

CHAPTER - IV

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FUNCTIONING OF DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALIZATION IN ATHANI TALUKA

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### FUNCTIONING OF DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALIZATION IN ATHANI TALUKA

Democratic Decentralization as a political concept aims at widening the area of people's participation, authority and autonomy through dispersion or devolution of powers to people's representative organizations from the top levels to the lowest levels in all the triple dimensions of 'political decision-making', financial control and administrative management' with least interference and control from higher levels.<sup>1</sup> The democratic decentralization involves the following ingredients:

- i) the word 'democratic' indicates the object of a larger and closer association of the people with their own government;
- ii) to pursue this end, the word 'decentralization' implies that there will be devolution or dispersion of authority from the higher levels of the government to the lower levels. Thus, the process of democratic decentralization is vertical rather than horizontal,
- iii) this dispersion of authority assumes the form of autonomy to the people at lower levels to take political decisions with regard to policy formulation and work programme, to devise ways and means to execute it, to manage and control the finances required for it and ultimately, to guide and control its administration,
- iv) the authority thus decentralised should be managed by the people either directly or indirectly through their representatives and thus, the institutional machinery of democratic decentralization should be elective,

v) the concept of democratic decentralization as a political doctrine certainly limits, if it does not deny altogether, interference and control from the above.<sup>2</sup>

After studying the ingredients of the concept of democratic decentralization, it is necessary to study the functioning of the democratic decentralization in Athani Taluka, since the introduction of Mandal Panchayats in Karnatak State. The Government of Karnatak introduced this system since 1st April 1987. The study desires to probe into the functioning of democratic decentralization with special reference to Athani Taluka at macro-level and Sankonatti at the micro-level. In this direction, the earlier system had failed to yield results in certain developmental aspects and had treated these institutions as support structure. Panchayati Raj Institutions also had resulted into the domination of caste and class.

Athani Taluka is one of the ten Talukas situated in the north-eastern side of the Belgaum district. It has black and fertile soil. It is an area which has been commonly known for its dry climatic conditions. Having fertile soil, it has been facing the problem of adequate supply of water and monsoons. Hence, frequent famines are common in this Taluka, except a few villages that are found on the bank of Krishna river. It has an annual rainfall of 587.9mm. It has a population of 3,17,613 spread over 89 villages and 27 hamlet areas. It has a land area of total 1,99,513 hectares, out of which the irrigated area is 27,918 hectares, net sowing area 1,71,128 hectares, non-irrigated sowing area 1,43,210 hectares, forest area 591 hectares, wasteland 10,285 hectares and a miscellaneous area of 56,000 hectares.<sup>3</sup>

At the Taluka level, the institution of democratic decentralization is known as 'Taluka Panchayat Samiti' which acts as an advisory body to all the 24 Mandal Panchayats of the Taluka. It is purely a nominated body comprising the following 'ex-officio' members:

- i) 24 Pradhans of the Mandal Panchayats;
- ii) 2 members of the Legislative Assembly representing the Taluka,
- iii) 3 members of the Legislative Council representing the Taluka,
- iv) 10 members of the Zilla Parishad representing the Taluka,
- v) Chairman of the Taluka Agricultural Produce Co-operative Marketing Samiti,
- vi) President of the Primary Land Development Bank, Athani, and
- vii) As per Section 135 of the Act of 1983, the Taluka Panchayat Samiti should consist of 5 nominated members representing scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, backward classes and women. But the nomination power has not been exercised by the Taluka Panchayat Samiti so far, though the subject of nomination of 5 members has appeared in the seven meetings from 5.12.1987 to 9.3.1989. On 21.11.1988, this power was conferred on the Chairman of the Taluka Panchayat Samiti. Still, the power has not been exercised by the Chairman. The term of the members of the Taluka Panchayat Samiti is five years.

The member of the Legislative Assembly representing the major portion of the Taluka, acts as a Chairman. Accordingly, the Taluka Panchayat Samiti of Athani is presided over by a woman and in her absence, the Taluka Panchayat Samiti elects its own Chairman from amongst its own members. The Taluka Panchayat Samiti has an officer known as the Secretary belonging to Gazetted Class II cadre of the Government, who is assisted by 24 members of the staff, out of whom,

2 are junior engineers forming the Mini Engineering Division. All of them are paid by the Zilla Parishad.

The meetings of the Taluka Panchayat Samiti commence usually from 11.00 AM and sometimes at 3.00 PM. The Taluka Panchayat Samiti usually meets once in a month. The members of the Taluka Panchayat Samiti are paid daily allowance of Rs.18/- per head to attend its meetings.

