

**PANCHAYATI RAJ AND IMPLEMENTATION OF  
WELFARE SCHEMES FOR THE POOR IN ORISSA: A  
STUDY OF KORAPUT DISTRICT**

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### CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "PANCHAYATI RAJ AND IMPLEMENTATION OF WELFARE SCHEMES FOR THE POOR IN ORISSA: A STUDY OF KORAPUT DISTRICT", submitted by Raj Kumar Khosla is in partial fulfillment of Master of Philosophy degree of this university. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree to any other university and is his own work.

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To  
*My Affectionate maternal  
Grandfather and Grandmother*

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## ABBREVIATION

<b>ARWP</b>	<b>Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme</b>
<b>BDO</b>	<b>Block Development Officer</b>
<b>BPL</b>	<b>Below Poverty Line</b>
<b>CAPP</b>	<b>Command Area Development Programme</b>
<b>CDP</b>	<b>Community Development Programme</b>
<b>DPSP</b>	<b>Directive Principle of State Policy</b>
<b>DRDA</b>	<b>District Rural Development Programme</b>
<b>DWCRA</b>	<b>Development of Women and Children in the Rural Area</b>
<b>EAS</b>	<b>Employment Assurance Scheme</b>
<b>GKY</b>	<b>Ganga Kalyan Yojana</b>
<b>HYV</b>	<b>High Yielding Varieties</b>
<b>IAAP</b>	<b>Intensive Agriculture Area Programme</b>
<b>IADP</b>	<b>Intensive Agriculture District Programme</b>
<b>IRDP</b>	<b>Integrated Rural Development Programme</b>
<b>JGSY</b>	<b>Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana</b>
<b>MFAL</b>	<b>Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers Programme</b>
<b>MLAs</b>	<b>Members of Legislative Assembly</b>
<b>MNP</b>	<b>Minimum Need Programme</b>
<b>MPs</b>	<b>Members of Parliament</b>

<b>NDC</b>	<b>National Development Council</b>
<b>NES</b>	<b>National Extension Service</b>
<b>NFBs</b>	<b>National Family Benefit Scheme</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-Governmental Organization</b>
<b>NMBS</b>	<b>National Maternity Benefit Scheme</b>
<b>NREP</b>	<b>National Rural Employment Programme</b>
<b>OBCs</b>	<b>Other Backward Classes</b>
<b>PRI</b>	<b>Panchayati Raj Institution</b>
<b>RLEGP</b>	<b>Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme</b>
<b>SCs</b>	<b>Scheduled Castes</b>
<b>SEEUY</b>	<b>Self-employment Scheme for Educated Unemployed Youth</b>
<b>SFDA</b>	<b>Small Farmer Development Agency</b>
<b>SGSY</b>	<b>Swarnajayanti Gram Sworozgar Yojana</b>
<b>STs</b>	<b>Scheduled Tribes</b>
<b>TRYSEM</b>	<b>Training of Rural Youth fore self-employment</b>
<b>VLW</b>	<b>Village Level Worker</b>
<b>YMCA</b>	<b>Young men's Christian Association</b>

# ***Introduction***



## INTRODUCTION

India lives in its villages. The majority of her population lives in the rural areas. Since independence, all round socio-economic development of rural India was one of the important goals before the Government of India. In order to achieve this, it accorded a high priority to rural development and adopted several welfare programmes in the country. Before India's Independence, during different stages of national movement, the National Congress had highlighted the need for rural development as a means to address the economic backwardness of the country. Gandhi was a champion and a great articulator of the idea of rural-reconstruction. He also saw a strong connection between the self-sufficiency of the rural India and the project of independence and 'swaraj'. Although the Gandhian ideas on economy did not exercise much influence on the policies of the Indian state after independence, it was the economic necessity that brought the rural dimension on to the centre stage. The ultimate objective of rural development, as conceived by the policy makers, was to eradicate poverty and improve the quality of life for the masses. One can argue that it is with these objectives in mind that the Government of India initiated the Five Year Plans.

The First Five Year Plan (1951-56) emphasized on rapid agricultural development so as to achieve food self-sufficiency in the shortest possible time. It was also believed that an all-round, balanced development, would contribute towards the rise of national income and would also improve the living standards of the people over a period of time. The Second Plan (1956-61) focused its attention on industrial development. According to the planners, the industrial growth would eventually transform the rural economy. The Third Five Year Plan (1961-66) set as its goal the establishment of a self-reliant and self-generating economy. The development of basic industries remained one of the main planks of this new planning strategy. The Fourth Plan was concerned with the eradication of poverty. This plan aimed at an average 5.5 per cent rate of growth in the national income and the provision of national minimum for the weaker sections of the community. There were attempts to

fuse economic growth with distribution of resources across social classes. The slogan Garibi Hatao highlighted the dimension of distribution of resources and social justice. The Fifth Plan (1974-79) was introduced at a time when the Indian economy was passing through a crisis. This gave the goal of achieving economic justice a new meaning, a new saliency. The Fifth Plan had two main objectives: first the removal of poverty, and second, the achievement of self-reliance. The sixth plan (1978-83) clearly acknowledged the achievements of planning in India but also drew attention to the concentration of economic power in the hands of a few powerful business and industrial families and the growing inequality of income and wealth across social classes. The Janata Government sought to increase production and to provide employment to the people below poverty line. This plan also focused on enlarging the employment potential in the agriculture and allied sectors of the economy. It also emphasized the need to raise the income of the poor through a 'Minimum Need Programme'. Again when the Congress Government came to power it rejected the Janata approach and introduced an earlier model of growth by aiming at a direct attack on the problem of poverty by creating condition of an expanding economy. The Seventh Five Year Plan was introduced in April 1985. The main objectives of the Plan were to increase the agricultural productivity and to increase employment opportunities for the poor. The Eighth Five Plan was introduced in 1990. This plan was launched in midst of a severe economic crisis. The Narasimha Rao- government initiated the process of fiscal reforms with the view to provide new dynamism to the economy. The Eight Plan reflected these changes in its attempt to accelerate economic growth and to improve the quality of the common man<sup>1</sup>.

After so many decades after the independence, India still houses a large number of poor people in the world. This has led people to seek an explanation as to why in spite of all these Five-Year-plans, the Indian state has not been able to address the issue of poverty in India. It was felt that the planning process did not adequately reflect the interest of the poor belonging to the country. Even the

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<sup>1</sup>. Ruddar Datt and K. P. M. Sundharam, *Indian Economy*, S. Chand & Company., New Delhi, 2001., pp-252-253.

implementation of programmes did not involve the participation of the common people. It is in this context, that the need for decentralization and the role of the Panchayati Raj Institution has become significant. Even during the period of the nationalist movement, Indian polity was conceived in federal terms. Very early on the leaders of the Congress had realized that a proper governance of the country needed a network of institutions located at different levels of the Indian society. The argument for federal-decentralization was put forward at two levels. The federal structure, particularly the reorganization of provinces on linguistic basis, was reflective of the ethnic and linguistic pluralism of India. The argument is that a unitary system of rule could not address the pluralities of the country. The second argument was based on democratic governance. A huge country like India cannot be ruled properly by a centralized structure. Hence, the division of power and the creation of different levels were considered a necessity.

The history of the Panchayat system in India is quite old. Mahatma Gandhi saw village panchayat as a potential instrument for the socio-economic and political transformation of the rural society. He also viewed it as a site where collective life of people are created and nurtured. He was convinced that greater the power of the Panchayat the better it is for the people. The aim of the Panchayati Raj system is to take democracy to the village level and in the process empower the ordinary villagers who hitherto remained peripheral to the process of democratic governance. Every village Panchayat is a key locus of decentralization of legislative, executive and judicial power. It also came to represent the interface between the developmental state and the villages.

The primary objective of Panchayati Raj is to strengthen the socio-economic condition of the people at the grass-root level. It also aims to give power to the local people so that they can take an active role in the local governance. It also envisages active participation of all sections of people in the developmental programmes of the village. Due to the nature of the rural society in India, Panchayati Raj institutions are bound to confront the problems such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, poor

health condition and so on. The political participation of the people in local governance tends to get circumscribed to a large extent by these conditions. In turn, these conditions provide the backdrop for the intervention of the state.

The present study is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter focuses on the link between rural development and Panchayati Raj in India. In a general sense, the concept of rural development implies an over-all growth of the people inhabiting the rural society in the country. Here the notion of development is considered in a broader sense so as to include both economic and social well-being of the people. The objective of 'rural development' is to enhance the quality of life of the rural people. Within the notion of 'rural development', the need for developing and nurturing natural as well as human resources is strongly emphasized. It is also assumed that these resources are simultaneously the means as well as the goals of rural development.

When we talk of 'development' three of its basic components are always highlighted. These elements are: life sustenance, self-respect and freedom. Every individual has certain basic needs such as food, clothes, shelter, healthcare and security. Without the fulfillment of these needs, no human development is possible. Hence, a certain level of economic security is intrinsic to the notion of development. How some of these basic needs can be fulfilled has always been a subject matter of controversy. However, one thing is sure that logic of modern society dictates that in order to fulfill the basic needs of the individuals the production process has to be enhanced. A subsistent economy will not be able to fulfill the basic needs of the people. Similarly, enhancement of production alone cannot make sure that people get their basic needs. The system of distribution is equally vital.

The sustenance of life by obtaining its basic needs is an important ingredient of development. Though important, economic elements are only a part of what constitutes genuine development. Every person seeks some basic form of self-respect and dignity. It is well known that rural societies in India right through their complex

history have always been hierarchical. The prevalence of caste-system, from the point of view of the lower castes and dalits, tends to undermine individual dignity. It also robs people off their honour. Any concept of rural development that does not recognize such structures of indignities will remain lopsided and normatively inadequate. Similarly, an all-rounded development should always enhance individual freedom. In a basic sense, freedom refers not only to certain individual capacities but also to certain conditions in which such capacities can be exercised. Thus as a species of development, 'rural development' should be defined in these broad terms combining both economic and non-economic elements.

In India experiments with rural development started long before the independence. The first chapter deals with some of these important experiments undertaken during the colonial period. For instance, Rabindra Nath Tagore started the Shantiniketan Experiment in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Rural reconstruction was the basic aim of this programme. It also aimed at the socio-economic development of the rural community. The objective of this programme was to study the problem and to develop better ways to manage agriculture, livestock, cooperatives, and sanitation etc. The programme also included running of high schools, training facilities for both boys and girls in kitchen gardening, poultry, dairy, carpentry etc. Further Tagore started games and sports in the schools so that different caste-groups could mingle. He also emphasized the need for the local government to take up some responsibility in the rural development programmes that could lead to welfare of the rural folks.

The Marthandam experiment, like the one in Shantiniketan, was initiated in order to enhance the quality of life of the rural people. It became the demonstrative centre containing about a hundred local assemblies of the religious order of the Young Men's Christian Association. In this programme Dr. Spencer Hatch suggested that rural development is possible only by bringing about cooperation among the rural people. M. L. Brayne started the Gurugaon experiment that put emphasis on self-help among the rural people. This programme also used the means such as films, songs, and theatre to pass on information regarding agriculture and health to the people.

The Baroda Rural reconstruction started from the Grow More Food Enquiry Committee Report. From the experience of Marthandam, and after studying the methods of extension and co-operation in Europe, V. T. Krishnamachari set into operation a comprehensive and progressive programme of rural reconstruction, covering various aspects of rural life. Like other experiments before, he also put emphasis on the people's capacity for self- help and self-reliance. In the Gandhian tradition of constructive programme, the concept of rural development was treated in a different way. His action plan involved the rebuilding of every aspects of human life i.e. economic, educational, social and political. Gandhiji's primary objective was self-sufficiency, particularly in food and cloth. The rural development in a holistic way, in a Gandhian discourse, is related to gram swaraj.

The Firka scheme highlighted the short-term and long-term objectives of the rural development programme. The short-term objective of the scheme was to develop the basic amenities and institutional framework, particularly carrying out of communication, water supply and sanitation projects and formation of panchayats and co-operatives. The long-term objective was to attain self-sufficiency in matters of basic needs like food, clothing, shelters etc. through the development of agriculture, animal husbandry, khadi and cottage industries. The Nilokheri was yet another pioneering attempt, which drew countrywide attention and influenced community development initiatives.

In 1947, S. K. Dey, former minister of Community Development started a small refugee resettlement centre at Nilokheri in Punjab. This programme called as "Mazdoor Manzil" because it was based on the principle of "He who would not work, neither shall he eat". This programme also pointed that right to living was guaranteed till surplus was available with any member of the colony. Equal rights for the education and medical care for the sick were also guaranteed in this programme. A year later, Albert Mayer launched the Etawah Pilot Project. The aim of the project was to improve the quality and productivity of land, and to provide educational

facilities and sanitation in the villages. Local cooperatives and panchayats were meant to spread the message of development and the programme was intended to be self-propelling. The objective of entire programme was to strengthen social and economic condition of the rural areas.

In the post-independence period, the Community Development Projects were inaugurated in 1952. These projects drew their inspiration from the earlier initiatives at Shantiniketan, Marthandam and others. The main objective of this programme was to begin a process of reconstruction in the rural areas of the country. The initial enthusiasm for the Community Development Programme was phenomenal, but these initiatives did not bring about significant changes at the local level. Run by the bureaucracy, it was not able to generate enough participation of people at the village level. Without popular participation and without adequate institutional basis, the Programme did not yield the desired result. The perceptive policy makers were quick to realize that without popular participation and proper institutional basis, rural development initiatives would not reach the needy and the poor.

The experience of the Community Development Programme led the policy makers towards the path of democratic decentralization. The modern Panchayati Raj came into being as a product of such a change of thinking. The Balwantray Mehta study team strongly recommended democratic decentralization. The team advocated a three-tier Panchayati Raj Institution, at the village level, at the block level and finally at the district level. Due to lack of involvement of local people in Panchayati Raj Institutions and irregularities of election, the three-tier Panchayat could not survive for long. Again a committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Ashok Mehta. The Ashok Mehta Committee suggested two-tier Panchayati Raj system. The committee pointed out that below the state level should be the district, and below the district, the block level. The district level institution was an executive committee of Zilla Parishad. The Mandal Panchayat should work at the local level for rural development. However, no action could be taken on the recommendations of the Ashok Mehta committee at the central level. The G.V.K. Rao committee was

appointed by the Planning Commission to review the existing administrative arrangements for rural development. The committee suggested three-tier system of Panchayati Raj Institutions and all the three tiers were considered important. The committee also suggested that the district plans should ensure that need of the poor are taken into account while framing policies. L. M. Singhvi strongly recommended that the Gram Sabha should be reestablished which has been forgotten for long period.

