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BRIEF HISTORY OF SOLAPUR ZILLA PARISHAD
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CHAPTER - III

BRIEF HISTORY OF SOLAPUR ZILLA PARISHAD AND PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM IN INDIA

3.1 Introduction.

The Panchayati Raj organization, as now commonly understood, came into existence after the acceptance of the recommendations of the Study Team of C.D.P. headed by Balwantrai Mehta in India. The aim of the Panchayati Raj was to bring rural people under the influence of the process of rural developmental activity.

Under the British Rule, some scanty efforts were made to establish Panchayati Raj system in India, but these could not make much headway in the field of rural development because most of the members on various sub-district and district boards were nominated. So it is very important to take an account of Panchayati Raj system in India, because now-a-days, it has become an important mode of public expenditure to develop the rural economy of India.

3.2 Panchayati Raj System in India.

Panchayati Raj system in India has been established in three-tiers; with the institutions, namely Gram Panchayat at the village level, Panchayat Samiti at Tahsil level and Zilla Parishad at district level.

These institutions have been assigned the important role of leadership of regional economic development. The system is working with three-tiers. Gram Panchayat at the bottom of the Panchayati Raj is constituted with Panchayat committee members known as Gram Sabha, the representatives of which are elected on the basis of adult franchise at village.

At the block or Tahsil level, or at the second-tier of the Panchayati Raj in India, there are Panchayat Samitis. A Panchayat Samiti constitutes of a Sabhapati and members of the Samiti. A Panchayat Samiti has been assigned the responsibility to execute the development plans of Zilla Parishad at Taluka level.

At the top, or at the apex-tier of Panchayat Raj, there are Zilla Parishads. Zilla Parishads are the important link between the State and the actual rural community via Panchayat Samitis. So, Zilla Parishads are very important institutions at the apex of Panchayat Raj system in India.

The term 'democratic decentralization' suggested by Mehta Study Team was given up and the term 'Panchayati Raj' was given to these institutions.

3.3 History and Development of Panchayati Raj in India.

The Panchayati Raj organization, as now commonly understood, came into existence all over India after the submission of the report of the Study Team to evaluate the Community Development Programme and National Extension Service headed by Balwantrai Mehta.

On 9th December, 1955, the Parliament passed a Resolution to appoint a committee to examine the performance of the Community Development Programme. The Study Team submitted its report in January, 1957. The Study Team brought to the notice the following conditions:

- i. The Community Development Programme operated by the Government officers at block level did not receive public response sufficiently;
- ii. Huge wastage of expenditure was taking place while implementing these programmes; people did not regard the Community Development work as their own;
- iii. With these conclusions in mind, the committee suggested the following recommendations:

1. The entire work of community development and rural development should be given in the hands of the elected representatives at all the three levels, i.e. at village level, at Taluka/block level, and at the district level;
2. There should be the creation of statutory bodies at village, Taluka and district levels, namely the village Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad;
3. The body should be given the sole authority of all the developmental programmes which are of exclusive interest to the area.

In short, the Study Team proposed the scheme of Democratic Decentralization in the field of the rural developmental work.

The recommendations made by the Study Team forced the States to study the establishment of Panchayati Raj organizations. Rajasthan was the first State in India to establish Panchayati Raj system in October, 1959. Subsequently, Andhra Pradesh established Panchayati Raj system on 1st November 1959. This was followed by Maharashtra in May 1962. Also the other States in India have established the Panchayati Raj system thereafter. This 'Panchayati Raj' is having a long history in India.

CONCEPT AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PANCHAYATI RAJ.

The term 'Panchayati Raj' has come to stay in our country permanently after the acceptance of the recommendations on 'Democratic Decentralization' of Balwantrai Mehta Study Team. Previously, the local governments were known as village Panchayat, district board or sub-district board. These were the self-governing bodies at that time. Panchayati Raj implies the creation of local government institutions at village, block or Taluka and district levels. These bodies are having a very important role to play in the process of all round economic development of a country and uplifting of villages.

The units of local self-government in rural areas are village Panchayat, Panchayat Samities and Zilla Parishads. The village Panchayats have been linked to the Panchayat Samiti at the block level and Panchayat Samitis are linked to the Zilla Parishad at the district level.