To examine the functioning of the Taluka Panchayat Samiti, data related to meetings which were held and the subjects discussed in the meetings have been thrown light. Instead of questioning the people of the functioning of Mandal Panchayats, it is equally important to know as to how many meetings have been held and what subjects have been discussed; and also study the various resolutions passed and implemented. This would lead to commenting upon the performance and functioning of these institutions.

The study of the proceedings of the Taluka Panchayat Samiti collected from 9.10.1987 to 3.9.1989 enables one to discuss the functions relating to the following matters:

**1) Supply of Drinking Water:**

Sr. No.	Subject	Date	Resolution No.	Page No.
1.	Repair of Borewells	9.10.87	3	1
2.	Repair of Borewells, Preparation of Budget estimates for Mini Water Supply Schemes	5.12.87	3	1
3.	Completion of on-going project construction of 'Gunda' (source of water) at Algali.	5.12.87	-	2

Sr. No.	Subject	Date	Resolution No.	Page No.
4.	Setting up of handpumps and drilling of new borewells	8. 2.88	3	1
5.	Survey of areas of drilling new borewells.	19. 4.88	3	2
6.	Management, repair and maintenance of borewells, mini water supply schemes by the Mandals.	19. 4.88	4	2
7.	Tender for construction of water tank	19. 4.88	4	2
8.	Repair of borewells and tap system	3. 6.88	6/2	3
9.	Digging of wells	3. 6.88	6/3	3
10.	Consultation of Mandal while drilling borewells by Zilla Parishad	26. 7.88	-	2
11.	Objection raised by the Pradhans in drilling borewells.	26. 7.88	C	3
12.	Direction for deciding the point of borewells	26. 7.88	2	3
13.	Handing over water supply scheme	26. 7.88	6	5
14.	Completion of mini water supply scheme at Kohalli by the Zilla Parishad technical division.	26. 7.88	9	5
15.	Supply of water from Ghatprabha to Krishna	21.11.88	6	4
16.	Repair of motor of water supply	5. 1.89	4B	3
17.	Supply of water from Ghatprabha to Krishna.	6. 2.89	4	4
18.	Digging of wells	6. 2.89	7	5

Sr. No.	Subject	Date	Resolution No.	Page No.
19.	Increasing the height of Mahishwadgi barrage.	6. 2.89	9	5
20.	Repair of motor, borewells of mini water supply scheme.	9. 3.89	4	2
<b>II) Supply of Electricity:</b>				
1.	Supply of electricity to Janata houses and Janata colonies.	9.10.87	5	2
2.	Reducing the deposit for electric pillars.	9.10.87	5	2
3.	Electricity to fairs, objection raised on the scarcity of lineman in the villages.	5.12.87	5	2
4.	Supply of electricity to Janata colonies.	8. 2.88	12	3
5.	Objection raised on the frequent cuts and low voltage of electricity.	21.11.88	4	4
<b>III) Health and Family Welfare Programme:</b>				
1.	Implementation of family welfare programme, identification of qualified couples for FWP and co-operation with FWP camps.	9.10.87	5	1
2.	Objection on improper working of health units, health workers, scarcity of health workers.	5.12.87	3	1
3.	Shifting of health centre	5.12.87	-	2
4.	Shifting of health centre.	19. 4.88	6	3
5.	Sanction for Primary Health Unit	21.11.88	3	4
6.	Demand for financial assistance by Mandals to couples undergoing FWP.	5. 1.88	3	3
7.	Repairs to Hospital	5. 1.88	4	3

Sr. No.	Subject	Date	Resolution No.	Page No.
<b>iv) Housing:</b>				
1.	Distribution of 80 group houses for the houseless and landless labourers	5.12.87	-	2
2.	Demand for group houses for the landless and houseless scheduled-castes and scheduled tribes.	5.12.87	-	2
3.	Selection of beneficiaries for group houses.	5.12.87	-	3
4.	Objection raised on the delay in the construction of 1200 Janata houses.	19. 4.88	2	2-3
5.	Selection of beneficiaries for Janata houses.	26. 7.88	1	1
6.	Disqualifications for beneficiaries on grounds of non-residence and non-execution of bond for Janata houses.	21.11.88	3	2
7.	Allotment of site for group housing scheme	21.11.88	5	2
8.	Allotment of Gaonthana area for Janata Plot.	5. 1.89	2	4
<b>v) Education:</b>				
<b>A) <u>Pre-Primary:</u></b>				
1.	Joint construction of Anganwadi & Balwadi	9.10.87	4	2
2.	Supply of firewood by the Mandals to prepare special nutrition.	9.10.87	4	2
3.	Rent of Anganwadi and Balwadi buildings to be paid by Mandals.	5.12.87	-	1
4.	Objection raised on the quality of special nutrition.	5.12.87	-	2



