

PARTICIPATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN PANCHAYATS IN KARNATAKA**Dr. Pralhad .V. Chengte**

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Abstract

The Gram Panchayat plays a significant role in the democratic decentralization process, as it is the institution at the bottom level of the system; drawing villagers closer to participate in decision-making instances. The path of decentralization has been successful in some parts of the country; but disparities are present in certain regions/districts in terms of effectiveness of implementation, functioning of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), and self-generated development initiatives. In the light of above, a detailed study/survey on understanding capacities of gram panchayats in the Shavamogga Districts. The primary focus of the study was to understand the Political parties participated in the panchayat raj.

Key words: Rural, Political, Panchayat, Development, participation

Introduction:

Decentralized system of governance, which have recently emerged in different parts of the world, vary considerably. They are structured, funded and held accountable in different modes and degree of popular participation. The process of decentralization seeks to create greater energy, a higher sense of responsibility and better morale among the field agents. Decentralization denotes "the transference of authority, legislative, judicial or administrative, from a higher level of government to a lower level. Although, the basic idea of decentralization is sharing the decision-making authority with lower levels in the organization, power can be shared within the system. Power can also be shared with outside organization or agencies.

Decentralization means assigning both the power and responsibility to the lower levels from centre in decision making, financial and administrative aspects with accountability. There are different forms of decentralization and it can be distinguished mainly by the extent to which the power to plan, decide and manage is transferred from central government or organizations, in carrying out their tasks.¹

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are as follows;

1. To know the development of Panchayat in India and Karnataka.
2. To study the Factors Influencing Political parties Participation in Panchayat Raj.

The Concept of Panchayat Raj:

The concept of panchayat raj has been considered differently by different academicians and policy makers such as units of local government, as an agency of state government for carrying

out governmental functions and implementation of developmental programmes at local level and also as a means to realize participatory democracy at rural level.

In this light, The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 has provided a new dimension to the concept of panchayati raj. In other words, the concept of participation of the people should be considered as an ideological commitment and, therefore, what is needed is legislative and structural measures to give legitimacy to people's participation

According to S.R. Maheshwari panchayat raj in India has three broad images: (i) As an instrument for realization of community development, (ii) As an organ of state government to execute community development programmes and other schemes and (iii) As an idea to realize democracy at village level (Ziauddin Khan 1969, p-58) considers panchayat raj essentially as local self-government institutions the idea of which is to bring the decision making authorities nearer to the people. It is also said that the term panchayat raj literally implies government of the people's representatives and thus develops the feeling of self-government among the rural masses.

Panchayat raj is unquestionably Indian in origin. Panchayati raj bodies which are genuine and effective democratic decentralized institutions, provide ample opportunities for large number of rural people to take genuine and effective participation in development and democratic decision making process and to infuse in minds of the rural people a spirit of self help, self dependence and self reliance and to obtain the experience in the art of local self government. The concept of panchayat raj, since its inception, faced various interpretations both from its protagonists and antagonists. On the one hand, the emphasis was on maximum local autonomy and minimization and control by higher authorities especially the state government on the some considered it to be ruination for country.²

MEANING OF PANCHAYAT RAJ SYSTEM :

The panchayat raj system is really an effective instrument of participation. In order to make the panchayats and edifice of democracy, they should be given more powers, more autonomy and financial resources. It also means to overcome the prevalent socio-economic deficiencies in rural society.

The panchayat raj institutions are statutorily elected bodies at the Village, Block and District levels with powers of local government There are village panchayats at the Village level, panchayati samithis at the block/taluka level and the Zilla parishads at the district level. The primary objective of panchayati raj is to strengthen the base of democracy at grass roots and to enable the people of each village to achieve intensive and continuous development in the interests of the entire population, irrespective of the caste, class, creed and religion. The panchayat raj is different from all other government as a whole, is not an administrative arm of the government but a part of the whole government. It's great potentialities lie in the fact that, under the guidance and supervision of the state government, the final responsibility for carrying out rural development will fall more and more on people themselves through their elected local representatives. The greatest stress and attention must, therefore, be put on the village panrhayats

and Gram sabhas, periodic elections, evolution and proper local planning (Desai Vasant, 1990, P-3). Panchayat Raj or local self-government is an exercise in democratic decentralization of administrative authority. Panchayat Raj or local self-government is an exercise in democratic decentralization of administrative authority. The system is based on the following principles.³

- (i) There should be a three-tier structure of local self governing bodies from village to district level, with an organic link from the lower to the higher ones.
- (ii) There should be a genuine transfer of power and responsibility to these bodies. Adequate financial resource should be transferred to those bodies to enable them to discharge their responsibility.
- (iv) All development programmes should be channeled through these bodies.
- (v) The system evolved should be such as to facilitate further decentralization of power and responsibility in the future (Dahama 1991, P-41).