HISTORY OF PANCHAYATI RAJ.

In 1947, India was granted Independence by the British Rulers. At that time, the position of India, especially the economic position, was very backward. Because the rulers did not apply science and technology for the welfare of the masses of India. At that time, the gap between the developed countries and India began widening. This can easily be seen by revealing that 1/10th of the people of the world enjoyed 60% of the world's income while 67% of them had less than 10% income of the world at their disposal.

After the end of the Second World War, two different approaches were brought to bear for the economic development; first one was the 'democratic approach' and the second one, the 'revolutionary approach'. The history of the economic development clearly explains the merits and demerits of these two approaches.

After Independence, India had to accept the great challenge of economic development for the welfare of the masses and to attain self-reliance with a humble beginning. Thus, a great burden fell on the shoulders of our leaders and they were assigned to share the responsibilities of performing the activities of the economic development. Our leaders selected the mix of the above mentioned two approaches by way of Democratic Planning with a view to get the benefits of both the approaches - Democratic and Revolutionary.

IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME.

In 1950, with the coming into existence of the Planning Commission, we began a large-scale planning for economic and social development. It was backed by the development of rural areas. While drawing inspiration from various developmental programmes, reports of the commissions and committees, the Planning Commission gave importance to the activities of the rural development for making the economic planning meaningful, with embracement of every activity and aspect of the rural life with the implementation of the Community Development Programme (hereinafter called 'the C.D.P.' for short), the Planning Commission thought of shaping up the village development programmes. The Commission expected that this will help to reduce hunger, poverty, disease, squalour and ignorance.

The Planning Commission designed the C.D.P. on the basis of 'self-help'. Therefore, the C.D.P. mainly insisted on the principles of co-operation which expected active participation and initiative in economic development activity by the whole community. 'Community Development' denotes the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of the governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of the communities. It is a balanced programme for stimulating the local potential for growth in every direction. The C.D.P. gives autonomy at the lowest level. This programme makes it feasible and practicable to provide the people a chance of thinking over their difficulties. The C.D.P. is a process of social action in which the people of

the community themselves get organized for planning and action; they define their individual needs and problems, which individual planning would meet their needs and problems. These plans are executed with maximum reliance on the resources of the community and supplement these resources when necessary with services and materials from governmental and non-governmental agencies outside the community. In this way, the people manage their own affairs and provide the services they need.

The people working through their own representatives become more conscious of their rights and duties and the relationship between the paying of rates and taxes and the provision of services. In this way, the local government and the community development must go forward hand-in-hand. In this way, there was a high degree of co-operation between the democracy and community development. It can be said without the fear of contradiction that in the absence of community development, democracy cannot work for a longer period. The C.D.P. is the best approach for achieving the economic development under democratic conditions. This approach helped India to bring democracy in actual practice. Thus, the C.D.P. gave an opportunity to a common man to build up his country.

In C.D.P., active participation of all the members of the society in planning and decision-making was expected, which affected the economic life of the community.

"In this way, C.D.P. was the powerful means to develop the conditions which are essential for the growth of freedom in a developing country. It was a

practical and effective way to achieve a viable political, social and economic order in accordance with the principles of human dignity and self-determination".²

"It was democracy's most positive alternative to communism".³

The C.D.P. was the powerful political instrument in the hands of the Government to create a sense of confidence in the minds of the people. Through the C.D.P., people of the under-developed and undeveloped regions can share the benefits of economic planning.

India, population-wise the largest democratic country in the world, implemented the C.D.P. for the development of the masses through a peaceful way.

This programme was an arm of socio-economic development of masses in a democratic way. The C.D.P. was started on October 2, 1952, with the initial launching of 55 community projects which covered the population of 16.4 millions. This was a pilot project to study the reactions of the people and the difficulties arising in its implementation.

Some period after launching this scheme, it was revealed that people were keen about these schemes. Afterwards, the National Extension Programme was formulated and put into operation on October 2, 1953. It was a comprehensive plan for the upliftment of the rural masses of India, covering the entire country with 5,000 blocks and a population of about

70,000. This programme increased its coverage in 1967. At that time, the entire rural population was covered. This programme aimed at removing the mental lethargy of the rural people and also to develop an urge and initiative for better living conditions. This scheme proposed to increase dynamic attitude for the development in the minds of the rural people.

