

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Panchayati Raj has been regarded as the legitimate instrument to realise the grassroot democracy. Panchayati Raj has been closely associated with democracy, decentralization and development. Democracy enables the active participation of the people in their own government in order to achieve the maximum development of the people and the community through political education. Hence, democracy is indispensable to Panchayati Raj. Decentralization implies devolution or dispersion of authority, autonomy and responsibility to people at local levels in decision-making, financial control and administrative management. As democracy is essential to Panchayati Raj, so is the decentralization. Democracy and decentralization are the basic methods to meet out the challenges of the people at the local levels.

An attempt has been made to bring forth the working of the Sankonatti Mandal Panchayat as an effort for M.Phil.Dissertation. The study is based on the personal observation of the meetings of the Mandal Panchayat and the Taluka Panchayat Samiti at Athani; an analysis of the proceedings of the Mandal Panchayat and the Taluka Panchayat Samiti; interviews with the office-bearers of the Mandal Panchayat and the Panchayat Samiti; observations of the Village Panchayat Records; reviews of the Panchayati Raj Acts, Asoka Mehta Committee Report, etc., interviews with the Taluka level Government officers and collection of the extracts of annual expenditure statements of the Taluka level Development Departments, etc.

In the First Chapter, an attempt is made to discuss the meaning of the various concepts - Panchayati Raj, democracy, decentralization and development, etc. An evolution of the Panchayati Raj Institutions also has been traced from the ancient period to the present. An account of Panchayati Raj in different stages, viz. pre-British, British, post-Independence period Community Development Programme, Balwantray Mehta Committee Report, Asoka Mehta Committee Report, etc. has been brought. Not only the evolution of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in India is assessed, but also the evolution of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Karnatak has been brought forth.

The Second Chapter deals with the study of the recent Zilla Parishads ... Act of 1983 enacted and implemented by the Government of Karnatak. An attempt is made to bring a summary of the important features of the Act. At the end, the appreciations of the Act by different scholars also have been dealt with.

In the Third Chapter, comparison of the two Panchayati Raj Acts, viz. of 1959 and of 1983, has been made. An attempt has been made to compare the provisions of the two Acts, at the village, taluka and district levels. The recommendations of the Asoka Mehta Committee have been referred to wherever essential. Apart from that, the highlights of the comparative study and the differences between the two Acts have also been emphasized.

In the Fourth Chapter, a macro-level study is undertaken. The functioning of democratic decentralization in Athani Taluka is made. Before undertaking the study of the working of the 'Sankonatti Mandal' at the micro-level, an effort is made to study the meaning and

features of the concept of democratic decentralization, and the role of the Taluka Panchayat Samiti, Athani, which acts as an advisory body to all the 24 Mandals of the Athani Taluka. As the working of the Sankonatti Mandal and its effectiveness, very much depends on the advisory role of the Taluka Panchayat Samiti.

The Final Chapter provides the micro-level study of the working of the Sankonatti Mandal. It covers a study of the meetings of the Mandal, an assessment of the office-bearers, subjects discussed in the Mandal, decisions taken and executed by the Mandal, the implementation aspect of the various resolutions passed by the Mandal with the expenditure incurred by the Mandal and other agencies at the Taluka level. Apart from that, the proceedings of the Gramsabha in all the seven villages of the Sankonatti Mandal have been analysed. The study ends with a brief conclusion.

* * *