The panchayat raj like democracy at the national and state levels, is both an end and a means. As an end, it is inevitable extension of democracy, as a means it would continue to be responsible for discharging obligations entrusted to it by the people. As an edifice of democracy, it forms the base of the democratic pyramid in the country.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA:

Pre Independence Period:

The history of village level panchayat raj institutions in India goes back to hundreds of years. A feature of these institutions was that, they were largely self governing, although their social background was characterized by a rigid social structure. Between ancient medieval and modern period, the growth of panchayats had ups and downs. It is only from the year 1870 that India saw the dawn of representative local institutions. The famous Mayo's resolution of 1870 gave impetus to the development of local institutions by enlarging their powers and responsibilities. Following the footsteps of Mayo, Lord Ripon in 1882 provided the much needed democratic framework to these institutions. All boards (then existing) had to have a two thirds majority of the non-officials. Who had to be selected; the chairman of these bodies had to be from among the elected non-officials. Local self-government institutions received a boost with the commission on decentralization in 1907 under the chairmanship of C.E.H. Hobhouse. The commission viewed local government should start from the village level rather than the district level. The years that followed, after the First World War, saw the advent of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi on national political scene. Gandhiji set tone of nationalist point on the panchayat and declared that "the village panchayats would be now a living force in a special way, and India would almost be enjoying self government suited to its requirements" (Shiviah, 1976, p. 32). The development of local self-government institutions got further momentum with the introduction of Moutague-Chelmsford Report, which made local self-government a 'transferred subject' under the scheme of Diarchy. The most significant development of this period was "the establishment of the village panchayat in a number of provinces, no longer a mere ad hoc judicial tribunal, but a

representative institutions symbolizing the corporate character of the village and having a wide jurisdiction in respect of civic matters" (Shiviah, 1976, p-33) However, due to organizational and financial constraints the scheme evolved by the reforms did not make the panchayats truly democratic and vibrant institutions of local self government, yet, by 1925 eight provinces had passed Panchayat Acts and by 1926, six native states had passed panchayat laws. D.P.Mishra made a critical assessment of the performance of local selfgovernment institutions, the then Minister for local Self-government under the Government of India Act of 1935 in Central Provinces and Berar.⁴

Post Independence Period:

The post independence phase of panchayat raj is marked with significant developments. It is an attempt to usher in socio-economic and cultural transformation in the countryside. In 1952, the Government of India had launched a comprehensive programme known as community development programme, encompassing almost all activities of rural development. However, the programme could not make much headway in fulfilling the dreams of the rural masses. In order to examine the causes for its failure, the Government of India had constituted a high power study team headed by Balwantrai Mehta, a member of parliament. The team observed that the failure of the community development programme was due to the conspicuous absence of people's participation. In order to secure participation, the team suggested that a set of institutional arrangement would have to be created to make participation meaningful and effective. This resulted in creation of a 'three-tier' system of panchayat raj institution to organize and manage the rural development activities. Thus, began a new experiment in the sphere of rural development through the participation of people. The recommendation favouring democratic decentralization accelerated the pace of constituting panchayat raj institution in the states. Commentators have visualized the growth of panchayat raj institutions during the post independence period in three phases: first phase 1959 to 1966; second phase 1967-1976; and third phase 1977-1986 (Shiviah, 1986) A similar periodisation was made by Ashok Mehta Committee, namely, the phase of ascendancy (1959-64); the phase of stagnation (1965-69); and the phase of decline (1969-77). Commencing on the performance of panchayat raj institution during these phases, the committee records, "a number of developments in the past have conspire to undermine the panchayat raj structure and made them ineffective. In fact, except in Maharashtra and Gujarat, the panchayat raj institution have been rarely an opportunity to take up planning or implementation work on a sizable scale. Schemes like small farmers development agency or drought prone areas programme or intensive tribal development project were not brought within the purview of the elected zilla parishads either in Gujarat or in Maharashtra"⁵

In order to consider ways to reinvigorate and revitalize the panchayats, the Government of India had appointed G.V.K.Rao Committee (1985) The G. V.K. Rao committee recommended to make 'district' as the basic unit of planning and favoured holding of regular elections to the panchayat institutions. The L.M. Singhvi committee recommended for devolving more financial resources to panchayats to make them more viable. The committee viewed panchayat as the base for democratic and republican operations of the nation.⁶