Sr. No.	Subject	Date	Resolution No.	Page No.
5.	Co-operation with Anganwadi workers	5.12.87	-	2
6.	Construction of two Anganwadi buildings by the Zilla Parishad funds by drawing up of chits.	6. 2.89	5	3
<u>B) Primary Education:</u>				
1.	Construction of school buildings (Rupees. 18,000 per class room).	8. 2.88	8	2
2.	Construction of hostels for students in villages.	8. 2.88	10	3
3.	Repair of School Buildings.	3. 6.88	4	4
4.	Construction and repair of school building	26. 7.88	2(A&B)	2
5.	Construction of school buildings by the Mandals.	26. 7.88	3	3
6.	Public contribution and voluntary labour for the construction of schools.	5. 1.89	7	5
7.	Transferring of classroom from one village to another.	5. 1.89	8	5
8.	Distribution of funds among Mandals to repair school buildings.	21.11.88	7	3
9.	Estimate for repairing schools	5. 1.89	9	5-6
10.	Repairing schools	6. 2.89	3	4
11.	Sanction for additional class rooms.	9. 3.89	6	2
<u>C) National Adult Education Programme:</u>				
1.	Commencement of NAEP 30 centres for men and women.	3. 6.88	5	2-3

Sr. No.	Subject	Date	Resolu- tion No.	Page No.
D) <u>Higher Education:</u>				
1.	Inclusion of leather industry in the list of job-oriented courses.	5.12.88	-	3
E) <u>Training:</u>				
1.	Construction of building by Taluka Development Board funds for tailoring training centre.	8. 2.88	9	3
2.	Appointment of full-time teacher for knitting.	19. 4.88	6/2	3
<b>vi) Sanitation : Construction of Latrines for Women:</b>				
1.	Purchase of place for the construction of latrines.	5. 1.89	3	4
2.	Construction of latrines	5. 1.89	3	4
<b>vii) Distribution of Essential Commodities:</b>				
1.	Listing of beneficiaries and distribution of green-cards.	9.10.87	2	2
2.	Demand for timely distribution of foodgrains.	9.10.87	3	2
3.	Distribution of new ration cards.	19. 4.88	5	3
4.	Objection raised against improper distribution of foodgrains by the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee.	19. 4.88	6	4
5.	Supply of foodgrains by the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee as irregular	26. 7.88	4A	2

Sr. No.	Subjects	Date	Resolu- tion No.	Page No.
6.	Aid for rural development programmes in the form of foodgrains.	26. 7.88	4B	3
7.	Commencement of fair price shop in the village.	21.11.88	10	3
8.	Demand for a new unit of Food Corpora- tion of India at Athani to improve the distribution.	6. 2.89	4	2
9.	Processing for the unit of the Food Cor- poration of India.	9. 3.89	5	2
<b>viii) Public Works:</b>				
	Construction of Samaj Mandir	21.11.88	469	4-5
<b>ix) Animal Husbandry:</b>				
1.	Establishment of veterinary hospital in each Mandal.	5.12.87	-	2
2.	Demand for construction of veterinary Hospital.	5. 1.89	1	8
<b>x) Small Savings Scheme and Banking Facility:</b>				
1.	Fixing of target Rs.1.0 Lakh for each Mandal.	5.12.87	-	2
2.	Completion of Bank building	26. 7.88	7	5
3.	Establishment of Banks in Mandals where there is no banking facility.	5. 1.89	5	2

Sr. No.	Subjects	Date	Resolu- tion No.	Page No.
<b>xi) Organization of Multi-purpose Co-operative Society for Women at the District Level:</b>				
1.	Membership of women from Athani Taluka	6. 2.89	2	3
<b>xii) Mini-irrigation Project:</b>				
1.	Completion of Hirehall Jalanayan	5. 1.89	6	5
<b>xiii) Selection of Beneficiaries:</b>				
1.	Names of 15 beneficiaries for Million wells are announced in the meeting.	5. 1.89	2	2
<b>xiv) Social Forestry:</b>				
1.	Releasing of 7 forest workers' wages.	5.12.87	-	1
2.	Demand for supply of coconut plants for Janata colonies.	5.12.87	-	1
3.	Planting and maintaining 10 trees around each borewell by the Mandal.	26. 7.88	2/C	2
<b>xv) Development Programmes:</b>				
A) Planning:				
1.	Utilizing Taluka Development Board funds for development programmes in the Taluka	9.10.87	1	1
2.	Survey and budget estimates of development programmes by the Mandals.	3. 2.88	4	2
3.	Objection raised for delay in the commencement of development programmes.	3. 2.88	4	2
4.	Publicity of development programme, distribution of the list of programmes.	26. 7.88	4E1	3

