areas.

The introduction of Panchayati Raj in the rural areas of India is an epoch-making event for upliftment of them in the fast moving, momentous and revolutionary period after Independence. Now-a-days it is generally viewed that the Panchayati Raj is a panacea for all rural ills. If the policy of the government in giving impetus to the Panchayati Raj movement is implemented faithfully and scrupulously, it will surely bring about the political, social and economic revolution which will not only enhance the democratic character of our society but will also provide a perennial source for throwing up energetic, honest and competent leaders with potentialities to change the entire scenario of the country and to guide the fates of the people most efficiently and effectively.⁴
Introduction of the Panchayati Raj was hailed as one of the most important political innovations in independent India. It was also opined as a revolutionary step. It is a system of local self government where in the people takes responsibility themselves for development. It is also a system of institutional arrangement for achieving rural development through people's initiative and participation.

Although, the concept of Panchayati Raj is a state’s subject but, basically each state is free to evolve its own system depending upon local needs, circumstances, administrative conveniences and experiences. As a result, of this we have a variety of Panchayati Raj institutions with all kinds of combinations and permutations. In fact, their success or failure depends upon their structure, powers, functions leadership, financial status and state’s control. In a big country like India, changes in different aspects of these bodies have been taking place as per the changing circumstances. Although the whole activities of Panchayati Raj institutions are broad or wider based but their resource base is very inadequate. As things stand today, the economy of local government is very weak which indicates that Panchayati Raj Institutions have very limited scope to impose taxes in their jurisdiction.
Mahatma Gandhi's Opinions On Panchayati Raj

Gandhiji believed that democratic freedom has to be founded in institutions of self government at every village in India. He drew his inspiration from the traditional Panchayaties; 'village republics', which he called Panchayati Raj. He based his vision of contemporary democracy in independent India on genuine peoples’ participation in the development and welfare of their own habitats through elected Panchayaties.

The genesis of the system of Panchayati Raj can be traced back to the vision of Mahatma Gandhi, who advocated the revival of the traditional Panchayaties so that Gram Swaraj, which had been an integral part of the social system of India, could become a reality. The Panchayati was for him a tool which would enhance people's participation in the governance of the country. The Gandhian ideology had a spontaneous appeal to the rural people, who faced the problems of hunger, disease and poverty. Reordering of a composite traditional rural social system through a community based Panchayati approach thus became an objective of local governance in independent India. Mahatma Gandhi advocated that Panchayati Raj, should be a decentralized form of Government where in each village is responsible for its own affairs, as the foundation of India's
political system. He termed it as "Gram Swaraj" (Village Self-governance).

According to Mahatma Gandhi, “Indian Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, each village will be a republic or Panchayati having full of powers. It follows, therefore, that each village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to decay in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual which is the unit. This does not deny willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and woman knows what he or she desires and, what is more, he/she knows that no one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labour. This society must naturally be based on truth and non-violence which, in my opinion, are not possible without having belief in God, meaning a self-existent, All-knowing having force which inherits every other force known to the world and which depends on none and which will live when all other forces may conceivably perish or cease to act. I am unable to account for my life without belief in this all-embracing living light.” 6
Approaches to Panchayati Raj

There are two approaches to the study and formulation of the concept of Panchayati Raj—normative or empirical. The normative theorist would like to formulate an ideal conceptual model according to his own approach and aspirations. The empiricist, on the contrary, would be interested in studying the concept in operation, in recognizing the gap existed between the ideal and the real, in denoting the operational trends that appear to influence or modify the concept in practice or even to push back new conceptual horizons and finally, in reflecting an empiricist's view of the emerging concept of Panchayati Raj.

A stage may, thus, be reached when the empiricist may come to emphasize for an altogether new conceptual model, or at any rate, to make a serious plea for re-orienting the ideal construction in view of emerging operational trends.

It is a system of governance in which gram panchayaties are the basic units of administration. It has three levels: village, block and district. At the village level, it is called a Panchayati. It is a local body. Institute which works for the welfare of the village. The number of members usually ranges from 7 to 31; occasionally, groups are larger, but
they never have fewer than 7 members. The block-level institutions are called the Panchayati Samities. The district-level institution is called the Zilla Parishad.