Recent Efforts:

The amendment phase began with the 64th Amendment Bill (1989), which was introduced in parliament for constituting panchayats in every state at the village, intermediates and district levels. It proposed that the Legislature of a State could by law, endow the panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government. This bill was the brainchild of the late prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, who strongly believed in strengthening panchayats by giving them constitutional status. Unfortunately, though the Bill got a two thirds majority in the Lok Sabha, it was struck down in the Rajya Sabha in October 15, 1989 by just two votes. The next government headed by V.P. Singh also made an abortive effort to provide constitutional status through the introduction of 74th Amendment. Notwithstanding the above developments, the Government declared its commitment to the philosophy of 'power to the people' and for the purpose to provide much needed constitutional status to panchayats. The then Congress-I Government headed by P.V. Narasimha Rao initiated the 73rd amendment to the constitution in 1991. A comprehensive amendment was introduced in the form of constitutional (Amendment) Bill in September 1991, which was subsequently referred to a joint select committee of parliament in December 22, 1992 and the Rajya Sabha on the December 23, 1992. The bill got the president's assent on April 20, 1993 and the constitutional 73rd Amendment Act came into effect on April 24, 1993.

Post Amendment Phase:

The purpose of this section is to see what extent the blueprint provided by the amendment has become a reality. To begin with, there was a positive response from the states. Since almost all the states had passed legislation in conformity with the provisions of the amendment to establish panchayats at village, taluk, block and at district levels. For the first time in the history of panchayat raj system, a high degree of uniformity has been conferred on panchayats mainly in terms of structure, composition, powers and functions.

Constitutional Perspective of Panchayat Raj In India

Panchayat Raj Institutions in India refer to statutory multi-tier administrative structure entrusted with the developmental duties and responsibilities by the state legislatures. This form of local self-government has its origin in Lord Rippon's famous Resolution of 1882 in which he recommended "the smallest administrative unit, the sub division or taluka or Tehsil shall ordinarily be placed under a local board" Article-40 of the constitution directs states to form panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as responsible units of self-government.⁷

PANCHAYAT RAJ SYSTEM IN KARNATAKA:

The panchayat raj system introduced in Karnataka State (earlier known as Mysore state) with the passing of Mysore Village Panchayati and Local Boards Act. 1959 (Act N0-10 of 1959). (B.S. Bhargava 1979 p-37) It was formally inaugurated after the completion of first panchayat raj elections, by Dr. Rajendra Prasad the then president of India, on 21st December 1960. Serious attempts were made in Karnataka in 1960s to introduce radical changes in local self-government. The Karnataka village panchayat and Local Boards Act, 1959 introduced earliest system of

panchayat raj, with directly elected Taluk development Boards/village panchayats, coterminous with taluks group of villages. It related to the community development block, retained the direct administration structure. Infact the deputy commissioner, as its head was responsible for both development and regulatory functions. A district development council was provided with a consultative, advisory and coordinating role. No scheme or staff was transferred to these elected bodies. However, these bodies were utilized by the state administration to implement various local oriented planschemes and the block development officer (BDO) was the chief executive officer of the taluka development board. In the process of planned development, they were almost entirely implementing bodies and non plan-formulating bodies. This experiment in democratic decentralization proved abortive. The kamataka zilla parishads, taluka panchayatsamitis and mandal panchayats Act 1983, which received presidential assent on July 10,1985 was gazette on August 2,1985 replacing the earlier Act.

The panchayati raj act of Kamataka, 1985 is based on recommendations of Ashoka mehta committee Report, 1977. The Chief Minister, Shri Ramkrishna Hegade observed, "we have enacted this law with a view to translating Gandhiji's concept of Grama Swaraj into reality. It also symbolizes our conviction that a large and diverse country like India cannot survive as a democracy unless it adopts a four-tier federal system with functioning units of government at mandal, district, state and national level, these units will function as governments at respective levels in real sense" Kamataka panchayat raj system has been recognized as the most farreaching effort of democratic decentralization in country. The objective is to meaningfully carve out a third tier of government that is the district government. The state government has consciously devised a system which gives status and stature to the panchayat raj bodies, entrusts them with all those welfare, development and civic functions and responsibilities whose ambit lies within their respective jurisdiction, equips them with resources by way of budgetary support, staff and powers to perform these entrusted tasks satisfactorily with statutory autonomy of decision making⁸.