The Sarkaria commission advocated that the power of enacting any law on panchayats should be vested under entry 5 List II exclusively with the state. The commission suggested that there should be uniformity of law throughout the country. The legislation on Panchayati Raj reached a historical climax with the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act in December 1992. The Act came into force from April 1993. The 73<sup>rd</sup> Act provides for a three-tier Panchayati Raj system: the Gram Sabha should be at village level, then comes the Panchayat level and finally the district level. It also provided for reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Women. The first chapter looks at this long history synoptically and examines the ways in which the changes were brought in relation to the Panchayati Raj system and its complex link with rural development.

The second chapter has a special focus. It deals with the role Panchayati Raj in implementing welfare schemes. With the new constitutional status, the Panchayati Raj system has played an important role in implementing various welfare schemes. Since the First Five Year Plan the aim and objective of the plan and programme is to strengthen the socio-economic condition of the rural area. The postcolonial state is inevitably an interventionist state and the intervention is usually done through several institutions located at different levels of the society. Since independence, the main focus of the state intervention was and continues to be in the realm of poverty-eradication. At different points of time, various welfare schemes were launched by the state to eradicate rural poverty.



Following the study report, the Government of India launched a programme called Intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP) in one district from each state of the Union. This programme provided all types of facilities, such as adequate and timely supply of fertilizers, supply of credit by cooperation, adequate storage facilities for seeds and fertilizer and village planning for increased production. The IADP was then extended under the name of Intensive Agriculture Area Programme (IAAP). The IAAP was mainly for the use of High Yielding Varieties (HYV), in the next state this programme was led to the revolutionary change in agricultural production. The programme led to Green Revolution in the country. The Land Reform Policy was started in order to alleviate poverty. The First Plan emphasized to abolish intermediaries, enactment of radical tenancy reform and resumption of personal cultivation based on peasant proprietorship. Finally the two centrally sponsored programmes were Small Farmers Development Agency and Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers Programme launched for giving institutional supports to the small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers through Block Development Offices, Cooperative Societies and Banks.

The Integrated Rural Development Programme was introduced in 1978-79. The aim of the IRDP was to remove poverty and unemployment in rural societies, through family wise and also individual wise planning to generate additional income. The small and marginal farmers, share-croppers, tenants, agricultural labourers, rural artisans, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and other disadvantaged groups get benefit from this programme. The National Rural Employment Programme was meant to improve the economic condition of the rural poor. Under this programme, the preference was given to SCs and STs and Women. In addition to these programmes, special initiatives were also undertaken to look into the welfare of children and women in the rural areas. The Jawahar Rozgar Yojana was started mainly for generation of additional gainful employment for unemployed and underemployed persons in the rural areas belonging to the families below poverty line.

The role of the Panchayat Raj has been and continues to be vital for the implementation of these welfare schemes. The Gram Sabha of a particular village does the selection of beneficiaries and the particular village that would benefit out of these welfare programmes. The plan for the area in terms of identifying the need of the area is also undertaken by Panchayats. Besides these, Panchayat system is also responsible for construction of village roads, make availabilities of drinking water, educational facilities, better health care and rural sanitation. It also emphasizes on financial transparency for better knowledge of the public on various development programmes. The link between the programmes, state and Panchayati Raj institutions is explored in this chapter.

The third chapter deals with the role of the Panchayati Raj in implementing welfare schemes in Orissa. For this Koraput, one of the most backward districts of the state is chosen. The Orissa Gram Panchayati Act 1948 came into being in order to establish local self-Government. Orissa was the first state in India to introduce the legislation. It was considered to be the first major innovator in the field of local self-Government in India. With the introduction of three-tier Panchayati Raj by the recommendation of Balwantray Mehta, the Orissa Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad Acts came into being in 1959. In 1968 Zilla Parishads were abolished by the Swatantra Government. But before the landmark 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act came into being, the Zilla Parishads were re-established in 1991. This chapter critically examines the role of Panchayati Raj system as an implementing agency within a specific district.

The term of the Panchayat is for five years, and the people directly elect all the members of the Village Panchayat. The people also directly elect all the members of the Panchayat Samiti and the Chairpersons are indirectly elected. The post of chairperson of Zilla Parishad is also indirectly elected. If any of these get dissolved before the completion of its term then within six months a fresh election shall be held to elect new representatives at the Panchayat level.

The Orissa Panchayati Raj system is associated with Grama Sasan, Gram Sabha and Palli Sabha. Grama is considered as an entity with more than ten thousand people. Grama Sasan approves the plans, programmes and project for socio- economic development before the Grama Panchayat takes those up. Gram Sabha is the main organization at the village level. The primary objective is to involve people in selecting beneficiaries for various plans and programmes operating at the village level. Palli Sabha is also formed in every village. Palli Sabha meets annually in February each year to give its recommendation to the Gram Panchayat on the developmental works and programmes. It also prepares the annual budget estimate and submits to the Gram Panchayat. In the three-tier Panchayati Raj, the Village Panchayati is the primary institution at the village level. The Panchayat Samiti is at the intermediate level that connects Village Panchayat with Zilla Parishad. The Zilla Parishad is key institution that mediates between the provincial state and the people.

Panchayati Raj in Orissa, as elsewhere, provides reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and Women. The reserved seats for SCs, STs and Backward Classes are in proportion to their population and one-third of the seats are reserved for women. Orissa was the first state that provided 33 per cent reservation for women at Gram Panchayat level.

The function of the Panchayati Raj is quite comprehensive. Within the process of democratic decentralization, Panchayati Raj plays an important role. It provides opportunities to the local people to directly participate in grass-root democracy. Besides this, the Panchayati Raj takes responsibilities for the construction and maintenance of rural roads, school buildings, primary health centre etc. It is also responsible for providing sanitation facilities, drinking-water facilities, rural housing, rural electricity facilities etc. in the rural areas.

Koraput, as mentioned before, is one of Orissa's most backward districts. A significant portion of its population belongs to several tribal communities.

Comparatively speaking, the percentage of literate people of this district is very less. Due to poor economic condition, this district is depends to a large extent on Governments assistance. There are various welfare schemes, which are meant to strengthen the economic condition of the district such as, the Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana, which is being implemented in all the 197 Panchayats of the district, with effect from 1 April 1999. One of the main objects of this programme is to provide infrastructure including durable assets at the village level, and to create assets to enable the rural poor to increase their access to sustained employment. It also tries to generate wage employment for the unemployed poor in the rural areas of the district. The Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana has been in operation since 1999. This is essentially a self-employment programme. The individuals living below poverty line are the targets of this welfare-intervention by the state. Specially the SCs, STs and Women get preference in this programme. The Employment Assurance Scheme was launched in 1993. The Employment Assurance Scheme's main objective is to create through manual work additional wage-employment for the rural poor living below the poverty line.

Due to poverty and limited opportunity for employment in agriculture sector, this district needs to provide employment throughout the year through developmental works undertaken through different schemes of District Rural Development Agencies. In this district, the BPL families do not have adequate shelter to live. The Indira Awas Yojana has helped some of them to have access to proper housing. In the Social Assistance Programme, the district also gets resources from the Government and pass on the benefits to the old people and the needy women of the area. Through this scheme, Mid-Day meals are provided to the children of the primary school in this area. There is a shortage of drinking Water in the district. In order to address this problem, the district administration undertakes the digging of tube wells, ponds and so on. Resources for these activities are arranged through the welfare programme. Through the Public Distribution System, Koraput district gets assistance from the Government to provide subsidized rice, kerosene, sugar etc to the BPL families. The rural electrification programme, rural connectivity programme,

education facilities etc. are meant to improve the living standards of the poor people belonging to the Koraput district.

While discussing the implementation of the welfare programmes in Koraput district, the chapter intends to focus on the Panchayati Raj institutions and their role in effecting rural development in the area. The dissertation is primarily based on secondary literature and through these an attempt has been made to explicate the link between the initiatives of development and the institutions of state. Although not highlighted, this work highlights the operation of democracy at a local level. As we know, the story of democracy in India cannot be told without taking into account the developmental interventions of the state. A study on the implementation of welfare programmes provides us with a window to look into the rural society of the district and the power relations that provides the backdrop to the problematic of rural development.

# ***Chapter-I***

***Rural Development and Panchayati Raj  
in India.***

## Chapter-1

### RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND PANCHAYATI RAJ IN INDIA

In this present chapter an attempt is made to discuss, although broadly, the relationship between rural development and Panchayati Raj system in India. The existing Panchayati Raj institutions in the country have a long history and it is essential to analyze their evolution and growth. In the early decades after the independence, Panchayati Raj institutions were conceived largely as a means through which developmental energy of the state could be channelized. Their role in the process of democratization was not adequately emphasized. Hence it is vital that the nature of the Panchayati Raj Institutions should be discussed as it evolved and changed over a period of time. The present chapter begins with a discussion on the idea of 'development'. The term 'development' has always been and still is controversial. It is essential that the term should be defined in broad fashion in order to include the components that are essential for the realization of true potential of individuals and communities belonging to the society. Analysis and understanding the interface between the Panchayati Raj institutions and rural development remains the central concern of this chapter.

Rural development means all round development of rural areas including their physical, economic, social, cultural and moral development<sup>1</sup>. The term 'rural development' carries a special significance for the developing countries for a large segment of their population live in rural areas. As a concept, it connotes overall development of rural areas with a view to improve the quality of life of rural people. In this sense, it is a comprehensive and multidimensional concept and encompasses the development of agriculture-allied activities, village and cottage industries, socio-economic infrastructure, and of human resources in rural areas.

According to Robert Chambers, rural development 'is a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men, to gain for themselves and their children more of what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest

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<sup>1</sup>. G. R. Madan, *India's Developing Village*, Allied Publisher, New Delhi, 1990, p. 522.

among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas to demand and control more of the benefits of rural development. The group includes small-scale farmer, tenants and landless<sup>2</sup>. Lassey highlights that the focus of rural development should be on the following: i) preservation of ecological integrity with a view to provide continuing supply of life-supporting resources; ii) efficient and appropriate land use; iii) healthy living conditions; iv) aesthetically pleasing environment; v) effective social, economic and governmental institutions; vi) improved human welfare terms of minimal economic and social level vii) physical structures and adopted landscape of pleasing design; viii) comprehensiveness that is full range physical, biological and human factor in rural regions.

The World Bank has suggested a more comprehensive definition of the term. It defines rural development as a strategy to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people that is rural poor including the small and marginal farmers and tenants. It also includes a mix of activities including projects to raise agricultural output, create employment, improve health and education, expand communication and improve housing. The nature and content of a specific rural development project reflects the political, social and economic circumstances of a particular, country or region<sup>3</sup>.

Rural development can also be seen as a process of developing and utilizing natural and human resources in rural settings. It can bring about new technologies to the rural areas and can contribute towards the creation of employment for the rural poor. The quality of life and its sustenance remain central to the concept of rural development. In addition to economic growth, the process of rural development can bring about changes in popular attitude and in many cases even in customs and beliefs of the people<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup>. Quoted in Katar Singh, *Rural Development: Principles, Policies and Management*, Sage Publications, New Delhi 1986, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>. Quoted in K. S. Arya and et.al, (Ed.), *Rural Development in India*, K. K. Publication, D. A. V. College, Chandigarh, 1986, pp. 73-75.

<sup>4</sup>. Katar Singh, Op. Cit. p. 18.



## **Basic Elements Of Development**

At a general level, irrespective of specificities of geography, culture, historical contexts, three elements are basic to the meaning of development. These elements can be seen as minimally necessary without which the term development cannot be fully grasped. These are as follows: i) life sustenance; ii) self-respect; iii) freedom.

### **I. Life sustenance:**

People have certain basic needs without which it would be impossible or very difficult for them to survive. These basic necessities include food, clothes, shelter, healthcare and security. When any of these are absent or critically in short supply, we may state that a condition of absolute underdevelopment exists. Provision for these 'life-sustaining' requirements for everybody is a basic function of all economies whether they are capitalist, socialist or mixed. In this sense, it can be claimed that economic growth (increased availability of basic necessities) is a necessary condition for the improvement of the quality of life, which is development. The absence of the minimal requirements in most developing countries, including India, creates different levels of expectations of the poor people towards the notion of development.

### **II. Self respect**

Every person and every nation seeks some basic form of self-respect, dignity or honour. The relationship between self-respect and development is quite complex. Often, deprivation causes low self-esteem among the people. A notion of equality is somehow central to the notion of self-respect. We as moderns believe that every individual, at least in principle, is endowed with reason and with capacities to direct his/her life the way he/she chooses. A modern sense of dignity is directly antithetical to the principle of hierarchy based on ascriptive. A model of development that only looks at the economic dimension is bound to be limited. Absence or denial of self-esteem indicates a lack of development.

### **III. Freedom**

Freedom in this context refers to political and ideological freedom and freedom from social servitude. It has two dimensions: negative and positive. The negative conception refers to the absence of constraints that individuals experience in society. It implies the state and other institutions should not impose unreasonable restrictions on individuals' freedom. Although important, the presence of negative freedom is not enough. One ought to treat freedom as an 'exercise' concept. In other words, it is important to realize that the exercise of freedom on the part of the individuals is vital. The relationship between freedom and development is constitutive. Achievement of more freedom is the goal of development and at the same time without a minimal presence of freedom it is difficult to undertake developmental initiatives in society. The conventional goals of development such as poverty-reduction, reduction of inequality and so on can be seen as essentially freedom-enhancing.

### **Objectives of Development**

There are certain basic objectives that are integral or essential to process of development. They are as follows:

1. To increase the availability and widen the distribution of basic life sustaining articles such as food, clothes, shelter, health-care and security;
2. To raise standards of living including in addition to higher purchasing power, the provision of more jobs, better education and greater attention to culture and humanistic values;
3. To expand the range of economic and social choice to individuals by freeing them from servitude and dependence<sup>5</sup>.