The late Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru recognised the importance of the C.D.P., because it gave an opportunity to a common man as a builder of his village and of India in a larger sense.

The work in the blocks had to be carried out through a band of officials such as extension officers, medical officers and village level workers. The Block Development Officer was made captain of this team. At this level, block advisory committees were constituted. Later on, the name of the committee was changed to 'Block Development Committee'. At the district level, the District Planning Committees were constituted. Schematic budget for every block was laid down for undertaking of various works such as construction of wells, construction of roads, sanitation, creation of medical facilities, etc. The developmental activities in agriculture such as irrigation, animal husbandry, production and distribution of high yield variety seeds.

Implementation of the C.D.P. obtained considerably good results in 4-5 years since its beginning. At the same time, the criticism regarding the execution of this scheme

started taking ground everywhere. The main criticism was that this programme failed to create enthusiasm among local people for active participation in their developmental programmes. The UNESCO Study Team pointed out that it could not see considerable work on the social welfare front.

Programme Evaluation Organization also pointed out the failure of the C.D.P. The Government officials did not have the initiative for the development of local areas. Targets were just fulfilled without creating public initiative in the implementation of the C.D.P. This fact was also accepted by the Programme Evaluation Organization.

The Second Evaluation Report pointed out that the Scheme was gradually dominated by the officials.⁴ The same tendency was noted in later evaluations.

It was also pointed out that the C.D.P., which was intended to create a sense of self-help and self-reliance among people, actually created a sense of dependence on the external assistance.

In these schemes, the participation of prosperous sections of the villages was very meagre.

The landless and hardworking people did not receive good award from the C.D.P. The C.D.P. failed to achieve the fulfilment of its objectives. The C.D.P. failed to benefit the community as a whole.⁵

It failed to win the confidence of the majority.

The need of the statutory participation of people at district, block/Tahsil and village level was revealed; and also the necessity of an institution for their working was pointed out.

The lack of response from common people gave rise to the appointment of a Study Team to make its revolutionary recommendations of 'Democratic Decentralization'.

**APPOINTMENT OF STUDY TEAM TO EVALUATE
C.D.P. AND ITS RECOMMENDATIONS.**

Under such circumstances, a Study Team for Community Projects and National Extension Service, under the chairmanship of Balwantrao Mehta was appointed in 1957. The following aspects were reflected for its study:

- i) The contents of the programme;
- ii) The arrangement of the programme with special reference to:
 - a. intensification of agricultural activities;
 - b. co-ordination between:-
 1. different ministries/departments at centre;
 2. the Centre and the State;
 3. different agencies within the C.D.P.;
 - c. the organizational structure methods of work with a view to securing speed in the despatch of business;
- iii) The assessment of extent to which the C.D.P. has succeeded;
- iv) The method adopted for reporting upon the results by the C.D.P. and the National Extension Service;
- v) The assessment of the requirements of personnel for the C.D.P. and their training.

EMERGENCE OF PANCHAYATI RAJ.

No doubt, the scheme of Panchayati Raj emerged after the acceptance of the recommendations of the Democratic Decentralization of Balwantrai Mehta Study Team, that is why the credit is given to the C.D.P. for giving ground for the emergence of Panchayati Raj system.⁶

In India, the history of Panchayati Raj is very old. In ancient times, the village formed the basic unit of the social and economic life in India. The villages were self-sufficient and the standard of living was satisfactory at that time.

During the British Rule, the inhabitants of our country were denied all the benefits of the civilised life. Our handicrafts and manufactures were ruined with a view to provide a push to the British industries. In due course of time, agriculture became more and more uneconomic business. British rulers made the Indian farmer more and more poor. In this period, the condition of the rural masses from physical, economic, social, educational and cultural points of view became gradually very unsatisfactory and beyond the limit of tolerance. India became, in due course, an under-developed country.

Several causes led to the decay of village Panchayats during the British rule. Efforts were made to involve people in local self-governments with the establishment of the district and Taluka local fund committees in 1869.