Political Parties Participation:

Nature and functioning of political Parties system is analysed in terms of nature and extent of political participation. Political Parties participation has assumed great importance in modern period, which is marked by democratisation and is heavily loaded with emphasis on human rights. Among all citizens, the democratic citizens have ample opportunities to participate in political parties process in several ways, with different degree of involvement and at various levels of political systems. There is variation in citizen's participation in political Parties process, because of difference in standard of living, level of education, social environment and political culture. Citizens contribute something to the people through participation in political Parties process and such participation increases their creative energy, political participation makes a government responsible to people their demands and aspirations. Greater participation in political process leads to greater self - government and provides opportunity for development of

leadership at various levels. Under such conditions the government is by the people, for the people and of the people.

Meaning:

Many writers have defined political Parties participation in different ways depending upon their perception of democracy. According to "A dictionary of modern politics and political sociology, participation means manifest of self involvement in activities such as political groups, political parties, the electorate and government itself". This definition refers to citizen's voluntary participation in organised democratic institutions and taken note of institutional diversion of democracy.

Herbert Me Qosky define political participation as "those voluntary activities by which member of society share in selection of rules and directly or indirectly, in formulation of public policy". Norman H. Nie and Sydney Verb thus defines "political participation as we refer to those legal activities by private citizens which are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take". This definition covers selection and actions of public personnel and does not take note of non-conventional dimensions of political parties participation.⁹

Factors Influencing Political parties Participation:

There are certain individual and environmental factors which influence political parties participation. Individual factors which influence political participation are general interest, economic interest, psychological needs and sense of competence of citizens.

1. Some citizens have interest and aptitude for public affairs and they participate in political process. There are two factors which motivate them to get into politics.
2. Some citizens actively participate in political parties to advance their material interest. Though there are other direct means to promote economic interest, some citizens report to political means for this purpose. Politics has also an economic component.
3. Some citizens involve themselves in politics for seeking recognition and respect from others. According to them, participation of self-worth and success. Some other citizens have a natural drive for public service and participate in various political activities.

There are various psychological variables, which derive/ craze for domination derives for discharging social responsibilities. Compensation for certain deficiencies or deprivation etc. However, political participation survives by virtue of its capacity to provide rewards to those who engage in it. This is the one field in which there is no dearth of participation at any time. Confidence in political competence drives some men to participate inactive politics. Degree of political competence is determined by quality and level of education, sound financial position, physical and endurance.

Following Are The Environmental Factors Which Influence Political parties

Participation:

- i. Political environment which includes party system, nature of comparison, issues, ideologies, etc., influence political participation. Capacities of political parties to notice the people involvement in politics, intensity and effectiveness of campaigning increase the voting

percentage. Burning issues and conflicting political ideologies divides people into groups. Such situation leads to wider participation in politics by the people.

ii. Expansion of governmental activities brings the hitherto untouched groups into contact with the government. When the government undertakes welfare measures for various sections of people in a democratic societies, the political beneficiaries press the government to accelerate the distributive measures, various beneficiaries organise themselves into various unions and associations, politicise their members and resort to pressure tactics like satyagraha to secure maximum benefits for their members.

iii. As citizens in democracy living in an open society, their political participation is influenced by certain environmental forces like religion, caste, political parties, ideologies and mass media, etc. Religious philosophy, scriptures, beliefs etc influence political participation. A liberal religion encourages political participation of various sections of society, including women and weaker sections while a conservative religion does not encourage women to participate in politics.

Various political parties which seek support of people try to explain their ideologies, programmes and achievements and at the same time highlight the failures and shortcomings of other parties. Thus they politicize citizens and involve them in various political activities. They swing the opinion of people in favour of or against a particular issue. Mass media like press, radio and television play an important role in politicising the people. They create political awareness among the people highlighting public issues. In a developing country like India where percentage of literacy is very low, radio is the main source of political information to the illiterate masses.¹⁰

Conclusion:

Effective working of Panchayat system requires effective control and supervision of development bureaucracy by the political Parties, but the problem of his type of provisions and control by popular representatives, which has become a critical problem. The problem lies in lack of proper commitment and orientation. The officials and non-officials may not have fully appreciated each others rule thereby creating frequent deadlock and crises in development administrations. The lack of culture of political and proper appreciation of the Panchayat system at the lower levels by the officials has resulted in this type of feelings & actions such feelings and actions can be effectively avoided by organising workshops, and short term training courses. In this connection, training assumes an important role for orienting and making them committed to the development function.

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