### **Rural Development in India**

The concept of development administration emerged in the wake of decolonization of the third world countries after the Second World War. The need for socio-economic reconstruction was widely felt in these societies. India was no exception to this general rule. Even during the freedom struggle, the issues of

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. pp. 19-21.

nation building and of socio-economic development India were raised in various forums of the National Congress.

The all-pervasive poverty in the rural areas of India struck the attention of many leaders of the Congress during the period of anti-colonial struggle. As the Congress penetrated into the rural areas, the problems of the poor peasants became important for the purpose of anti-mobilization. The deprivation of the peasants was seen as a direct product of India's colonial subjugation. It is not surprising that Gandhi put the issue of reconstruction of rural areas and alleviation of rural poverty at the centre of his anti-colonial imagination. Therefore, Gandhi's constructive programme for improving the condition of the rural poor was essentially a political act, and his emphasis on rural development was primarily an initiative in national reconstruction <sup>6</sup>.

### **Rural Development in Pre-Independent Period**

Before we discuss the nature of rural development in the post-independent period, it is essential that we should focus our attention on some of the experiments on rural reconstruction undertaken during the colonial period. Some of the ideas underlying rural development as practiced today have a long history. Once we know about these old initiatives, then we can map the changes that has occurred in the sphere of rural development in India. Some of the programmes concerning rural reconstruction during the pre-independence period are discussed below.

#### **1. Sriniketan Experiment**

As early as 1908 Rabindranath Tagore had founded several rural reconstruction centres in eight villages in the Kalingram Pargana in West Bengal. Later he went on to establish Shantiniketan (1921) with a view to bring about an all-round transformation of village life. This experiment is popularly known as Sriniketan Rural Reconstruction Programme. This experiment was intended to bring about an all-round development of the villages in the specified area. In

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<sup>6</sup>.. G. K. Lieten, and R. Srivastava, *Unequal Partners*, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 199, p. 13.

order to do that it was essential to identify and understand the problems affecting the rural areas.

According to this experiment, attempts were made to develop village-crafts that were essential not only for generating employment for the villagers but also for creating a sense of self-reliance among them. It also provided schools for boys and girls with boarding facilities. The programme also included running of high schools, training facilities for the boys and girls in kitchen gardening, poultry, dairy, carpentry and other crafts. One of the objectives of the experiment was to create a sense of solidarity among the children in school. In a caste-divided society, intermingling of people belonging to different castes was a desirable goal. It was not possible to undermine the role of the caste in the village life. However, within the school it was possible to undermine the hierarchical order of the caste by bringing the students together. In this context, the role of the games and sports were found to be useful. It gave opportunities to the students to intermingle. Tagore emphasized the importance of rural reconstruction and wished to draw the attention of the people towards it. The running of the experiment was not easy. The lack of professional guidance for undertaking different measures for rural development was deeply felt. As the salaries were not attractive, it was difficult to retain the trained persons for long.

Tagore wanted that the local government to discharge its responsibility towards rural development. He also felt that it had an important role to play towards the welfare of the rural folks. Needless to say that during the colonial period, this idea was not properly received by the government. Tagore also wanted to increase the cultural resources available in the rural areas of the country. No doubt his ideas did spread around and influenced the people who came in contact with him. He was also aware of the limitations of his experiment. He knew that several rural problems remained un-addressed by his experiment. In spite of all its limitations, Tagore's experiment was indeed commendable and

contributed towards the emerging pool of ideas on rural development and reconstruction.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. The Martandam Experiment

The Martandam experiment was started in 1921 under the leadership of Dr. Spencer Hatch. The purpose of the experiment was to bring about a complete upward development for rural people. The Martandam became a demonstration centre for about a hundred local assemblies of religious order of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) for the surrounding villages. It had a demonstration farm, prize animals, equipments for honey industry and other cottage vocations at its campus. The work was carried out by local assemblies of the YMCA whose members offered voluntary service in their spare time. The local leaders were trained and actively participated in the process. Rural surveys were conducted in order to assess the situations at the ground level. The organizers held drama, exhibitions, melas and demonstration of various activities in order to get the villagers involved in the process of rural development. These activities were also helpful in disseminating the ideas of development in the rural areas. Some local industries like weaving, poultry and bee-keeping were initiated on a cooperative basis.

The approach of Dr. Hatch was based on the idea of 'self-help' and on providing adequate guidance to the villagers. According to him, a combination of these two elements would help in the process of rural reconstruction and development. The other principles that he emphasized upon were: I) starting work where people are ready; ii) understanding the total fabric of social relationship; iii) offering a comprehensive programme; iv) tailoring the programme according to local needs of the people; v) working on the basis of what the people already have and familiar with; and vi) planning on a long-term basis and ensuring reasonable stability of trained leader.

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<sup>7</sup> Dr. K. Venkata Reddy, *Rural Development in India*, Himalaya Publishing House, Delhi, 1988, pp.33-34.

On the basis of his own experience, Dr. Hatch affirmed that the foundation of rural reconstruction work was essentially spiritual. On a different plane, Martandam experiment attempted to change the outlook of the rural people that included enthusing them, inculcating in them a desire to improve and creating in them a spirit of cooperation and self-respect. In time, the messages of this experiment were taken to various other places in the country. Its workers helped the process of rural development that were taken up in places such as Baroda and Cochin.<sup>8</sup>

### 3. The Gurgaon Experiment:

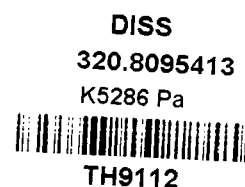
Mr. F. L. Brayne started rural reconstruction work in Gurgaon district, when he was appointed as a District Magistrate there. Brayne spoke of rural reconstruction in terms of the old-fashioned virtues such as hard work, thrift, self-respect, self-control and self-help. He did not believe in the idea that rural development was possible only with the intervention of the state. According to him, the desire for improvement on the part of the people was the key to economic betterment, without which the economic gain ran the risk of being overrun by wasteful expenditure and population pressure. He focused on four fundamental principles such as i) panchayats for spontaneous and permanent improvement; ii) knowledge – mass education particularly of girls; iii) example and leadership by the elite; and iv) spirit of survival and sense of duty to undergo sacrifices for fellow citizens.

On the basis of these four principles, Mr. Brayne established 8 schools of economics and domestic science to teach dignity of labour and self-help to the rural people. Dissemination of these principles was conducted through films, songs and dramas. Emphasis was put on increasing farm yields and on improving health standards. His great contribution was the creation of the 'Village Guide', as a multi-purpose worker playing a catalytic role in the process of rural development in the country.<sup>9</sup> This experiment was novel in the sense that never before the cause of rural development was championed by a government official.

<sup>8</sup>. S. N. Mishra, *Rural Development and Panchayati Raj*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, pp. 21-23.

<sup>9</sup>. Ibid. pp. 23-24.

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#### **4. Rural Reconstruction in Baroda:**

Baroda was one of the advanced Princely states in colonial India. In 1932, under its enlightened Maharaja a Scheme of Rural Reconstruction was initiated. Mr. V. T. Krishnamachari, known for his 'Grow More Food Enquiry Committee' Report, and the former Diwan of the state, was the spirit behind this programme. He was knowledgeable about various experiments of rural development in India as well as in Europe and pressed these ideas into the making of this programme. The main objective of the reconstruction programme was to enhance the quality of life in the rural areas of the state. He emphasized on the ideas such as 'will to live better' and capacity for 'self-help' and 'self-reliance'. The experiment incorporated several programmes such as: i) improvement of communication; ii) digging of drinking water wells; iii) anti-malarial measures; iv) pasture improvement; v) distribution of improved seeds; vi) training in cottage crafts; vii) establishment of Panchayats and co-operatives covering every village; viii) development of village schools as centers for teaching agriculture and imparting the principle of "Will to live better".

One Crore rupees was earmarked for the rural reconstruction work in the state, the income from which was to be utilized for meeting the cost of this programme. In every district, intensive zones, consisting of twenty to twenty-five villages were carved out. They were managed by graduate assistants who were also responsible for spreading the messages of rural development among the masses, and also for forming cooperatives in the villages. By 1942-43, twenty-four such intensive zones covering nearly 487 villages were in operation in Baroda.

These measures were supported by socio-economic legislation such as debt-clearance, consolidation of holdings, and strengthening monogamous code of conduct among the people. The programme shared many characteristics with

other such programmes, namely, comprehensiveness, well-knit organizational support, use of institutional resources, emphasis on agriculture and so on<sup>10</sup>.

### **5. Gandhian Tradition of Constructive Work:**

The role of Gandhi in the anti-colonial struggle is a widely researched field. For the first time in the history of India, he brought a large number of peasants, tribals, and peripheral communities into the fold of the nationalist movement. However, his intervention in the realm of rural development and reconstruction has not received that much attention from the scholars and policy makers. It is true that whenever people talk of village India, they mention the name of Gandhi, but this name-dropping is more ceremonial than substantive. It is important to remember that Gandhi's utopian imagination was overtly rural. His ideas concerning the rural reconstruction can only be understood within the context of his broad world-view about society and social construction. Similarly, his idea of village reconstruction was primarily normative, a significant part of his vision of 'swaraj'. According to Gandhi, the colonial rule brought in its wake large-scale deprivation to the country and impoverishment to the large masses of peasants. The moral decline in India, to Gandhi, was intimately linked to the dislocation of its rural society. Hence Gandhi's ideas on rural development always contained both the economic and moral dimensions within it. Gandhi's Sevagram programme of 1920 reflected clearly his ideas on rural development. His action plan was holistic in nature involving all aspects (economic, social, moral and so on) of human life.<sup>11</sup>

Gandhi's ideas of constructive programme consisted of the following components: i) use of khadi; ii) promotion of village industries; iii) removal of social discrimination; iv) basic and adult education; v) village cleanliness; vi) communal harmony; vii) prohibition; viii) education in health and hygiene; ix) uplifting women; and x) propagation of national language.

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<sup>10</sup>. Sagan Chand, *Community Development and Panchayati Raj in India*, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1967, p.50.

<sup>11</sup>. Kishore Chandra Padhy, *Rural Development in Modern India*, B. R. Publishing Cooperation, New Delhi, 1986, p. 41.



Gandhi laid great stress on self-sufficiency, particularly with regard to food and other daily requirements of individuals. He made village autonomy as a precondition as a product of development. The individual was to be at the centre of developmental initiatives that could expand and express itself in ever-widening circles, beginning from local panchayat and heading towards a corresponding national organization or super-national organization through various intermediate tiers. He introduced Khadi and put emphasis on basic education to every citizen. There is, however, substantial agreement that at the core of his programme lay the cultivation of some moral values namely, truth, non-violence, non-possession, self-restraint, dignity of work, fearlessness and that he insisted on the purity of the means to achieve these moral ends<sup>12</sup>.

As pointed out earlier, veneration of Gandhi has often prevented people from undertaking a critical analysis of his visions including the ones regarding the rejuvenation of villages in India. However, after his assassination in 1948, attempts were made by his followers to put his ideas of rural development into practice. In this context, Vinoba's work can be singled out as significant. Gandhi left behind a number of organizations of constructive work with different degree of health and efficiency. Incorporation of the Khadi and Village Industry Programme, notion of village self-sufficiency, and the faith on "Panchayati Raj" and "Sahakari Samaj" movement in contemporary period can be seen as the impact of Gandhian ideas on developmental discourse in India. The Bhoodan and Gramdan movement led by Vinoba and Jaiprakash Narayan could be viewed as a continuation of the Gandhian tradition.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Rural development Schemes: Lessons for the future**

#### **1. The Firka Scheme in Madras**

The Madras Government started the Firka Scheme in the state with a purpose "to organize the villagers for a happier, more prosperous and fuller life in

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<sup>12</sup>. S. C. Jain, *Community Development and Panchayati Raj in India*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1967, p.51.

<sup>13</sup>. S. N. Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

which the individual villagers will have the opportunity to develop both as an individual and as a unit of well-integrated society”.

The short-term objective of the scheme was to develop basic amenities and institutional framework, particularly for carrying out communication, water supply and sanitation projects and for establishing Panchayats and co-operatives. The long-term objective was to attain self-sufficiency in matters of basic needs of the people such as food, clothing, shelter etc, through the development of agriculture, animal husbandry, Khadi and cottage industries.

The Scheme was launched in 1946 and a special fund of Rupees 4 crore was created for this purpose. The Director of Rural Welfare was put in charge of the scheme at the provincial level. At the district level, the collector was made responsible for implementing the scheme. Rural Welfare Officer who was in charge of two or three Firka and had under him five to ten ‘Gram-Sevaks’, one for each of the circles into which the Firka, consisting of villages, had been divided. Every Firka was provided with staffs from the departments of Agriculture and Public Works. Public participation in the programme was conceived in terms of the matching contribution that came from the people. In all construction works, matching contribution from the people was insisted upon. There were non-officials who were associated with the programme through a State Rural Welfare Board comprising of the various departments. The help of the prominent constructive workers were also drawn upon from time to time. At Firka level, there were development committees to advise on the implementation of the scheme. The programme covered the following areas: i) communication; ii) drinking water facilities; iii) improvement of sanitation; iv) improvements of agriculture including extension of the benefits of “Grow more Food” scheme; v) development of Khadi and other village industries; vi) adult education including elimination of social evils; vii) establishment of co-operative societies.

The Firka Development Scheme was merged with C.D. and N.E.S. Programme when the latter was adopted by the state in 1953-54. Considering the programme’s contents, pattern of organization and its broad approach, one could say that the C.D. and N.E.S. programme remained in an embryonic form in the

earlier experiment. In spite of the differences, the basic approach, the structure of administration, and the contents of the new programmes were very similar to the one contained in the Firka experiment<sup>14</sup>.

## **2. Nilokheri Experiment.**

Nilokheri was another pioneering attempt, which drew countrywide attention and influenced the CD movement. In 1947, Sri. S.K. Dey, the former Minister of Community Development, started a small refugee resettlement centre at Nilokheri in Karnal district of Punjab, under the ministry of Rehabilitation, Government of India<sup>15</sup>.