Sr. No.	Subject	Date	Resolution No.	Page No.
5.	Completion of different schemes giving over priority to the Nala-bunding, tank school buildings, etc.	21.11.88	4	2
6.	Completion of New Schemes.	6. 2.89	5	3
<u>B) Famine Relief Measures:</u>				
1.	Survey of Programmes	9.10.87	2	1
2.	Supply of Fodder	21.11.88	7	5
3.	Supply of Fodder	9. 3.89	5	2
<u>C) Flood Relief Measures:</u>				
1.	Miniboats used to cross the rivers should be transferred from Zilla Parishad to Mandals.	5.12.87	-	2
2.	Demand for the purchase of new boats	26. 7.88	11	5
<u>D) Review of Progress:</u>				
1.	Completion of Nala-bunding projects	9.10.87	1	1
2.	Drinking water, electricity, social forestry, plantation, Angawandi and Balwadi energy food.	5.12.87	3	1-2
3.	Repair of school buildings, roads, Nala-bunding, borewells.	8. 2.88	3	1
4.	Consideration of progress of IRDP, Antyodaya, 100 Wells, Development of Surplus Land, Negilainagya, Bhagyajyoti Training for Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM).	19. 4.88	1	1

Sr. No.	Subject	Date	Resolu- tion No.	Page No.
5.	School-building, Nala-bunding, borewells, social forestry, land-army, agriculture, industry, animal husbandry, horticulture, Integrated Rural Development Programme.	26. 7.88	2	2
6.	Progress of Government Departments	21.11.88	11	3
7.	Horticulture, Education, Health and FWP water supply.	5. 1.89	6	3
8.	IRDP, Special component, development of surplus land, Antyodaya, Janata Houses, Gobar gas plants.	6. 2.89	1	2
9.	Pressure on implementation of programmes without giving scope to the lapse of funds.	9. 3.89	1	2
<b>E) <u>Officers' Absence:</u></b>				
1.	Absence of Taluka level officers to attend the meetings of the Panchayat Samiti seriously viewed, warning issued to absentees.	8. 2.88	13	3
2.	Absence should be treated as 'without leave'.	26. 7.88	4D	3
<b>xvi) Matters concerned to Taluka Panchayat Samiti:</b>				
1.	Release of contingency grant	8.2.88	5	2
2.	Release of Jeep repair grant.	8.2.88	6	2
3.	Increasing the quota of Diesel	8.2.88	7	2
4.	Fixation of rent for TPS quarters	3.6.88	1	1

Sr. No.	Subject	Date	Resolu- tion No.	Page No.
5.	Release of contingency and others	3. 6.88	263	1
6.	Repair of TDB* quarters and Guesthouse	26. 7.88	10	5
7.	Demand for an estimate of Rs.50,000/- for repairs of TDB* quarters & guesthouse.	5. 1.89	3	2

\*Taluka Development Board

Under the Act of 1983, the Taluka is not an effective point of democratic decentralization. The Act creates two-tier system - the two elected tiers being the Zilla Parishads and the Mandal Panchayats. Instead of abolishing the Taluka level organization, it retains the Taluka level organization in the name of the Taluka Panchayat Samiti which acts in an advisory role to the Mandal Panchayats of the Taluka. Looking to its powers and functions, it is more a formal organization without any executive authority.

As the concept of democratic decentralization indicates the three features, viz. the political decision-making, financial control and administrative management. Applying the structural and functional aspects of the Taluka Panchayat Samiti to the features of democratic decentralization, one can point out the major deficiencies as follows:

These are; (i) the Taluka Panchayat Samiti is not truly democratic in the sense that it does not contain elected members, instead it consists of 'ex-officio' members (nominated members), the decisions taken by the Taluka Panchayat Samiti are advisory and not executive; (ii) regarding the financial control, the Taluka Panchayat Samiti has no independent sources of income and it should depend

on the Zilla Parishad for its finances. Further, it does not exercise financial control over the Mandal Panchayats of the Taluka; (iii) with regard to administrative management, it has limited powers. The Block Development Officer, with his office staff, can guide and advise in the implementation of different development programmes such as IRDP, NREP, Astravale, 100 wells, etc., and in the matters pertaining to the Mandal Panchayats. The Block Development Officer and his staff belonging to 'generalist' category cannot provide technical expertise necessary for the development programmes. However, the Taluka Panchayat Samiti has a mini Engineering/Technical Division consisting of 2 Junior Engineers who render technical expertise in the construction of Janata Houses, Million Wells Scheme and Astravale. For other technical guidance and assistance, the Taluka and Mandal Panchayats are to depend on the Technical Division of the Zilla Parishad.