**Aims of Panchayati Raj**

1. The local body institutions being nearer to the spot where schemes are to be carried out and they will be able to properly supervise for the execution of the local schemes and programmes.

2. The local and elective representative institutions will be able to stimulate the people for undertaking development schemes because they will be in a better position to select and operate schemes which fulfill the needs of the people.

3. The local institution, made up of popular local leaders will be in a position to enhance greater people’s participation for the planning and implementation of schemes there by mobilizing additional resources for development purposes.

4. The local institutions can provide the necessary assistance and guidance to the state in the creation of Five Year Plans and render all possible assistance to the government officials in the implementation of various projects and schemes.
5. The primary goal of Panchayati Raj is to enable the people of each area to achieve tremendous and continuous development in the interest of the entire population. The elected representatives should be encouraged to value the people rather than opportunities for the exercise of authority. The concept of Panchayati Raj is not confined to the non-official and democratic organization associated with it, and it represents, a distinct level of responsibility and functions within the general scheme of administration of Panchayati Raj consisting of both the democratic institutions and the extension services through which development programmes are carried out.

6. As a vital part in the building up of the proper relations between the individual and his community through introduction of self-management of problems of his community, a sense of participation in the society and the political education of the villager in the citizenship of the country, and

7. As a method of establishing local self-governing agencies for government for, the sake of utilizing and expanding the machinery of public administration for the purpose of enormously expanding tasks of a welfare government in working out a planned economy.
Constitutional Basis for Panchayati Raj

The Article 40 of the Indian Constitution declares that the state shall take steps to organize Village Panchayaties and provide them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to make them as units of self-government. The 73rd Amendment fulfils an imperative need to provide certain basic and essential characteristics of the Panchayati Raj bodies in constitution to give certainty, continuity and strength to them.

Duties/Responsibilities of Panchayaties

According to Mahatma Gandhi it is the function of the Panchayati Raj "to revive honesty and industry.... It is the function of the Panchayaties to teach the villagers to get rid of disputes, if they have to settle them. This will ensure speedy justice without any delay and expenditure. Neither police nor military are not required (or) needed for getting justice. The panchayaties should work hard to improve the quality and quantity of cattle. They should show steady increase in the mild yield and they should also strive hard to increase in the quantity of food stuff grown in their villages. This is to be accomplished by properly nurturing the soil with qualitative fertilizers. You have your own indigenous games. You should banish intoxicating drinks and drugs from your midst. I hope you will eradicate untouchability if it is still existed in your village. The
Hindus, the Muslims, the Sikhs, the Parsees and the Christians should all live as brothers and sisters. If you achieve all I have mentioned, you can visualize real independence, and people from all over India will come to see your model & ideal village and take inspiration from it.9

**Basic Services or Needs**

Panchayaties at village levels are expected to perform certain obligatory functions to furnish basic services to all the people living in the area. Being constitutional bodies, they represent the model of community’s participation and social empowerment. Some things are included basic services.

1. Primary education
2. Primary health
3. Safe Drinking water
4. Sanitation and street lighting
5. Environment protection
6. Common property resources (CPR) management

Gandhiji’s dream has been come to true with the introduction of the three-tier Panchayati Raj system to enlist people’s participation in rural reconstruction. While inaugurating Panchayati Raj at Nagour, Rajasthan on October 2, 1959, Nehru said with unquestionable
enthusiasm, "we are going to lay the foundation of democracy for Panchayati Raj in India.". The focus was still on community projects and National Extension Service and he thought that the reason for slow progress was dependence on official machinery, that situation would be remedied, by implementing Panchayati Raj. At a Seminar in Jaipur in December 1964, Balwanth Roy Mehta clearly stated that community development is the object, the purpose, and Panchayati Raj is the instrument for implementing that programmes.