This programme was called 'Mazdoor Manzil', because it was based on the principle of "He who would not work, neither shall he eat". Right to life was considered very important within this programme. Equal rights for the education and medical care for the sick were also guaranteed in this programme.

The main objective of the experiment was to attain self-sufficiency both within the town as well as in the surrounding villages. The central aim of this programme was to initiate vocational training for people. Several training centres covering dairy, poultry, piggery, printing press, engineering workshop, tannery and bone meal factory were opened for the purpose of skilling the people. People were trained in the vocation of their choice for their economic and social development. Although the experiment was not a great success, it left its imprint on the Community Development programme in India. The Nilokheri programme became a symbol of progress through self-help and mutual aid<sup>16</sup>.

## **3. The Etawah Pilot Project.**

Albert Mayer (an American town-planner who was in India during the Second World War) started the Etawah Project in 1948. The negotiations to initiate this programme started in 1946. The Government of Uttar Pradesh

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<sup>14</sup>. S. C. Jain, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>15</sup>. G. R. Madan, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>16</sup>. S. N. Mishra, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

inaugurated this development project at Mahewa in district Etawah in 1948, with the help of Sri Albert Mayer. This programme covered 64 villages with a population of 70,000. The aim of the programme was to improve the quality of land, agricultural practices and educational facilities in the villages. With the support of the local cooperatives and panchayats, the programme was intended to be self-propelling. This experiment was followed by a number of projects in the eastern parts of the state. As a pioneer venture, Etawah had a good deal to offer to the nation: its successes as well as its failures had much in them to guide the future of the rural community development movement in India. Thus, it served as a model for the community projects started later in 1952<sup>17</sup>.

## **Rural Development and Democratic Decentralization in Post-Independence**

### **Community Development Programme**

After India's independence, the basic objective of the newly formed Government was to initiate development programmes to strengthen the socio-economic condition of the rural area. The Community Development Programme was launched for all round development of the rural area.

As defined by the United Nations, "Community Development" means, the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social to integrate these communities into the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress<sup>18</sup>. Under the First Five Year Plan, the CD Programme and the National Extension Service were given priority for the purpose of effecting social and economic transformation in rural areas. The Government of India had entered an agreement with the Ford-foundation to start the Community Development Programme. The first series of this programme was launched on October 2, 1952.

The Community Development Programme was launched by taking the previous experiments undertaken by people in the colonial period. Undoubtedly,

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<sup>17</sup>. G. R. Madan, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>18</sup>. R. L. Khanna, *Panchayati Raj in India*, The English Book Depot, 1972, p. 211.

these experiments exercised influence on the Community Development Programme. Among these, the Etawah project undertaken with the guidance of Albert Mayer exercised the greatest influence. The basic premise on which CDP rested was to motivate the rural people to undertake community-based work or initiatives in order to improve their social and economic condition and their life and environment. The Government of India provided general guidance for the promotion of the CD programme. A few years later a development programme with limited scope and funding, named as National Extension Service (NES) was introduced as a prelude to the launching of CDP in the remaining rural areas of the country.

Since independence, with the emphasis on rural development, decentralization of the planning process assumed greater importance. The decentralized planning, it was rightly argued, can be successful only through people's participation. Participation was considered both as a means as well as an end of the developmental initiatives. The CD programme was launched with high ambition to meet the challenges of rural reconstruction, but it remained a programme run by the bureaucracy without local level participation. Therefore the programme could not respond to the needs of the people effectively. Finally it was thought that the remedy lay in the decentralization of power, starting from the national state to the village-level. Nearly five years later in 1957, a study team under the Chairmanship of Balwantray Mehta was appointed by the Planning Commission to review the working of the CD Programme and also to examine the question of reorganization of district administration to provide for popular participation between the village and state level<sup>19</sup>.

### **Local Self-Government in Pre-Independence period**

The Local Self-Government or Panchayati Raj did not emerge all on a sudden in Post-Community Development Programme period. Since the ancient period, the Local Self-Government functioned at the local levels. It is essential to present a brief account of the Local Self-Government in Pre-independent India.

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<sup>19</sup>. R. L. Khanna, p. 212.

In Ancient period, according to the Rig Veda (1200 B.C.), the Self-Government functioned in self-sufficient Villages spread in several Kingdoms in the Indian Sub-Continent. The Self-Government comprised of a village assembly. The village elders belonging to various households formed the assembly and some among them chosen by consensus comprised the panchayat. The Self-Government took decisions and actions on village defense, law and order, inter-personal and inter-household disputes and maintenance of commercial assets. It was also taking responsible for collection of tax to pay the King or the Central Government.

During the medieval period, the Self-Government was not successful. In this period the Muslim rulers, specially the Mughals, based their governments on the principles of feudalism. Under the Mughal rule, the Government was in charge of maintaining law and order, local defence, higher judicial functions and tax administration. There were feudal chiefs and revenue Collectors (Zamidars) those who mediated between the rulers and the village people. This certainly did not prepare the soil for local self-government to take root in India.

During the British period, a highly centralized bureaucratic system of administration comprising district, provincial and central administrations was established in the country. The purpose of creating a centralized administration system was to facilitate the extraction of land revenue from the people. The colonial state needed an administrative structure for its effective rule. Later on the idea of local government grew for effective functioning of the government at the local level and to appease the educated class of Indians who wanted to take part in the administration of the country. The Governor General Lord Rippon (in Council) passed a resolution that the primary aim of Local Self-Government was to impart political education to the people. Efficiency in management of local affairs was of secondary consideration to him. He suggested that, for rural areas there should be District and Sub-District Boards with two-third elected members and non-official Chairpersons be set up to perform basic civic functions.

In 1907 the British Government set up the Royal commission on Decentralization to examine administrative and financial relations between the

central government and the provincial governments and recommended the required changes. The commission also inquired into the structure and working of Local Self-Government in India. The commission made certain recommendations about reorganizations and reinvigoration of the Local Self-Government. As regards the rural Local Self-Government, it recommended revamping of sub-district and district boards and also setting up a village panchayats with informally elected members and with village headmen as its chairperson. The commission thus recommended a three tier system by addition of village panchayats to the sub-district and district boards already in existence in most of the rural areas in provinces<sup>20</sup>. Within the colonial dispensation the operations of local self-government was indeed limited. No doubt, motivated Indians used this institution to improve the condition of people living in the rural areas. Yet, the experiment with local self-government could not go beyond a certain level and its growth was stifled because of unnecessary administrative interference and apathy.

We have pointed out earlier the ways in which Gandhi brought about a shift in thinking about rural development in India. He also raised the issue of local self-government during the freedom struggle. According to him, local self-government was supposed to play a pivotal role in brining about rural development in India. However, some of these ideas concerning local Self-Government took a concrete shape only in the post-independent period. Therefore, it is worthwhile to focus our attention on some of these initiatives undertaken in India after independence.

### **Balwant Rai Mehta Committee**

In 1957, the Balwant Rai Mehta committee was appointed to study and review the CD programme and NES, and to suggest ways of improving their efficiency in terms of their effective implementation. The committee was also asked to examine, “the extent to which CD movement has succeeded in utilizing

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<sup>20</sup> B. S, Khanna, *Rural Local Government in India and South Asia*, Deep and Deep Publications, New Delhi 1999, pp. 6-11.

local initiatives and in creating institutions to ensure continuity in the process of improving economic and social conditions in rural areas”.

The Committee found that, one of the major weaknesses of these programmes was in the realm of popular participation. It felt that developmental initiatives could not make any progress without the involvement of the people at the grassroots. In order to increase the participation of the people, power has to be given to the people. The Committee recommended that statutory elective local bodies should be formed at the village level and necessary power, resources and authority should be provided to them. In order to bring about people’s participation in the developmental process and to overcome the defects of the CDP and NES, Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) were introduced at the village level in the country. It was also of the view that the composition of the Panchayati Raj bodies should be with suitable representative of all sections of people<sup>21</sup>.

The Balwant Rai Mehta committee suggested that there should be representative bodies at three levels (district, block and village) for the effective functioning of the Panchayati Raj Institution in the country. The basic objectives of the institution were: i) to secure maximum participation of the people in socio-economic development; ii) to decentralize the administrative apparatus down to the village level; iii) to carry the democratic process and local self-government institutions to rural areas<sup>22</sup>.

In 1958, the standing committee of the National Development Council (NDC) agreed broadly with recommendations of the committee. However, it was recognized that, since conditions were different in different parts of the country, the State Government concerned should be free to decide about the exact applications of the concept of democratic decentralization and its institutional set-up.

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<sup>21</sup>. B. S. Khann, op. cit., P. 17.

<sup>22</sup>. S. S. Singh and Suresh Mishra, *Legislative Frame Work of Panchayati Raj in India*, Intellectual Publishing House, New Delhi 1993, pp. 7-8.



For the first time the Panchayati Raj Institution was established in the state of Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu in 1959. The then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurated the PRI in Rajasthan. With the growing enthusiasm among the state governments, some of the states such as Assam, Karnataka, Orissa, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh also established Panchayati Raj in 1960-61<sup>23</sup>. In time, the PRI became quite effective in the states of Gujarat, Karnataka, West Bengal and Maharashtra<sup>24</sup>.

One of the positive contributions of the Panchayati Raj was that it provided institutional framework for establishing link between elected representatives of the people and government officials. It also encouraged the local leaders to interact with higher-level political leaders in the National Development process. But some of these positive ideas were not able to solve the problem of participation of the people in the Panchayat Raj Institutions in the country. Many Panchayats were superseded and elections were not held for many for several years. No doubt these things weakened the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Therefore, the need for reviewing the work of Panchayati Raj was once again felt by the government. In 1977 under the leadership of Ashok Mehta a Committee was appointed to review the Panchayati Raj system and to make suitable recommendations.

#### **Ashok Mehta Committee**

The Ashok Mehta Committee was appointed by Janata Party led Government in 1977 to inquire into working of Panchayati Raj Institution in the country. The committee in its report pointed out several factors that had adversely affected the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the country. According to the Committee, the structure of the PRIs was inadequate and government-support was meager. Together, they hindered the effective functioning of the Panchayats in the country.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>. B. S. Khanna, op.cit., p. 22.

<sup>24</sup>. S. S. and Suresh Mishra, op. cit., P. 8.

<sup>25</sup>. Ibid., pp. 8-9.

The Committee looked at the evolution of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in post-independent India in three phases. From 1959 to 1964 it was a phase of ascendancy, 1965 to 1969 was the phase of stagnation and finally from 1969 to 1977 was that of decline. To strengthen the Panchayati Raj the committee recommended the reorganization of the Panchayati Raj bodies into two main-tiers instead of three-tier Panchayati Raj adopted by Balwant Rai Mehta. This Committee suggested that, in the long run only two-tier Panchayati Raj should take responsibilities of local and regional development. The Committee also added that the first point of decentralization below the state level should be the district. The block should not be the first point of decentralization. It should only have an executive committee of the Zilla Parishad as in Maharashtra to implement the development programmes formulated and approved by the Zilla Parishad. Because of the weaknesses of the Village Panchayats with regard to both finance and leadership, the committee recommended the constitution of Mandal Panchayat that will work as a main institution responsible for rural development.

The governments in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh were quick to pick up the recommendations concerning the Mandal Panchayat. However, the Ashok Mehta Committee report could not be implemented because of the fall of the Janata Government and the Congress party that came to power in 1980 was not keen in implementing it.<sup>26</sup>

In post-Janata period, in order to implement the anti-poverty programmes effectively institution such as District Rural Development Agencies (DRDA) was created at the district level. With this institutional innovation, the need for integrating Panchayati Raj system with rural development administrating was seriously felt. The decentralized planning was framed at the district level as well as below it. Various aspects of decentralized planning were examined by two expert groups, one is the working group on block level planning headed by M. L. Dantwala (1977) and the working group on district planning headed by C. H. Hanumantha Rao (1983). These two groups recommended that the basic decentralized planning function had to be done at the district level. The

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 9-10.

recommendation of these two expert groups provided a solid basis for recasting and revamping Panchayati Raj Institutions.

After 1983, the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the country entered into another era. After Rajiv Gandhi came to power, he made sincere efforts to implement the Panchayati Raj for rural development. After decades of neglect, democratic decentralization and Panchayat Raj were once again at the centre stage of policy making in India. In this context, it is worthwhile to look into the G. V. K. Rao Committee (1985) and examine the new steps taken by the Government headed by V. P. Singh.

### **G. V. K. Rao Committee**

In 1985, a Committee under the chairmanship of Dr. G. V. K. Rao was appointed to look into the existing administrative arrangements for rural development and poverty alleviation and also to recommend appropriate structural mechanism to ensure that they were planned in an integrated manner and effectively implemented.

### **The Committee recommended that:**

- Panchayati Raj Institutions should be active and effective in handling people's problems;
- there should be a three-tier structure for Panchayati Raj Institutions and the district should be the basic unit for policy planning and programme implementation;
- Zilla Parishad should be done by a number of sub-committees elected on the basis of the proportional representation so that the participatory democracy will be developed and encouraged;
- Panchayati Raj Institutions at the district level as well as below the district level should be assigned important role in relation to planning, implementation and monitoring of rural development programme;
- Plans should focus on the condition of the poor. The district plan should include all the resources available both in plan and non-plan as well as the available institutional resources;

- District Development Commission (DDC) should be created to look after the co-ordinate all the development activities. On the other hand where Zilla Parishads are not working, the DDC could function as chairman and chief executive of the District development council<sup>27</sup>.

### **L. M. Singhvi Committee**

The L. M. Singhvi Committee came into being in 1986. The committee submitted its report at the instance of the Ministry of Rural Development of the Government of India. After discussing the growth and development of democratic decentralization in India, the committee came to the view that there was a need to revive the institution of Gram Sabha in India. The Committee also suggested that the Panchayati Raj should be given a constitutional status so that its identity could be protected. It also wanted to establish Nyaya Panchayats for a cluster of villages<sup>28</sup>.

It argued that there should be free and fair election to the Panchayati Raj bodies under the supervision of the Election Commission. It also recommended to appoint a Financial Commission for devolution of funds to Panchayati Raj Institutions and to keep specific areas of taxation earmarked for Panchayati Raj Institutions by amending seventh schedule of the constitution. It further stated that all the rural development programmes have to be entrusted to the Panchayati Raj Institutions<sup>29</sup>.

