



Original Article

Panchayati Raj Institutions: Evolution and Development in India

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Panchayat Raj Institutions in India are made gross tic changes in the local administration, it's achieved decentralization of power and played a very important role in empowerment of villages. Evolution of Panchayats in India having a very long history, it was start from Vedas age in between it get support from the rulers of medieval period and finally had structural growth in British rule. The 73rd constitutional amendment act 1992 provides constitutional recognition to PRI's for its development. In present scenario PRI's have been functioning for the overall growth and development of the villages and local public.

Keywords : Panchayati Raj, Democratic Decentralization, Gram Swaraj, Local self Govt.

Introduction :

Panchayati Raj is a political system which is popular and found in countries like India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Srilanka and Pakistan in South Asian region. The literally meaning of Panchayati is "An assembly of five respected elders of the village" and Raj means "rule". These Panchayats were responsible for to solve the disputes between individuals and the villages. The each Panchyati headed by one leader, he is called as Sarpanch or Pradhan and it is assembled routine basis in a specified place either under a tree or any other construction. The main duties of Panchayati were to discuss the matters related to administration, Judicial and public. Presently, PRI's in India have a constitutional status with the specified duties and the responsibilities in 11th schedule.

The Evolution and Development of the PRI's in India:

The evolution and development of PRI's has been study in two phases, they are divided as pre-independence and post independence phases.

Pre independence phase :

The evolution of PRI's found in the age of Veda's especially in Rigveda, is a reference about local governing body called as "Sabha". This body consists of few members who having a knowledge and experience in administration. The administrative decisions were taken after intellectual decisions and interactions.

In the medieval period the rulers especially in the Mughal's dynasty we seen structural growth of Local Government and encouragement to the self governance at village level. The local government was responsible for to collect taxes and policing duties, this was the reason for rulers to support the local administration and they appointed various posts in village level to monitor and for the overall development of the villages.

Later in British rule local self government took support for trade and taxation but not much concentration on their problems and development. In 1687 at Madras first Municipal Corporation was established by British to manage administration of the Madras town. After in different periods the local self government grown and developed in India they are as follows :

- 1688-1880 : Local self government highly used by British's for financial and their imperial needs.



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- 1881-1920 : Given opportunity for local public to participate in local government administration. Lord Ripon was known the essentiality and need of local governance in administration and he supported to it. He is called as “Father of local self government in India”. In 1907 British government set up Royal Commission on Decentralization and it is also played a major role in growth of local self government in India.
- 1921-1935 : The jurisdiction and other rules were framed to the villages which comes under local self governments. The 1935 Government of India act also clearly mention distribution of authority and other issues of local self governments.
- 1936-1946 : The power and authority was given to the state government to create, establish and control the local self governments.

Post independence period :

- After independence and adaptation of the Constitution of India PRI's kept under state list. The Directive principles of state policy clearly clarify under Art-40 the development of PRI's is the main responsibility of the state government.
- Later on various state governments set up committees for the reform and define the duties and responsibilities of the PRI's.

The Government of India set up a various committees related to local self governments, they are as follows :

1. **National Development Council 1956 :** It was set up in the year 1956 by central government under the leadership of Balwant Roy Mehta to encourage and support “Democratic Decentralization” and indirectly to increase the active participation in local politics and administration of the public. The committee recommended three tiers to local self government as Gram Panchayat at village level, Panchayati Samithi at block level and Zila Parishad at district level and the direct elections for Gram Panchayats and indirect election for both Panchayati Samithi and Zila Parishad. The state of Rajasthan adopted these committee recommendations.
2. **Ashok Mehta Committee 1977-78 :** This committee was set up to study the local self government in the year 1977 by central government and it was recommended two tiers system, participation of political parties, creation of a separate Panchayat Raj ministry and lastly the constitution recognition to local self governments.
3. **GVK Rao Committee 1985 :** It was recommended regular elections for local self governments and given more importance to Zila Parishad.
4. **Singhvi Committee 1986 :** This committee focused on overall growth and development of local self governments and restated constitutional recognition for local self governments.

73rd Constitutional amendment act 1992 : This act provided constitutional status and recognition to local self governments and renamed as Panchayati Raj Institutions under the part IX which titled as “THE PANCHAYATS” and 11th Schedule under the Article 243G of the Constitution of India.

The 73rd Constitutional amendment act says Panchayat is an institution of self government constituted under article 243B, for the rural areas and it is a responsibility of every state to constitute Panchayats as per the accordance and provisions of the constitution. The duties and responsibilities (29) of the Panchayats are mentioned in 11th Schedule under the Article 243G of the Constitution of India. The important duties are as follows :

- Agriculture, land improvement, minor irrigation, water management, animal husbandry and fisheries.
- Social forestry, minor forest produce, small scale industries, Khadi and cottage industries.
- Rural housing, drinking water, fuel and fodder.
- Roads, bridges, waterways, rural electrification and non conventional energy sources.
- Poverty alleviation, education, technical training, libraries, health and sanitation.
- Family welfare, women and child development, social welfare, cultural activities, welfare of SC and ST's.
- Public distribution system, markets and fairs and maintenance of community assets.

The Conclusion :

By the above observations it can be concluded that the democratic decentralization has been achieved through Panchayat Raj Institutions at gross root level. The role and responsibility of the PRI's and active participation of public are increasing day by day but it's also creating lot of challenges to the local administration because of high politicization, castism. Panchayat Raj is the dream of Mahatma Gandhiji, Father of our nation, had a faith on Gram Swaraj and self survival of the village. The 73rd amendment act 1992 fulfilled the dream of Gandhiji but to avert the challenges and major problems the government may have concentrate more on development of the PRI's.

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