The next important landmark in the development of the local self-government was in 1882 with Lord Ripon's Resolution,

adopted by the British Government. Later on, several provincial Acts were passed accordingly. Local Boards of district and Taluka level were created in provinces like Bombay, C.P. and Berar. But most of the boards were created at district level. The Royal Commission on Decentralization in 1909 pointed out that the scanty success was the result of not building the system from bottom. The foundation of the scheme should be the village. The Commission recommended the creation of sub-district boards at Taluka/Tehsil level and village Panchayats at the village level along with a relation to the local self body at the district level. Montague-Chemsford Report suggested complete self-control in these local bodies. In 1919, the Act made the local self-governments a provincial subject. The Acts regarding district boards and village Panchayats were passed to reduce the interference of the government in their administration. These local bodies did not make much headway as the members mostly were nominated by the government and these bodies were not of democratic nature.

In this way, we can see the origin of the local self-government in the efforts made by the British Rulers in this direction. These bodies could not provide any scope for the training of the local self-governments.

After obtaining Independence on August 15, 1947, we aimed at developing fast with those of the advanced countries in the world. India declared its policy of Welfare State. The government accepted the challenge of creating a society based on equality, social justice and freedom.

Accordingly, the Planning Commission pointed out the need of involvement of every person in the process of nation building in the following words:

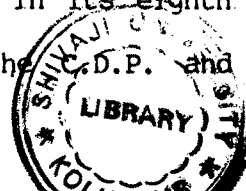
"Planning in a Welfare State is a social process in which every citizen has to participate. Our progress will be really regulated by the advancement of the village people".⁷

Even Mahatma Gandhi pointed out the need of democratic power vested in the hands of the peasant and labour.⁸

The question of democracy below the State level became the most crucial point of discussions after Independence. A Constitutional provision was made to establish village Panchayats in the rural areas. Also, a serious thought was given to the question of linking the Panchayats with the programme of economic development. The Report on the organization of local self-government (Rural and Urban) showed that a democratic government at the centre cannot work unless it is supported by democratic organizations of the local administration.

The first Five Year Plan pointed out the need of an active role of the local self-governments and the bodies in the field of economic development and their proper linkage at different levels.⁹

This point was re-emphasized in the second Five Year Plan also. The National Development Council, in its eighth meeting, decided to appoint a Study Team for the
the National Extension Service.



RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY TEAM (MEHTA TEAM)

After a wide study and touring throughout the country, the Study team under the Chairmanship of Shri. Balwantrao Mehta recommended the methods to make the C.D.P. more successful.

The Study Team pointed out that the power given to the Government officials had weakened the non-official institutions. The team also pointed out that,

"Few of the local bodies at a level higher than the village Panchayat have shown any enthusiasm or interest in community development or in the National Extension Service work and even the village Panchayats have failed to come into the field to any appreciable extent. Also, there is a need to create representative local institutions, to create initiative of local people in the activities of economic development".¹⁰

The Team laid emphasis on immediate decentralization of responsibility, which had not yet taken place below the State level. It was of the opinion that it can be effected by devolution of power to a body which, when created, will have the entire charge of all the developmental work within its jurisdiction. The team pointed out the need of replacement of the existing local bodies by representative democratic institutions, which will be statutory, elective and backed by adequate executive machinery. Also, it should possess adequate resources.

What the team suggested in actual details was the creation of a three-tier system of decentralization, namely,

the village Panchayat, the Panchayat Samiti and the Zilla Parishad, and recommended the handing over of the entire developmental administration to these bodies. The Team gave a detailed plan of organization and functioning of these bodies.

At the bottom, there should be the organization of village Panchayat. The Team observed that the block should, as far as possible, be treated as an administrative unit of all the development departments.

The team expected maximum results from this experiment of democratic decentralization and suggested the beginning of all three-tiers simultaneously.

The reports of the Study Team on the C.D.P. and the National Extension Service were accepted by the Government of India and the States were asked to create such institutions in accordance with the scheme of the Study Team, making some minor changes according to their local needs.

All the State Governments have accepted the principle of transfer of authority to various levels below the district as outlined by the Study Team. Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh were the first ones to implement the scheme of Panchayati Raj. The late Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurated the Panchayati Raj measures in Rajasthan on October 2, 1959. In Andhra Pradesh, the system was enforced on November 1, 1959.

The movement spread like a wildfire over the country. There has been a remarkable progress in the implementation and coverage of Panchayati Raj in India.