### **Sarkaria Commission**

The Sarkaria Commission on Centre-State relations (1988) did not favour the idea of Singhvi Committee to confer constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The Commission was of the view that the power of enacting any law on Panchayats was vested under entry 5 (list II) exclusively with the state. There should be uniformity in three aspects of Law throughout the territory of

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<sup>27</sup>. M. R. Biju, *Dynamics of New Panchayati Raj System: Reflections and Retrospections*, Kanishka Publications, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 31-34.

<sup>28</sup>. S. S. Singh and Suresh Mishra, op. cit., P. 10.

<sup>29</sup>. Kuruganty R. Sastry and C. P. Vithal, "Participatory Dimension in Rural Development: The case of Panchayati Raj", *Journal of Rural Development*, Vol. 7, No. 6, 1988, P. 694.

India. The uniformity can be secured by adopting any of the order of preference, which is given below: i) by law with respect to this matter made by all the State Legislatures in accordance with a model bill prepared on the basis of consensus at the forum of Inter-State Council, recommended by us to be established under Article 263; ii) by a law on this subject made by Parliament under Article 252 (I) with consent of the legislatures of all the states; iii) by a Parliamentary Law Uniformity applicable throughout India containing provisions analogues to Article 172 and 174 of the constitution.

There were number of committees being appointed to suggest ways and means to revitalize Panchayati Raj Institutions in India. In spite of this, the PRIs could not acquire the status and dignity required for its effective functioning. Several factors such as the absence of regular election, inadequate representation of weaker section like the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and Women, insufficient devolution of power and lack of financial resources contributed to its ineffective functioning. Article 40 of the Directive Principles of State Policy says that “the state shall take steps to organize Village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of Self-Government”. But the actions of the governments over the years towards the Village Panchayats have been, at best, mixed.<sup>30</sup>

The committee made recommendations for the revitalization of Panchayati Raj based upon linking the institutions of democratic decentralization with socially motivated economic development. The committee also mentioned that the Panchayati Raj structure, powers and functions and also its relationship with the Government as well as with various relevant local institutions should be reviewed periodically and revised to enable it to perform its role effectively in improving socio-economic conditions of the people.

### **Constitutional Status of Panchayati Raj**

The earlier attempt to make Panchayati Raj Institutions effective did not succeed due to lack of people’s participation in the institutions, and irregularities

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<sup>30</sup> S. S. Singh and Suresh Mishra, *op. cit.*, P. 11.

of election to the Panchayat Raj bodies. After various committees' recommendation and suggestions Panchayati Raj yet again took a new turn. In order to revitalize the Panchayati Raj, Rajiv Gandhi Government introduced 64<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment in the Parliament in 1989. However the bill could not be passed in the Rajya Sabha due to two basic reasons, first, the bill was seen by many as an acts of intrusion by the Central Government into the affairs of the local government. Second, many thought the Bill was interested in imposing a uniform set of rules concerning local government through out the country. Although 64th Constitutional Amendment Bill got the support of the two third majority in the Lok Sabha, in Rajya Sabha it failed to get the required support from the members. The National Front under the prime Minister-ship of V. P. Singh introduced 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Bill (a combined bill on Panchayats and Municipalities) on 7 September 1990 during its short tenure in office, but it was never taken up for discussion. In September 1991, the Congress Government under Narasimha Rao introduced the 72<sup>nd</sup> (Panchayat) and 73<sup>rd</sup> (Nagarpalikas) Constitutional amendment bills. They were referred to a Joint select Committee of the Parliament. The Lok Sabha passed the bill on 22 December 1992, while the Rajya Sabha passed it the following day. Following its ratification by more than half the state assemblies, the President gave his assent on 20<sup>th</sup> April, 1993, and the Act was brought into force by a Government notification on 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1993 as the 1992 Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act.

### **Salient Features**

The main features of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act are:

- Panchayats shall be institutions of Self-Government.
- There shall be a Gram Sabha for each village or group of villages comprising all the adult members registered as voters in the panchayat area.
- There shall be a three-tier system of panchayats at village, intermediate block/taluk, and district levels. Smaller states with population below 20 lakhs will have the option not to have an intermediate level Panchayat.
- Seats in panchayats at all the three levels shall be filled by direct election. In addition, chairpersons of village panchayats can be made members of

the panchayats at intermediate level and chairpersons of panchayats at the district level.

- MPs, MLAs and MLCs could also be members of panchayats at the intermediate or the district level.
- In all the panchayats, seats would be reserved for SCs and STs in proportion to their population. Offices of the chairpersons of the panchayats at all levels shall be reserved in favour of SCs and STs in proportion to their population in the state.
- One-third of the total number of seats will be reserved for women. One-third of the seats reserved for SCs and STs will also be reserved for women. One-third of the offices of chairpersons of panchayats at all levels shall also be reserved for women.
- State legislatures have the liberty to provide reservation of seats and offices of chairpersons in panchayats in favour of backward classes.
- Every panchayat shall have a uniform five years term and elections to constitute new bodies shall be completed before the expiry of the term. In the event of dissolution, elections will be compulsorily held within six months. The reconstituted panchayat will serve for the remaining period of the five-year term.
- It will not be possible to dissolve the existing panchayats by amending any act before the expiry of its duration.
- A person who is disqualified under any law for election to the legislature of the state or under any law of the state will not be entitled to become a member of panchayat.
- An independent Election Commission will be established in the state for superintendence, direction and control of the electoral process and preparation of electoral rolls.
- Specific responsibilities will be entrusted to the panchayats to prepare plans for economic development and social justice with respect to twenty-nine subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule. The Seventy-Fourth Amendment provides for a District Planning Committee to consolidate the plans prepared by the panchayats and municipalities.
- The panchayat will receive adequate funds for carrying out their functions. Grants from state governments will constitute an important

source of funding but state governments are also expected to assign the revenue of certain taxes to the panchayat. In some cases, the panchayat will also be permitted to collect and retain the revenue it raises.

- In each state a finance commission will be established to determine the principles on the basis of which adequate financial resources would be ensured for panchayats<sup>31</sup>.

The enactment of 72 and 73 Constitutional Amendment Acts are great historical achievements and crucial milestones as far as the local government and democratic decentralization in India is concerned. The Acts not only provided constitutional status to the local government institutions but also made them broad-based.

### **Extension of Panchayat**

The provision of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 came into force on 24<sup>th</sup> December, 1996. This Act extends panchayats to the Tribal Areas of states such as Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Gujrat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chattishgarh, Orissa and Rajasthan. With the extension, it allowed the people living in the tribal areas to have more control over their resources and provided them opportunities to preserve their distinct ways of lives. The State Governments were required to enact specific legislations in accordance with Provisions of the Act before the expiry of the year i.e. 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1997. States barring Bihar had enacted State Legislations to give effect to the provisions contained in Act 40, 1996<sup>32</sup>.

### **Salient Features**

After enactment of Extension of Panchayat by Parliament, the features of Act are as follows:

- The Act may be called to Provisions of the panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled) Act, 1996.

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<sup>31</sup>. George Mathew, *Panchyati Raj in India* in Kuldeep Mathur (Ed), *Development Policy and Administration*, Sage publication, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 118- 120.

<sup>32</sup>. Annual Report 2000-2001, Government of India, Ministry of Rural Development, P. 7.



- In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, “Scheduled Areas” means the Scheduled Areas as referred to in clause (I) of article 244 of the Constitution.
- The provisions of Part IX of the Constitution relating to Panchayats are hereby extended to the Scheduled Areas subject to such exceptions and modifications as are provided in section 4.
- Notwithstanding anything contained under part IX of the Constitution, the Legislature of a State shall not make any law under that Part which is inconsistent with any of the following features, namely:
  - (a) a State legislation on the Panchayats that may be made shall be in consonance with customary law, social and religious practices and traditional management practices of community resources;
  - (b) a village shall ordinarily consist of a habitation or a group of habitations or a hamlet or group of hamlets comprising a community and managing its affair in accordance with traditions and customs;
  - (c) every village shall have a Gram Sabha consisting of persons whose names are included in the electoral rolls for the Panchayat at the village level;
  - (d) every Gram Sabha shall be competent to safeguard and preserve the traditions and customs of the people, their cultural identity, community resources and the customary mode of dispute resolution;
  - (e) every Gram Sabha shall:
    - (i) approve the plans, programmes and projects for social and economic development before such plans, programmes and the village level;
    - (ii) be responsible for the identification or selection of persons as beneficiaries under the poverty alleviation and other programmes;
  - (f) every Panchayat at the village level shall be required to obtain from the Gram Sabha a certification of utilization of funds by that Panchayat for the plans, programmes and projects referred to in clause(e);
  - (g) the reservation of seats in the Scheduled Areas at every panchayat shall be in proportion to the population of the communities in the Panchayat for whom reservation is sought to be given under Part IX of the Constitution;
  - (h) the State Government may nominate persons belonging to such Scheduled Tribes as have no representation in the Panchayat at the intermediate level or the Panchayat at the district level;

- (i) the gram Sabha or the Panchayats at the appropriate level shall be consulted before making the acquisition of land in the Scheduled Areas for development projects and before re-settling or rehabilitating persons affected by such projects in the Scheduled Areas, the actual planning and implementation of the projects in the Scheduled Areas shall be coordinate at the State level;
- (j) planning and management of minor water bodies in the Scheduled Areas shall be entrusted to Panchayats at the appropriate level;
- (k) the recommendations of the Gram Sabha or the Panchayats at the appropriate level shall be made mandatory prior to grant of prospective license or mining lease for minor minerals in the Scheduled Areas;
- (l) the prior recommendation of the Gram Sabha or the Panchayats at the appropriate level shall be made mandatory for grant of concession for the exploitation of minor minerals by auction;
- (m) while endowing Panchayats in the Scheduled Areas with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government, a State Legislature shall ensure that the Panchayats at the appropriate level and the Gram Sabha are endowed specifically with:
  - (i) the ownership of minor forest produce;
  - (ii) the power to prevent alienation of land in the Scheduled Areas and to take appropriate action to restore any unlawfully alienated land of a Scheduled Tribe;
  - (iii) the power to manage village markets by whatever name called ;
  - (iv) the power to exercise control over money lending to the Scheduled Tribes;
  - (v) the power to exercise control over institutions and functionaries in all social sectors;
  - (vi) the power to control over local plans and resources for such plans including tribal sub-plans;
- (n) The State legislations that may endow Panchayats with powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government shall contain safeguards to ensure that Panchayats at the higher level do not assume the powers and authority of any panchayat at the lower level or the Gram Sabha;

- (o) The State legislature shall endeavor to follow the pattern of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution while designing the administrative arrangements in the Panchayats at district level in the Scheduled Area.
- Notwithstanding anything in Part IX of the Constitution with exceptions and modifications made by this Act, any provision of any law relating to Panchayats in force in the Scheduled Areas immediately before the date on which this Act receives the assent of the President, which is inconsistent with the provisions of Part IX with such exceptions and modifications shall continue to be in force until amended or repealed by a competent Legislature or other competent authority or until the expiration of one year from the date on which this Act receives the assent of the President.

Provided that all the Panchayats existing immediately before such date shall continue till the expiration of their duration unless sooner dissolved by resolution passed to that effect by the Legislative Assembly of that State or, in the case of a State having Legislative Council by each House of the Legislature of that State<sup>33</sup>.

The extension of Panchayat to the tribal areas of India opened up new possibilities for local governance. It had made the tribals more aware of their rights and helped them to exercise control over their natural resources and developmental programmes initiated by the state.

## Conclusion

Rural development is intimately linked to the process of socio-economic reconstruction in the rural areas. The ideas and practices concerning rural development can be traced to the colonial period. During the colonial era, various experiments were taken up mainly by the state for the social and economic reconstruction of the rural areas. Outside the realm of the colonial state, it was Gandhi who gave the idea of rural development a new qualitative shift. He, for the first time, made reconstruction of rural area an intimate part of the anti-

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<sup>33</sup> B. D. Sharma, *50 Years of Anti-Panchayati Raj*, Sahyog Pustak Kuteer, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 221-223.

colonial struggle. There were also other experiments that tried to combat the backwardness of the rural areas in India. Though these experiments were confined to small areas, they contributed a great deal to the pool of ideas on rural development and reconstruction.

After independence, the Indian state was designed to be an interventionist one. Against the backdrop of poverty and underdevelopment, the Indian state had to undertake policies that were essentially development-oriented. The first priority was to undertake speedy development at the national level. The First Five Year Plan undertook various plans and programmes for economic generation and rural reconstruction in the country. The first major programme undertaken by the state in the wake of independence was the Community Development Programme. Among other things, this programme was meant to foster unity and bring about progress in the country. Very early on the policy makers had realized that economic development in India would be impossible to achieve without tackling poverty and underdevelopment at the rural level. Two issues were at the forefront of the debate on rural development during the early decades after independence. First issue centres around the theme of participation. It was realized that the Community Development Programme did not yield result primarily due to the lack of the involvement of the people. How to ensure the people's participation at a sustained basis and at what level were the major concerns before the policy makers. The concern for appropriate institutions was the second issue that confronted the policy makers in India. All the recommendations offered by several committees as discussed above focused primarily on these two issues. The 72 and 73 Constitutional Amendments Acts have tried to deal with both the issues. The debate is far from over. The theme of rural development still remains one of the important issues in the realm of Indian politics today.

# ***Chapter-II***

***The Role of Panchayati Raj in Implementing  
Welfare Schemes.***

## Chapter - 2

# THE ROLE OF PANCHAYATI RAJ IN IMPLEMENTING WELFARE SCHEMES

### Introduction

This chapter is divided, for convenience, into six parts. They are: the Introduction, including the structure of Panchayati Raj; growth of the Panchayati system in India; Power and Functions of the Panchayats and some development issues; Gram Sabha; its status, function and powers; the role of Panchayats in implementing Welfare Schemes; and finally a review of some Welfare Schemes in the perspective of development.