The draft of Fifth Plan stated "The basic concept behind establishing Panchayati Raj was to create rural local self government agencies reasonably for discharging certain selected functions regarding development. Panchayati Raj is the instrument for community’s development, the apparatus of rural local self government is a means of reorganising district’s administration not adequately people oriented in its traditional form and an agent of state government for certain purposes. After the death of Jawaharlal Nehru both national and international problems, and understandable anxiety appeared on the development front; they served to weaken this faith and Panchayati Raj came under attack. During that time Hanson clearly stated, "if Panchayati Raj acted effectively, within a reasonably short span of time, as a developing
institution, its introduction had to be accompanied by revolutionary changes in the social and economic structure of the village. However, a little later, Panchayati Raj was emerged as the most important political invention of independent India, because through it, the masses of Indian people began, for the first time in their history, to experience the real fruits of democracy, in however, contradictory of distorted form

Main issues pertaining to Panchayati Raj Institutions

Started with great hope and enthusiasm some of the major problems and short comings that appeared in the working Panchayati Raj institutions can be identified as;

- Lack of adequate transfer of powers and resources to Panchayati Raj institutions.
- Lack of Panchayati Raj bodies to create their own resources such as tax on sale of land., and
- Non-Representation of woman and weaker sections in the elected bodies.
The present scenario of Panchayati Raj

Today, more than 26 lakh representatives are elected to the three levels of Panchayaties. Among them, over 10 lakh representatives are women, 5.2 lakh belong to the Scheduled Castes and 3.3 lakh to the Scheduled Tribes. For the last 15 years, institutions of Panchayati Raj have succeeded in empowering marginalized groups who were benefited by political representation and valuable experience. Many of them have successfully taken the challenge of governance and brought about enduring social change through their close links with the community.

Statement of the Problem

Three-fourths of our Indian people live in rural areas. The nation can, be strong and prosperous only when all villages are freed from backwardness and poverty. The empowerment of Panchayati Raj Institutions is essential for the economic and social development of villages. With the establishment of a three-tier Panchayati Raj system at the district, intermediate and village levels, the stage has been set for significant changes for the better condition in the rural areas. The study entitled, “Organisation and Working of Panchayati Raj System in Andhra Pradesh: with Special Reference to Mudigubba Mandal of Anantapur District” is an attempt to study and analyse the role
Mudigubba Mandal in the empowerment of various sections of the society and its role in the development of rural masses.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the present study are:

1. To trace out the origin and evolution of Panchayati Raj Institutions in India;
2. To examine the organization, structure and functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Andhra Pradesh;
3. To analyse the personnel, financial aspects and working of the Mudigubba Mandal of Anantapur district;
4. To study the important developmental activities taken up by the Mudigubba Mandal; and
5. To point out the deficiencies, if any and to offer suggestions for the improvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Andhra Pradesh.

Methodology

The study is basically descriptive and empirical in nature. Therefore, the data for the study were collected both from the primary and secondary sources. The primary data has been collected from the Government Orders (G.O.s), published reports, action plans, official documents etc. Data was also collected from various offices like District
Panchayati Office, Zilla Parishad, Mandal Office and Research Institutions.

The secondary data has been gathered from the published books, journals, periodicals, unpublished theses, official documents, brochures and official records. The secondary source material has also collected from libraries of University of Hyderabad, Osmania University, Hyderabad, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupathi, Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Anantapur and National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Hyderabad. The material collected has been duly processed analysed and used purposefully.

Plan of the Study

The present study is divided into Five chapters.

Chapter – I  INTRODUCTION
The chapter deals with the concept of Panchayati Raj in India, specific aims and objective of the study and the methodology adopted are discussed.

Chapter – II  HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PANCHAYATI RAJ IN INDIA
The chapter deals with the historical background of local self-government in India
Chapter – III EVOLUTION AND WORKING OF PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM IN ANDHRA PRADESH

This chapter presents the origin and growth of Panchayati Raj Administration as a whole.

Chapter – IV FUNCTIONING OF PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM IN ANANTAPUR DISTRICT-WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MUDIGUBBA MANDAL

It deals with the functioning of Mudigubba Mandal and its role in rural development.

Chapter – V SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It summarizes the study and makes some concluding remarks on the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions.
REFERENCES