Soon after receiving the recommendations of Mehta Study Team, the Government of Maharashtra appointed a Study Team to study the system of democratic decentralization under the Chairmanship of V.P.Naik, the then Minister of Revenue in the Government of Maharashtra.

This Study Team on Democratic Decentralization examined the various aspects of democratic decentralization and submitted its report on March 15, 1961. The suggestions which were made by this Committee were accepted by the Government of Maharashtra. The Government also passed the Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti Act in 1961. In Maharashtra State, Panchayati Raj actually came into existence in May 1962. Elections to Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis were completed by August 15, 1962; and thereafter, these institutions began to function in Maharashtra.

3.4 Brief History of Solapur Zilla Parishad.

The Government of Maharashtra passed the Maharashtra Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis Act in 1961 based on the report of the Committee on Democratic Decentralization headed by Shri.V.P.Naik, the then Revenue Minister in the Government of Maharashtra. Panchayati Raj, with its three-tier structure, popularly known as 'Zilla Parishads, Panchayat Samitis and Gram Panchayats' came into existence in May 1962 in Maharashtra.

The history of Solapur Zilla Parishad is not different from that of the Panchayati Raj history of India. The Panchayati Raj was created mainly on the recommendations of the Study Team on the C.D.P.

One of the main aims of the establishment of Panchayati Raj in India was to make democracy a reality for the rural people in India and to give them a proper opportunity to involve them in the decision-making process of their domestic development plans; using the domestic resources economically and in an optimum manner for development purpose and to make the rural economy of India self-reliant and ready for fulfilling the planning targets.

Keeping these aims in mind, Solapur Zilla Parishad actually started functioning with effect from August 15, 1962.

The first council of the Solapur Zilla Parishad came into existence at the same time. At the first time, 54 members were elected directly from various constituencies of Solapur Zilla Parishad; out of these 54 members, one lady member Mrs.S.B.Dhamke was elected simultaneously. Mrs.Anusuyabai Anantrao Pandhare, another lady member, was co-opted.

Shri.Namdeorao Jagtap and Shri.Shahajirao Patil came into power as Chairman and Vice-Chairman, respectively, with their seven committees of Zilla Parishad Council, which were as follows:-

1. Standing Committee,
2. Finance Committee,
3. Agriculture Committee,
4. Co-operative Committee,
5. Building and Construction Committee,
6. Education Committee,

7. Health Committee.

At the same time, Panchayat Samitis at respective Tahsils of Solapur District were created, which were as:-

1. South Solapur Tahsil,
2. North Solapur Tahsil,
3. Akkalkot Tahsil,
4. Pandharpur Tahsil,
5. Sangola Tahsil,
6. Malshiras Tahsil,
7. Karmala Tahsil,
8. Mangalwedha Tahsil,
9. Barshi Tahsil,
10. Mohol Tahsil,
11. Madha-Kurduwadi Tahsil.

Shri.S.Jambunathan, I.A.S., the then Chief Executive Officer, assumed the office with 18 assistant officers of various Departments.

Solapur Zilla Parishad has completed 26 years of its functioning. At present, Mr.K.R.Nimbalkar is the Chairman and Shri.P.T.Maske is the Vice-Chairman of Solapur Zilla Parishad.

The late Shri.Namdeorao Jagtap was the Chairman of Solapur Zilla Parishad from 1962 to 1969, Shri.S.S.Patil from 1969 to 1972, Shri.Vijaysingh Patil from 1979 to 1985 and Shri.K.R.Nimbalkar is the Chairman from 1985 till date.

With the ambitious plans to bring Solapur

district out of the sufferings of chronic drought situation, Solapur Zilla Parishad is working very hard.

3.5 Conclusion.

With the aim of bringing the democracy into a reality in practical rural life of India and of involving the maximum rural population into the rural development activity, the scheme of 'Democratic Decentralization' was suggested by the Mehta Study Team, which has now come to known as 'Panchayati Raj System'. Under this system, Zilla Parishads are the apex institutions. They are mainly responsible for the development of the rural area of the district. Hence, these Zilla Parishads should keep aloof of party-politics and put in hard efforts for the development of the district. The system of Panchayati Raj is the best means to bring about the 'democratic decentralization' in practice in India.

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