Mahatma Gandhi had the vision of uplifting the poor of India by giving them dignity and power in the actual realm of politics. In independent India, a committee under Balwant Rai Mehta, a staunch Gandhian and social activist, was set up to translate the Mahatma's vision. This Committee recommended a three-tier system, at the village, block and district level, which was known as the Panchayati Raj System.

Panchayati Raj was first started in Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh in 1959. Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurated Panchayati Raj in Rajasthan in 1959. Then gradually it spread to other States, as well as Union Territories. In Assam, Mysore, Orissa, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, Panchayati Raj was started in 1960-61. Then it came in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. Among the seven Union Territories, only Himachal Pradesh, the hilly areas, decided to set-up a three-tiered Panchayati Raj. In Pondicherry, an erstwhile French Colony, there were communes functioning at local level. Andaman Islands, Delhi, Goa, Manipur, and Tripura did not go for three-tier or two-tier system of Panchayati Raj. There was the local level Village Panchayats, which played a key role in implementing various developmental plans and programmes.

These responsibilities are divided between the three tiers. The Zilla Parishad allocates funds and approves budgets, for various developmental work.

The Panchayat Samiti looks activities such as agriculture, local industries, drinking water supply, health and sanitation, medical relief and communication facilities. The Village Panchayat, which is the key organization in Panchayati Raj System plays an important role in promotion of socio-economic condition of the rural area. It provides opportunities for local people to participate in various plans and programmes for rural development.

The Gram Sabha is the primary organization of the Panchayati Raj System, which plays a key role in development of the area. It helps village panchayat to identify problems and select the beneficiaries. As far as power of the Gram Sabha is concerned, the village panchayat does the entire work with the consent of the Gram Sabha.

The objective of the Panchayati Raj is to strengthen the socio-economic condition of rural areas. It makes plans and programmes according to the local needs and it transfers power to local people. The Panchayati Raj Institutions also look after various welfare scheme for rural development, thus bringing in decentralization of democratic power.

The Development Schemes that I talk about are, first the Community Development Programme, launched in 1952. Block was the main unit, and its aim was to improve the standard of living of the rural people. The Community Development programmes gave way to the National Extension programme. Nehru had the dream of providing work, along with development, to a large populace, straining under the burden of poverty in rural India. This was also meant to be a lesson in "self help"- a Gandhian motto. Some how, the projected scheme of covering 60,000 villages per year and covering the whole country in 8 years time was never fulfilled. The reasons for such failure could be located in the shift in the democratic priorities of the powers that be. Then came the poverty alleviation programmes such as IRDP. This was largely "the old wine in a new bottle", but it was launched at a time when the rural poor were undergoing a ferment.

Then the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana was launched for overall development at the rural level. The last part of the present chapter deals with development of the social sector, i.e. agriculture as well as education, health, drinking water, sanitation, housing and communication facilities in rural area.

Panchayati Raj is one of the units of democratic decentralization process, which provides better understanding on government's plans and programmes for development of rural areas. Through this institution people express their view for development of society, while helping themselves to a better and healthier civic life.

While speaking in the Rajya Sabha on the draft of the third five year plan, Jawaharlal Nehru had said that, the experiment of the democratic decentralization would bring a revolutionary change in India. The third plan brought about Panchayati Raj to enable the people of each area to achieve a continuous development in the interest of the entire society.<sup>1</sup>

Panchayati Raj is a major step in decentralization system. It was the dream of Gandhiji to establish local self-government. He wanted village panchayats as the primary grass-root democratic unit. Thus, a village panchayat, could play a key role in encouraging and supporting in productive activities among the people. Gandhiji had said: the "greater the power of the panchayat, the better is it for the people", as true democracy "has to be worked from below, through the people of every village"<sup>2</sup>.

The First Five Year Plan (1951-56) pointed out that, the constitution has provided for democratic institutions at the centre and in the state, but so long as local-governing institution are not setup, the structure of democratic government shall remain incomplete<sup>3</sup>. In 1956 a committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Balwant Rai Mehta to review the community Development Project and National Extension Service. The Mehta Committee suggested that the

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<sup>1</sup> Rajesh Dayal, *Community Development in India*, Kitab Mahal, Allahabad, 1966, pp. 62-63.

<sup>2</sup> B.S. Khanna, *Rural Local Government in India and South Asia*, Deep and Deep, New Delhi., pp. 18-19.

<sup>3</sup> G.R. Madan, *Indias Developing Village*, Allied Publishers, 1990, p.140.



Community Development movement would succeed in utilizing local initiatives by forming a three-tier Panchayati Raj Institution. The first tier was Village Panchayat, second was Block or intermediate level Panchayat or Panchayat Samiti and the third was Zila Parishad. The village panchayat was to ensure the improvement of socio-economic conditions in rural areas. At the block level the panchayat samiti was to provide institutional participation of the people in planning and implementation of development in a coordinated manner. At the district level the zilla parishad, was to guide the panchayat samiti and supervise over them<sup>4</sup>.

The proposed Local self government got constitutional status and came into being as Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI). The Indian Parliament passed the Constitutional (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992, in December 1992 and it came into force on April 24, 1993. The Act envisaged the establishment of Panchayats as unit of local self-government in all States and Union Territories, except the Tribal Areas in the states of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram and certain other Scheduled Areas through an Act of the Parliament<sup>5</sup>.

**The structure of Panchayati Raj Institution in its respective level is as follows**

#### **Village Panchayat**

The Village Panchayat is constituted on an elective basis with the provision of Women members cooption and along with Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe. The President of the village Panchayats is known by different name in different states, such as: Sabhapati in Uttar Pradesh, Mukhia in Bihar and Sarapanch in Punjab. He is an elected member, who plays an important role in collection of taxes, and various development programmes as he identifies the beneficiaries and the needs of that areas. The panchayat Secretary is responsible for maintaining records and accounts of the Panchayats. In some states as Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and Kerala, the secretaries are full-time

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<sup>4</sup> B.S. Khanna, *Rural Local Government in India and South Asia*, Deep and Deep, New Delhi, 1999. PP. 18-19.

<sup>5</sup> Katar Singh, "The Rural of Gram Sabha in Village Development", *Kurukshetra*, vol. 48, no. I, October 1999.

persons. While in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Assam they may be full-time or part-time. In Punjab and Uttar Pradesh the full-time secretaries generally look after several Panchayats. While in Punjab he is paid entirely by the Panchayat, in Uttar Pradesh he is a government servant, who looks after the work of Nyaya Panchayats (Judicial Panchayat)<sup>6</sup>. Apart from the President and the Secretary of the village Panchayat, there should be members who are elected directly by the people, known as Ward Member. They are direct link with the people of a village and work as communicators of various problems and the needs of the village. The main source of income of the Panchayat is property or house tax, tax on weekly market, vehicles (Bicycles, Carts etc.) tax, cattle pounds, lighting and water tax and grant from the Panchayat samiti and fee charged from registration of animals sold, and land tax etc.

### **Panchayat Samiti**

The intermediate Panchayat or the panchayat samiti is constituted by direct election and the head of the Panchayat samiti is known as Chairman or President who is elected indirectly from among the members of the Panchayat samiti. Though it (Panchayat Samiti) is located at Block level, it coordinates between the Block Development Officer (BDO) for various plans and programmes for that area. The Panchayat samiti is an important institution, which is an intermediary between the village Panchayat and Zila parishad.

The resources of the Panchayat samitis are, collection of land revenue, tax on professions surcharge of duty on movable property, toll and leases, motor vehicle tax and grants from the government

### **Zila Parishad**

The Zila Parishad comprises of the Presidents of Panchayat Samitis, M. L. As., and M. Ps. of the district. The District Collector is the Chairman of the Zila parishad. The function of the Zila parishad are to examine and approve the budget of the Panchayat Samitis. The district is the key unit of the plans at the state level. It distributes various developmental funds, which is allocated to the

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<sup>6</sup> *The Fifth Evolution Report on Working of Community Development and National Extension Organisation*, Planning Commission, 1958, pp. 110–112.

Panchayat samitis and coordinates and supervises over various plan and programmes at the Block level<sup>7</sup>. The district collector has an important role in various programmes like, he visits the area which is under his jurisdiction. He is the authority, who gives instruction to the lower institutions. As far the resources of Zila Parishad is concern, through the various departments (Revenue department, Transport department, Excise department) it will collect tax and supervise over it.

### **Growth of Panchayati Raj in India**

The Panchayati Raj started in state level in 1959. Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh were the first states to implement the Panchayati Raj on October 2 and November 1, 1959 respectively. Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurated Panchayati Raj in Rajasthan on 2 October 1959<sup>8</sup>. In Assam, Mysore, Orissa, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, Panchayati raj was started in 1960-61. Then, it came in Maharastra, Gujarat, Bihar, Madhaya Pradesh and West Bengal. In Rajasthan, Bihar, Madras, Mysore, Orissa, the Panchayat Samiti enjoys more power. The Zila Parishad is mainly responsible for advising, guiding, supporting and supervising Panchayat samiti. It is also responsible for preparing the district plan. In Maharastra the Zila Parishad plays an important role in planning and implementation of rural development programme. The panchayat samiti acts mainly to implement schemes and programmes. In Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal power is entrusted to the village panchayats and Panchayat samitis to guide and supervise plans and programmes for the local areas. Besides the two institutions, the Zila Parishad is directly involved in developmental functions, which is mainly at the inter-block level.

Among the Seven Union Territories (UTs) only Himachal Pradesh decided to set-up a three-tiered Panchyati Raj. In Pondicherry there were French type of Communes functioning at local level. Andaman Islands, Delhi, Goa, Manipur and Tripura did not go for three-tier or two-tier system of Panchayati

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<sup>7</sup> G.R. Madan, op. Cit, pp. 343 – 344.

<sup>8</sup> Rajesh Dayal, Op. Cit. p.63

Raj. There was the local level Village Panchayats, which played key role on various developmental plans and programmes<sup>9</sup>.

Thus the Panchayati Raj institutions vary in their power and function from state to state, keeping in view the diversities of India.

### **Powers and Functions of Panchayats**

The three tiers of the Panchayati system have different powers, in accordance with their functions and responsibilities. The whole point behind such a tiered idea was to give more voice to the people, while involving executive authorities and legislative authorities in the process of development. The functions of these institutions are as follows:

#### **Village Panchayat**

The functions of Village Panchayat are more important in rural development.

- Sanitation: Construction of drains, soakage pits, lanes, village streets, within the Panchayats jurisdiction. Provision for public latrines, D.D.T. spraying, cleaning of public streets, drains, and public latrines.
- Maintenance of the Panchayats roads, culverts, bridges, lanes, latrines.
- Improvement of housing: propagation of ideas connected with improved housing, encouraging people to undertake installation of smokeless chulahs, ventilators, construction of sanitary latrines and separate cattle sheds, etc.
- Health education: assisting the health staff at the block and the district levels in organizing and implementing health education programmes within the Panchayat area.
- Land management: maximum utilization of all land and improve production of the land by consolidation etc.
- Supervision of primary schools.
- Organisation of welfare activities among women and children and among other backward sections of the society.
- Maintenance of record of the Panchayats including records of the cattle.

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<sup>9</sup> B. S. Khanna, *op. cit.* pp. 22 – 23.

- Acting as the agent of the Panchayat Samiti for executing schemes of development that may be entrusted to it from time to time.
- Collection of taxes which it imposes, and of such taxes as are imposed by the Panchayat Samiti or by the State Government and of which the power of collection is delegated to the village Panchayat.

**Panchayat Samiti:**

- Development of agriculture: seeds improvement including its procurement and distribution, procurement, distribution and popularization of improved manures and fertilizers, agricultural practices, provision of agricultural finance with the assistance of the Government and of the cooperative banks, construction of minor irrigation works through village Panchayat, popularization of horticulture practice and vegetable cultivation, measures for encouraging soil conservation, land reclamation, plant protection and tree plantation.
- Improvement of cattle, sheep, goats and poultry, popularization of the use of veterinary services, inoculation facilities.
- Promotion of local industries:
- Supply of drinking water.
- Public health and sanitation, medical relief.
- Relief of distress caused by flood, drought etc.
- Construction, repair and maintenance of roads within the jurisdiction of Panchayat Samiti, except those under Panchayat roads.
- Management and administrative control of primary schools.
- Organization of welfare activities among women and children and according to their needs.
- Welfare of backward classes.
- Fixation of wages under the Minimum Wage Act for non-industrial labour.
- Collection of statistics and maintenance of records.
- In states where the district boards or Janpad Sabhas have undertaken the management of high schools, these can be transferred to the Panchayat Samiti concerned.

- In due course, such other functions as the development of small forests, the maintenance of watch and ward establishment, excise etc. may also be entrusted to the Panchayat Samiti.
- To act as agent of the State Government, in the execution of special schemes of development, collection of taxes imposed by the state or other activities which may be delegated to this body by the State Government.

#### **Zila Parishad:**

- To examine and approve the budgets of the Panchayat Samitis.
- To distribute the funds allotted for the district as well as between the various Panchayat Samitis.
- To coordinate and consolidate the Panchayat Samiti plans.
- To consolidate the demand for grant for special purposes by the Samitis and forward to the Government.
- To supervise the activities of the Panchayat Samitis<sup>10</sup>.

#### **Gram Sabha**

In Panchayati Raj system, Gram Sabha is the key organization. It directly connects development of the rural areas and various problem and needs of the people. Article-243 of the Indian Constitution states that, Gram sabha means a body consisting of at the village level. The role of the Gram Sabha is laid down in Article-243A as: "A Gram Sabha may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the legislature of a state may by law provide."<sup>11</sup>

Since India's independence the primary task was of an effective system of local self-government. Gandhiji urged and argued that the Indian independence must begin at the bottom so that every village will be a republic having full powers. Even on 25 January, 1948 Gandhiji noted that "the charter of India's independence as conceived by the congress was based on village autonomy". He pleaded for decentralization as an essential pre-condition for the realization of the ideal democracy to enable each individual to participate in the decision-making

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<sup>10</sup> *Report of Team For The Study of Community Project and National Extension Service*, vol.- III (Part -I), Community on Plan Projects, New Delhi, 1957, pp. 187 -189.

