
INTRODUCTION

I N T R O D U C T I O N

The history of development of Local Self-Government in India under the British Rule has been marked by several special drives towards strengthening the autonomy of the local bodies but these only produced sporadic effects, of course, the more important of these drives, especially Lord Ripon's Resolution of 1882, Decentralization Commission's Report of 1908, and the policies of the provincial governments after the introduction of Dyarchy in 1919, meant additional span of powers and functions for the local bodies but in the prevailing political climate, which was becoming more and more anti-British, there was little scope for genuine extension of the powers and autonomy of the local bodies. Some of the 'Popular' governments which assumed office under the Act of 1919, tried to bring about a radical renovation of the form and structure of rural Local Self-government. But the results were dis-appointing, especially from the point of view of latter-day analysts who have evaluated the evolution of local government in terms of local autonomy. Thus with regard to Bombay Village Panchayat Act of 1920, Y.B.Chavan, the then Minister for Local Self Government in Bombay State and now one of the most influential political leaders of India, commented in 1955 as follows:

" The Panchayats established under the Act of 1920 were merely a pale shadow of the glorious institutions that flourished in the villages in the earliest times. They were not fully representative, their powers were limited and

their finances were meagre and there was no provision for regular and substantial aid from Government.

In Maharashtra, the Naik Committee in 1961, recommended for the three tier structure of Panchayati Raj with District i.e. Zilla Parishad as a main executory body and not the Block/Taluka Samiti state as suggested by the Mehta Committee. Therefore, the working of Zilla Parishads in Maharashtra has got important place in the three tier structure of Panchayati Raj.

The Panchayati Raj institutions, Zilla Parishads, Panchayati Samitis and Gram Panchayats - are not only the nurseries of leadership but they also provide a laboratory for democratic experimentations and administrative innovations at the grass roots level. Panchayati Raj institutions for their effectiveness are intimately associated with other public institutions and political structures. The patterns and problems of rural local bodies have been changing with compulsions of a fast changing society and its aspirations. The rural local bodies are facing new challenges with the growing modernisation of rural areas, with the new objectives of democratic socialisms, decentralisation, development planning and welfare state, the importance of rural local bodies has come to the fore front. Rural local bodies are regulated by a host of enactments passed by the State Legislatures. The draft outline of the fourth plan has brought increasing importance to the role of rural local bodies because of their participation in the execution of the National development.

A need therefore, has arisen for rationalizing these bodies, to strengthen them to take up development functions. Modernisation is taking place at a very fast spread in rural areas. India's 70 % population is scattered in the rural areas. The rate of growth of population is tremendous as overall population during the span of ten year (1961-1971) is increased by 25 %. The problems faced by the rural people are various, scarcity of water, housing, lack of educational and medical facilities, increasing unemployment, breaking away of joint families and thrust for city life and shortage of Agricultural labour. This points to the importance of the study of rural local bodies and their finances on whom a major responsibility lies under the Indian Constitution. Rural local bodies are expected to play a major role in fulfilling the needs of the rural population. Though local government is a State subject the constitution has recognised the local government institutions as essential part of the National Government.

The subject of the local Government appears at entry 5 of the State list in the 7th Schedule of the Constitution of India. Zilla Parishads are the creation of the State Governments, whose responsibility is to provide adequate finance to them, because there is no separate 'local list' alongwith union, State and concurrent lists. The Zilla Parishads possess powers and performs functions which are specifically delegated to them by the various acts passed by the State Legislatures and they are subjected to statutory defined

supervision and control by the State Government. In the wake of socio-economic developments, since the attainment of independence the functioning of rural local bodies have assumed new dimensions.

One of the important areas which has developed in recent years is Panchayati Raj which has become a familiar pattern of District and Sub-District Administration throughout the country. Although Local Self Government institutions have been operating in the country for many decades, it is only since 1959 that a well developed and a well defined pattern of administration has been introduced (with minor variations) throughout the country which enables new political institutions at the village, block (or taluka) and district levels to take charge of development functions and in some cases even of the collection of land revenue. The important point about these new institutions is that wide powers have been entrusted to them in a variety of fields and officials of varying importance work in close co-operation with these bodies. In some states such as Maharashtra and Gujarat, Senior Officers of the level of a District Collector have been posted as Chief Executive Officers of the district level bodies. In most States various Development Officers, both at the district and Taluka levels, are expected to function in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Panchayati Raj institutions.

Reduction in unemployment and rural poverty in the underdeveloped countries like India requires an increase in the productive absorption of labour in agriculture. The most important practical question involved in increasing the absorption of labour in agriculture in these countries is how to increase multiple cropping. To increase multiple cropping (and yields), irrigation and selective mechanisation are primary importance.

With this in mind this study on ' Role of Sholapur Zilla Parishad in Development Irrigation ' is undertaken. The study is divided in VI chapters.

The first chapter, deals with the ' History of Panchayat Raj ' in India; which is based on secondary sources. In the second chapter an historical background of Sholapur Zilla Parishad is looked into. This chapter deals with origins of Sholapur district, right from the 14th Century when it was under the Muslims control.

Third chapter tries to study the district's area, location, population, caste, language, religion, sex distributional aspects and the dominant occupation of the people. The fourth chapter on ' Agriculture in Sholapur District ' tries to understand the agricultural produce of the area and the need of irrigation in specific areas.



Chapter V on ' Development of Irrigation ' and chapter VI, on ' Sholapur Zilla Parishad and Irrigation ' try to deal with facts and figures collected from the census, reports, socio-economic abstracts, annual reports of Sholapur Zilla Parishad, Gazetteers etc.

The work on the whole depends, much upon the Government reports, which are included in the study in form Maps, Tables etc. This is a first effort of the author in this direction; and hence they may be some errors in representing the facts and figures. The study certainly comes forth with its observations solely based on reports.