The composition of the Taluka Panchayat Samiti is not satisfactory. There are three reasons: (i) as per Section 135(f) of the Act, the Taluka Panchayat Samiti should contain 5 nominated members belonging to scheduled-castes, scheduled-tribes, backward-classes and women. But it does not consist of these members; (ii) as per the Act, it should contain not less than 18% of the scheduled-castes and scheduled-tribes, but at present, it only contains two members belonging to scheduled-castes and no member from the scheduled-tribes. The Chairman of the Taluka Panchayat Samiti being the only woman and no other woman member is found; (iii) the nominated character of the body makes the Taluka Panchayat Samiti anti-democratic.

with regard to the attendance and participation of the members, there is a considerable satisfaction. The average attendance



of the members of the State legislature is 20% which shows low participation; the average attendance of the members of the Zilla Parishad is 60%; the average attendance of the Mandal Pradhans is 80% and the average attendance of the Taluka level Government officers is 70% which indicates a considerable satisfaction. Another remarkable feature of the Act is the payment of the daily allowance of Rs.18/- to the members of the Taluka Panchayat Samiti to attend its meetings is a judicious development.

The provision of the Act to make a member of the State Legislative Assembly, belonging to the major portion of the Taluka, to act as the Chairman of the TPS is another new development. Rather, it enables the member of the State legislature to understand and advise on the matters of local necessities and to guide the leaders at the grassroot level.

The advisory, recommendatory, review and co-ordination roles of the Taluka Panchayat Samiti can be appreciative. In the Taluka Panchayat Samiti meetings, most of the subjects discussed are concerned with the basic necessities of human life and are brought to the notice of the Pradhans of the Mandal Panchayats. The discussions on the matters relating to drinking water, electricity, health and family welfare programme, housing for the poor, scheduled castes and scheduled-tribes have been satisfactory. Since to promote the development of children, the programmes relating to the construction of Anganwadi, Balwadi and the supply of special nutrition have a thorough discussion. To undertake educational development, the affairs of construction, repair of school buildings and hostels are taken up for discussion. For the encouragement of youth and the literacy, programme has been regarded essential. As much as 30 NAEP centres have been opened in different

villages. And it is a step in the improvement of sanitary conditions. While discussing the problem of distribution of essential commodities in the villages, it can be observed that when the people are dissatisfied with the performance of the local agency (Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee), they are forced to demand national agency (Food Corporation of India) for updating the distribution of essential commodities. There is also a considerable discussion in the field of public works which is concerned to the construction of Samaj Mandir in villages.

Not only the problems relating to human beings are discussed but also there is a considerable discussion on animal husbandry for undertaking the construction of veterinary hospitals in the Mandals. To promote the drive of small savings, as far as Rs.1,00,000 have been fixed as an annual target for each Mandal. Another highlighting development was on the organization of co-operative society for women at the district level. Even the problems of mini-irrigation, selection of beneficiaries for various development schemes, social forestry, plantation, were brought up at the meetings.

The Taluka Panchayat Samiti has been remarkable as far as the review of the progress of different development programmes relating to people, Mandal, Taluka and different Departments of the Government in the Taluka level, are concerned. Adequate discussions were dealt with on famine-relief and flood-relief measures. While reviewing the progress of various Departments, the attention was also paid on the attendance of the Government officers of the Taluka. The absence of the officers to the meetings was pointed out. A sort of warning was issued by the Chairman for officers who remained absent. Not only that, a kind of disciplinary action has been advised, but

officers' absence should be treated as 'unauthorised absence' and not leave. The subjects relating to the maintenance of the office of the Taluka Panchayat Samiti, its vehicle and property have also been resolved. The Taluka Panchayat Samiti acted as a 'forum of debate and discussion' to remedy the problems faced not only at the Taluka level but also at the grassroot level. All this points out that there is a general awareness amongst the rural masses; which in itself is an important development in the process of democratic decentralization. It can also be observed that the basic needs are demanded through the meetings; which shows that the development process has received a new impetus and a new thrust through democratic decentralization. What is more important, that the budgets spent have to be spent for the needs; and this has helped to see that implementation has become more efficient and less prone to corruption through the involvement of the people and the representatives at the grassroot level.

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#### REFERENCES

1. T.N.Chaturvedi (Ed.), "Panchayati Raj", pp.15-16.
2. Ibid., p.16.
3. 1981-Census and Records of Athani Taluka.

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