<sup>11</sup> P. M. Bakshi, *The Constitution of India*, Universal Law Publishing Co., 1997, p. 181.

and implementation process. Thus, Gandhiji sowed the seeds for an institution like the Gram Sabha much earlier than the framing of our constitution<sup>12</sup>. To Jayaprakash Narayan "Gram Sabha signifies Village Democracy". Further he pointed out that, "let us not have only representative government from the Village up to Delhi. One place, at least let there be direct government, direct democracy." The relationship between Panchayat and Gram Sabha should be that of Cabinet and Assembly. Jawaharlal Nehru visualized Local Self-Government as the basis of any true system of democracy<sup>13</sup>.

In order to grant constitutional status to Panchayati Raj institutions in the country and to bring about uniformity in their status and operations, the Indian Parliament passed the Constitutional (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992, in December 1992. Significantly, the Seventy-Third Amendment did not have a provision for constitution of Gram Sabha, but stipulated that their powers and functions were to be specified by the State legislature<sup>14</sup>. The architect of Community Development and Panchayati Raj, S.K. Dey pointed out that the Panchayati Raj would bring about a complete link-up of our people from Gram Sabha to the Lok Sabha. The inclusion of Gram Sabha in the Seventy-Third Constitution Amendment Act was thus only a logical outcome of the aspirations of the people. In accordance with the provisions of the Amendment, all States have made provisions in their respective Panchayat Acts for establishing the institution of Gram Sabha at village level. The Gram Sabha is the primary body in the Panchayati Raj System, which intends to facilitate direct participation of local people in activities, which are concerned with the planning, and development of their area<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Dr. Navin Chandhara Joshi, "Gram Sabha in Historical Retrospect", *Kurukshetra*, 1999, p. 70.

<sup>13</sup> S. P. Jain, "Gram Sabha – Task Before The Nation", *Kurukshetra*, vol.- 48, no. I, October 1999, pp. 20-22.

<sup>14</sup> Dr. Katar Singh, "The Role of Gram Sabha in Village Development", *Kurukshetra*, Vol. -48, No. -I, October 1999, p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> S. P. Jain, Op. Cit. p. 23.

### **Status of the Gram Sabha**

The Gram Sabha was set up in most of the states, but its status is different in different states. Like in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka the Gram Sabha is defined in relation to a revenue village, whereas in Maharashtra, West Bengal and Rajasthan the unit is much larger and coterminous with the village Panchayat. However, West Bengal also gives legal recognition to smaller units constituted at the level of the constituency, called Gram Sansad. The Kerala Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, provides for the constitution of the Gram Sabhas separately for every Ward (Constituency). The Madhya Pradesh Act offer the amendment in 1999, restricts a Gram Sabha to a revenue or forest village comprised within the area of the Gram Panchayat. However, for Schedule-V areas, both the Gram Sabha and the Gram Panchayat have been empowered to resolve that even a smaller unit of a hamlet or habitation be recognized as a separate Gram Sabha, and after due enquiry, such resolution is binding on the government. It is the first time in Law that the communities themselves have been given the power to define their membership and boundaries<sup>16</sup>.

### **Power and Function of the Gram Sabha**

The Gram Sabha is the primary institution, which provides direct power in the hands of the people. On the other hand it is a "Watch-dog" which is entirely responsible to the village assembly, it supervises and monitors the functioning of the Village Panchayat and the government functionaries. In fact, states like Bihar, Goa, Manipur have mandated the setting up of vigilance committees specifically for this purpose. In most states, the Gram Sabhas are empowered to examine annual statements of accounts and audit reports. Kerala has made the power of enforcing transparency and accountability more clear by provisions for scrutiny of all on-going and completed work, confirming the eligibility of beneficiaries and knowing the logic of each and every decision taken by the Gram Panchayat, in the Gram Sabha area. The Gram Sabha must approve of all the works and beneficiaries for schemes sponsored by the Ministry of Rural Development.

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<sup>16</sup> Harsh Mander, Towards Direct Democracy, Kurukshetra, Vol.- 48, No. -I, October 1999, P: 7.



There are some additional powers being legislated for Gram Sabha in some state. Such as, Andhra Pradesh, Goa and Orissa have given the Gram Sabha the very important fiscal power to identify and recommend areas for additional taxation and revenue generation. The 1999 Amendment of Madhya Pradesh Act goes further than any piece of legislation so far, in empowering non-tribal Gram Sabha. The provisions of Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) 1996 had boldly and creatively provided for Gram Sabhas only in Schedule-V areas. These include the following powers:

To exercise control over institutions and functionaries in social sectors transferred to or appointed by the Gram Panchayat (such as primary School teacher and health workers, primary schools and sub-health centers); to manage natural resources including land, water, forests and minerals within the area of the village in accordance with provisions of the constitution; to advice the Gram Panchayat in the regulation and use of minor water bodies and awarding minor mineral leases; power to impose prohibition; power to be consulted before land acquisition.

The provisions of Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas), Act 1996 provides for powers to the Gram Sabha for the resolution of disputes according to tradition and custom, but this vital power of the adjudication of justice has not been operationalised by any state legislature. Nor has this power been extended to Gram Sabhas in non-scheduled areas<sup>17</sup>.

Article 243-A expected state legislatures to provide with some power and perform such functions at the village level, which would help in democratic decentralization. In practice, the state legislature does not have any provision to perform any function of Gram Sabha, but majority of the states granted some functional powers to the Gram Sabha. Such as, the Gram Sabha has to discuss:

The Annual statement of accounts and audit report of the panchayat; to discuss the Administrative report of the preceeding year; to discuss proposal of

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<sup>17</sup> Harsh Mander, Op. Cit. PP: 9 – 10.

fresh taxation and enhancement of existing taxes of the Panchayat, and to discuss selection of schemes, beneficiaries and location of village under the jurisdiction of village Panchayat<sup>18</sup>.

### **Role of Panchayati Raj in Implementing Rural Welfare Schemes:**

The objective of Panchayati Raj is to strengthen the socio-economic condition of rural areas. Its primary target is to develop the backward sections of the rural area and to generate various welfare plan and programme for this purpose. Through the Panchayati Raj, people directly participate in various plan and programme and they express their view for the larger society. Village Panchayat is considered as the key institution in various welfare programme. Since independence various developmental programmes and work have been taken by successive governments, however, the major role of the entire activities was played by the village panchayat. After the 73<sup>rd</sup> (Constitutional Amendment) Act 1992, the role of Panchayati Raj has again increased more than before.

It is the greatest experience for India since the Community Development Programme was launched on 2 October 1952, in rural development. During the Second Five Year Plan (1956-1961) an effort was made not only to decentralize the administration of the district and block level but also to promote the establishment of three-tier system of the village, block and district Panchayat.

The aim and objective of Panchayati Raj was to transfer power into local hands. In the later period, a sincere effort was made to activate the Panchayati Raj institutions towards integrated rural development. To achieve this goal, Panchayati Raj was to play a key role in identifying rural problems correctly, motivate the people and mobilize the public interest towards rural reconstruction. Panchayati Raj was to look after all the developmental work, like poverty alleviation, land management, housing and water facility, better sanitation and the basic needs of the rural area in social life. To achieve the goal, the Panchayati Raj was to go through the concrete process, i.e. proper plan and programme. So far as the plan is concerned, if the planning is done by the local authorities, local people

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<sup>18</sup> Prof. M. Aslam, Towards Empowering Gram Sabha, Kurukshetra, Vol. -48, No. -I, October 1999, P: 31.

should be consulted on a regular basis during the planning period. This will generate participatory process of the development and generate better information for decision makers at the local level. At the local planning, the Gram Sabha, will help it to easily identify the needs of the people, so that it will be better suited for rural area.

### **Welfare Schemes and Rural Development**

Since independence, there have been various welfare programmes launched for better socio-economic life of the rural area. The welfare programmes are as follows:

#### **Community Development Programme:**

The Community Development Programme was launched on October 2, 1952. The aim of this programme was improving the standard of living of the rural people. Initially this programme was started in 55 blocks in the country. Block was the main unit of this programme. At the block level a Village Level Worker (VLW) was the key agent, who played important role in keeping relation between the village people for over all development. In each block there were Block Development Officer (BDO). He was the sole responsible person for coordinating the developmental activities, and in district level collector was the coordinator of all activities.

The objectives of the Community Development Programme were to generate community efforts to bring about improvement of the social and economic life of the people. The contribution of CDP was to challenge scarcity of food production, unemployment and inequality in socio-economic life of the rural people. Though, the government made plans and programme for development, people's participation was lacking. Keeping all this in mind, a committee was formed under the chairmanship of Balwantray Mehta. The recommendation of the committee was to setup Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) at the Village, Block and District level. The function of the PRIs was to implement the community development and social welfare programmes in rural areas. The

people's participation in plan and programme level was to identify the needs of the rural areas<sup>19</sup>.

The people's participation meant to involvement of the people in the development process voluntarily and willingly. This participation mainly takes place in decision making level, in implementing of development programme and projects, in monitoring and evolution of development programme and projects, and in sharing the benefits of development. The process is as follows:

**Participation in Decision making:**

It is a major step, which facilitates in decision-making in community projects, such as poverty alleviation, drinking water facility, construction of schools, road, health centre as an opportunity for all people of the village. It enables the villagers to present their view of their needs. Otherwise there is always the fear that the rich and influential would divert all facilities toward their own ends.

**Participation in Implementing of Development Programme and Project:**

There should be equitable participation on programme and project. The equitable participation either by physical presence or by financial contribution. On the other hand, it is a must for everybody to maintain and preserve natural resources (Forest, Land, Water etc.) in rural area.

**Participation in Monitoring and Evaluation:**

The people's participation in monitoring and evaluation provides the information related to progress of the project and identifies the needs of the peoples. It also helps to identify the beneficiaries of the village. The important advantage in participating in monitoring and evaluation is that it will reduce the mismanagement of resources of the project.

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<sup>19</sup> Ashok Bajpai, *Panchayati Raj and Rural Development*, Sahitya Prakashan, New Delhi 1997, pp. 28-30.

### **Participation in Sharing the Benefits of the Development:**

The benefits of development should percolate to the majority or in other words the needy. All should enjoy equal share of the project and all should express their problems freely. Thus the achievement of participation will come if all will share the benefits of the project and programme<sup>20</sup>.

It was during the formulation of the seventh plan (1985-90) that the need for grassroot level involvement in planning was felt implemented. From there it went on to people's self managed institution in the Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) with greater voice and choice<sup>21</sup>. The seventh plan sought to emphasise policies and programmes which would accelerate the growth in food grains production, increased employment opportunities, and raise productivity. The Narasimha Rao Government initiated the process of fiscal reforms as also of economic reforms with a view to provide a new dynamism to the economy. The Eighth plan reflected these changes in its attempt to accelerate economic growth and improve the quality of life of the common man<sup>22</sup>.

### **Green Revolution and Poverty Alleviation Programme:**

Poverty Alleviation Programme was the major step for the government. When the Community Development Programme (CDP) was launched, it was directed to the growth of Agricultural production. The Agricultural production was raised by 30 per cent through revolutionary changes in the field of agriculture. Mostly efforts were made to use new technologies for speedy growth in agriculture. In 1959, a Ford Foundation study had suggested to the Government of India that, for quick result in agriculture, there should be use of fertilizers in agriculture along with use of improved seeds, measures for soil and water conservation and land reforms are essential. The Government of India followed the recommendation of this study report. In 1960, a programme called,

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<sup>20</sup> "Local Level Planning and Rural Development", U. Ns. Asians and pacific Development Institute, Bangkok, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1980, pp. 86 –92.

<sup>21</sup> Dr. Sunder Raj, "People's Participation in Rural Development", *Kurukshetra*, Vol. – 48, No. –5, February 2000, PP: 3 –5.

<sup>22</sup> R. Datta and K.P.M. Sundaram, *Indian Economy*, S. Chand and Company Ltd., New Delhi 2001.

Intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP) was started in one district from each state, totalling fifteen districts. The IADP arranged all types of facilities, such as adequate and timely supply of fertilizers, supply of credit by Cooperative Banks, arrangement for marketing, educating farmers in a scientific way, adequate storage facilities for seeds and fertilizer and village planning for increased production through strengthening cooperatives and Panchayat, establishment of agricultural implements workshops and seed and soil-testing laboratories etc. The IADP was extended to 114 districts under the name of Intensive Agriculture Area Programme (IAAP). The IAAP mainly promoted the use of High Yielding Varieties (HYV) seeds. In the next stage, this programme led to a revolutionary change in agricultural production known as the Green Revolution. Encouraged by the success of the Green Revolution, a centrally sponsored scheme, known as Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP) was initiated in 1973, to solve the problem of the chronically drought affected areas. The DPAP initiated irrigation facilities, restructuring of cropping pattern and pasture development, changes in agronomic practices, livestock development and development of small and marginal farmers and agricultural labour. In 1975, another centrally sponsored scheme known as Command Area Development Programme (CADP) was launched with the aim of soil survey, land shaping, construction of field channels, water supply and ground water development. In Uttar Pradesh three major schemes -- the Sharda Sahayak Command Area Development, The Ramganga Command Area Development and Gandak Command Area Development were launched under this programme. The main thrust of these schemes was to develop the irrigation potential of the area with increasing agricultural productivity<sup>23</sup>.

Land Reforms was part of a strategy for development of agriculture and give relief to the masses of poor peasants in the country. In First Five Year Plan (1951-1956), the policy emphasized to abolish intermediaries, enactment of radical tenancy reform and resumption of personal cultivation based on peasant proprietorship. The second plan was a step ahead. It brought about legislation about ceiling and implemented it with a certain strictness. The object of this stage

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<sup>23</sup> Ashok Bajpai, op. cit, pp. 34 – 34.

of reforms was to give land to the small farmers, in which the panchayat played an important role<sup>24</sup>. For better irrigation facilities in agriculture, Irrigation projects were set up. In the revised 20-Point Programme the Government of India proposed to “increase irrigation potential, develop and disseminate, technologies and inputs for dry land agriculture”. It suggested that, every block would have a Crop Weather Watch Group and every state a Land use Board. A new system known as Pani Panchayat was granted for co-operative use of water. Even the farmers were assisted to undertake effective methods in conserving and utilizing water on a cooperative basis<sup>25</sup>. In Land Reform, the 20-Point Programme proposed three basic points: First, it proposed to “implement agricultural land ceilings, distribute surplus land and complete compilation of land record by removing all administrative and legal obstacles”. Secondly, this new programme also proposed to “review and effectively enforce minimum wages for agricultural labourer” and the thirdly the government proposed to “rehabilitate bonded labour.”<sup>26</sup>

Besides the larger interest two individual benefit-oriented programmes were launched in 1970-71. These two centrally sponsored programmes were Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA) and Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers Programme (MFAL), which were launched to give institutional supports to the small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers through Block Development Offices, Cooperative societies and Banks. Under the SFDA, problems of the farmers were identified and suitable help provided. The MFAL programme was specially for improving agricultural practices, minor irrigation and horticulture for marginal farmers, that is, those farmers having less than one hectare of land<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Devendra Thakur, *Rural Development and Planning in India*, Deep and Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 82-83.

<sup>25</sup> Vivek Ranjan Bhattacharya, *The New Strategy of Development in Village India*, Metropolitan Book Co, New Delhi, 1983, pp. 26 – 28.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p.93.

<sup>27</sup> Ashok Bajpai, Op. Cit, pp. 34 – 35.

### **Integrated Rural Development Programme:**

The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was first proposed in the central budget of 1976-77 and it was introduced in 1978-79<sup>28</sup>. The aim of the IRDP was to remove poverty and unemployment in rural societies. The beneficiary groups were to be the small and marginal farmers, share-croppers, tenants, agricultural labourers, rural artisans, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and other disadvantage groups such as nomads and most importantly rural women.

The objective of the programme was to provide employment through productive schemes in selected areas. The programme sought to lay sufficient emphasis on the weaker sections of the society through utilization of local resources.<sup>29</sup>

Under the IRDP, there were various employment generation programmes sponsored by the central government. These programmes were :

#### **1. Rural landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP)**

The RLEGP was a centrally funded scheme, mainly to improve and expand employment to at least one member of every rural landless household.

#### **2. Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM)**

The Programme TRYSEM was initiated in 1979. This programme was launched to provide technical and entrepreneurial skill to rural youths from families below the poverty line to enable them to take up income generating activities. The training institutions were ITI, Polytechnics, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Nehru Yuvak Kendras, Khadi and Village Industries Boards etc.

#### **3. Self-Employment Schemes for Educated Unemployed Youth**

The SEEUY was started in 1983 for unemployed youth in the age group of 18-35 years, who were matriculates and above. This programme was launched

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<sup>28</sup> G. R. Madan, Op. Cit, pp. 524 – 525.

<sup>29</sup> Binoy N. Verma and Birendra Prasad Singh, *Integrated Rural Development Programme: The Vision-Reality Gap*, Eastern Books, New Delhi 1991, pp.32 – 33.



to generate employment for the youth in rural area and improve the economic condition of the rural youth.

#### **4. National Rural Employment Programme (NREP)**

The NREP was launched in 1980 as a centrally sponsored scheme. This programme was started for the improvement of economic condition of the rural poor. Under this programme, preference were given to SCs and STs and Women. This programme was to be executed through Pachayati Raj Institutions, where these institution were working. In this programme workers were paid according to the minimum wages declared by the State Government and there was special provision for employment for landless labourers in the works. Besides these, the priority was given to social forestry, soil and water conservation, irrigation works, flood protection, construction and improvement of village tanks and ponds, school and dispensary building and works to improve village environment, hygiene and sanitation etc.

#### **5. ANTYODAY**

The ANTYODAY was introduced to improve the life of the poorest of the poor residing in rural areas. The scheme was meant for such a landless labourers, bonded labour, rural artisans, share croppers, marginal and small farmers who had not at all benefited from planned development. In this programme financial assistance was given to each beneficiaries to start economic activity of his/her own choice. The Government gave loans to the beneficiaries through Zila Parishads or banks. Provision for 50 per cent subsidy to be given to the lowest economic strata people in this programme was its hallmark<sup>30</sup>.

#### **6. Development of Women and Children in the Rural Area (DWCRA)**

During the ninth plan almost all the State Governments were implementing DWCRA activities in remote areas. The objectives of the DWCRA scheme was to improve economic, health, education and social status of rural women by providing them assistance and employment opportunities to earn their livelihood. In this programme women were directly involved in programme

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<sup>30</sup> Ashok Bajpai, Op. Cit. pp. 39 – 41.

management. This scheme also provided opportunities to organize and strengthen women's self help groups. Women were also involved in issues of social justice; identifying their needs and priorities while generating employment<sup>31</sup>.

The implementation of the above programme under IRDP were carried out by a special administrative set-up in which each district was referred to as a District Rural Development Agencies (DRDA). The DRDA is primarily responsible for effective planning, monitoring and evaluation of IRDP, NREP, RLEGP, etc. The functions of the DRDA is to coordinate and oversee the surveys and preparation of the annual plan at the block level, as well as the district level. Its function is to secure inter-sectoral and inter-departmental coordination and cooperation. An expert group on programme for alleviation of poverty constituted in 1981 by the planning commission under the chairmanship of M.S. Swaminathan, drew attention to the role of DRDA and stressed that the creation of DRDA should only be taken as a short term measure and in the long run, the local development functions should be entrusted to the elected bodies from village Panchayat upto Zila Parishad<sup>32</sup>.

### **IRDP and District level Planning**

The need of the District Planning was realised in the Fourth plan. As it was found that various schemes for development were providing to be ineffective due to a lacunae in the planning process the district planning was started. Under the Panchayat Raj the district planning has been undertaken by the district level bureaucracy and the elected people's representatives at that level. Under the IRDP, this district planning will give emphasis to the effectiveness of rural poverty alleviation programmes. The objective of the district planning are that it should be the people's need and local resource based; it should within this framework mainly focus on the development of the backward regions and weaker sections, and finally this planning also was to meet the development target on a

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<sup>31</sup> H. D. Dwarakanath, "DWCRA in Andhra Pradesh", *Kurukshetra*, vol. 47, no. 12, September 1999, pp. 14-15.

<sup>32</sup> Ashok Bajpai, *Op. Cit*, pp. 41-42.

sustainable priority basis. For the direct and better effectiveness of various welfare schemes District Plan proved to be most essential at local level<sup>33</sup>.

### **IRDP and Block level Planning**

The objective of the block level planning is mainly: to identify the growth potential of the block area in terms of local land, water and other resources; to identify the human resource situation and in particular the agricultural and non-agricultural families which are either unemployed or significantly under employed; to formulate special programmes for the rural poor and the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population to improve their economic conditions; to review the ongoing development activities and their relevance to the need for optimizing production and generating employment; to formulate schemes for unemployed to alleviate unemployment and to identify the needs of rural areas, such as medical facilities, drinking water supply, housing and education etc<sup>34</sup>.

### **Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY):**

The National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) were merged into a single new rural employment programme, known as the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY). The then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, announced on 28 April 1989 the launching of JRY. This programme was started mainly for generation of additional gainful employment for unemployed and under employed persons in the rural areas below the poverty line. Under the scheme of JRY, the entire socio-economic condition of rural society was to be improved<sup>35</sup>.

In Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, the Gram Panchayat was the sole authority to select the areas as well as the beneficiaries of the village. In this scheme, the Gram Panchayat played a key role in implementation of plan and programme on a with priority basis, with the consultation of Gram Sabha.

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<sup>33</sup> Abdul Aziz and P. V. Shenoy, "District Planning: Principles and Their Operationalisation", *Journal of Rural Development*, vol. 16 (4), NIRD, Hyderabad, India 1997, pp. 576 – 579.

<sup>34</sup> B.N. Verma and B. P. Singh, *Op. Cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>35</sup> Ashok Bajpai, *op. cit.*, pp. 42– 43.

All the above mentioned schemes were specifically meant to alleviate the economic situation of the rural poor. But we know that this economic progress has to be based on a social plank consisting of basic amenities, such as food, shelter, healthcare, education etc. Above this is the cultural milieu, which plays an important part in the development process.

### **Agriculture**

After India's independence, in the First Five Year Plan, the Planning Commission gave a prominent place to the improvement of agriculture, in the country in general and in CD areas in particular. The improvement of agriculture was essential to eradicate poverty. To improve the growth of the agricultural production various steps were taken, such as improvement of dry and hilly land, irrigation facilities, use of chemical fertilizers and quality seeds, improved agricultural techniques, tube-well facilities, canal facilities, etc. As far as the role of the Panchayati Raj is concerned, it was to implement various agricultural schemes for farmer and identify the beneficiaries and provide loan on subsidy basis. Through these PRIs the poor farmer gets improved seeds and fertilizers for the growth of agriculture to eradicate poverty of the rural society<sup>36</sup>.

### **2: Education**

Education is important for development in every aspect of human life. Article 45 of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) says that, "the state shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this constitution, free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years." Article 46 of DPSP says that, "the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and , in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation"<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> Rajesh Dayal, Op.Cit, pp. 121.

<sup>37</sup> P. M. Bakshi, Op.Cit, p. 73.

With the introduction of the Panchayati Raj, Primary Schools have been placed under the control of Panchayat Samitis. In this way block is the unit of development of primary education and the school committee of both, at the village level and at the block level, look after the programme of primary education. It is the village community, which plays an important role in promotion of primary education<sup>38</sup>. Under the Panchayati Raj System, Night schools are running to educate adult persons or those who are working in daytime. The adult literacy programme, and occupational training centres have been established at the block level<sup>39</sup>. Under the 20-point programme there is the provision of Non-Formal education, Mid-Day meal programme and Anganwadi programme, specially launched to increase the percentage of the enrolment in primary schools<sup>40</sup>. In the three-tier Panchayati Raj system the Gram Panchayat's role is more important for better functioning of these educational institutions. It also plays key role, to organize the villagers create awareness for education, and increase literacy rate among all sections of the rural society. Under the Panchayati Raj, the Gram Sabha selects workers from the village for both educational institution and anganwadi centres, because they are expected to serve better for the village.

### **Health and Sanitation**

Under the C.D. Programme greater attention was given to the health condition of the rural people. Primary Health Centres were established to improve health condition in rural area. A centrally sponsored scheme known as Anganwadi was launched to improved health conditions of children and mothers of the rural area. Under this anganwadi programme special care have been taken to provide nutritious food and medicine to both child and the mothers. Under Panchayati Raj a primary health centre was set-up at every village with all time availability of medicine for the villagers. The Panchayati Raj looks after the better functioning of these two institution<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> Rajesh Dayal, *Op.Cit.*, p. 218.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* p. 227.

<sup>40</sup> Dr. V. R. Bhattacharya, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 251 – 255.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

As far as the Sanitation is concerned, priority was given for the better sanitation of rural area. Keeping this in mind, the Panchayat provides safe water, public latrine, smokeless chulhas etc., in every village. The third Plan envisaged the provision of supplies of good drinking water to most villages in the country<sup>42</sup>. For this purpose effective co-ordination is needed. In Panchayati Raj, district and block levels were initiated first, and then special funds were routed to the village panchayat.

### **Housing and Communication**

The Village Housing Scheme was introduced in August 1956. The object of this scheme was to create healthy environment condition in rural life<sup>43</sup>. Under the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, the Indira Awas Scheme was introduced. In this scheme in every village, house was to be provided to the landless labourers and people below the poverty line. This facility would be given only after the Gram Sabhas identifies the beneficiaries. The revised 20-Point programme promised to allot house site and house to rural landless workers. The Minimum Needs Programme introduced in the Fifth Five Year Plan, placed a high priority on the provision of free house sites and assistance for construction of houses for the landless workers in rural areas<sup>44</sup>.

As far as the Communication Facilities are concerned, under Panchayati Raj, with the help of Panchayat Samiti, the Gram Panchayat will take responsibility for construction of roads, bridges etc. For better communication the Panchayat will provide funds for communication facilities.

### **Drinking Water Facilities**

Safe drinking Water is a big problem in rural India. To make drinking water available in the rural areas, the third Plan envisaged the provision of supply of good drinking water to most villages in the country<sup>45</sup>. A Scheme "Million Well" programme was launched for availability of water in each and every

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p.250.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.291.

<sup>44</sup> Dr. V. R. Bhattacharya, Op.Cit, pp. 173 – 174.

<sup>45</sup> Rajesh Dayal, Op.Cit, p. 250.

village. In 1972-73, the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWP) was started for the benefit of the villages or areas where the problem of drinking water was most acute. The programme gained further momentum during the Fifth Five Year plan, which included drinking water for villages in its Minimum Need Programme. The Minimum Need Programme for drinking water was to provide the facility to all villages suffering from chronic scarcity or having unsafe source of water<sup>46</sup>.

### **Rural Electricity Facility**

The Rural Electricity Facility was launched with the introduction of Minimum Needs Programme in the fifth Five Year Plan. This Scheme was introduced for accelerating electrification in the remote and economically backward areas<sup>47</sup>. The then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi announced electrification of villages in the 20-Point Programme in 1982<sup>48</sup>. The Panchayat was to decide the beneficiaries in every village, keeping in view the priority for economically weaker section in the village.

The Panchayati Raj Institution is the best initiative to empower the rural poor, especially the SCs, STs and Women. The PRIs giving opportunities to the people, to get involved in various developmental activities. After the implementation of Panchayati Raj, it has become easy for everybody to express their problem and the Government directly takes responsibilities for rural development. If we compare the success rate of development programmes prior to the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act and after, then we can say that at present it is doing well. Thus, rural development took a new turn after introduction of Panchayati Raj.

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<sup>46</sup> V.R. Bhattacharya, Op.Cit, p.152.

<sup>47</sup> J. P. Singh, "Rural Electrification", *Kurukshetra*, vol. 49, no.3, December 2000, p. 42.

<sup>48</sup> Dr. V. R. Bhattacharya, Op. Cit., p. 183.

# ***Chapter-III***

***Role of the Panchayati Raj in Implementing Welfare Schemes in Orissa : A Study of Koraput District.***



## CHAPTER – 3.

### ROLE OF THE PANCHAYATI RAJ IN IMPLEMENTING WELFARE SCHEMES IN ORISSA: A STUDY OF KORAPUT DISTRICT.

#### INTRODUCTION

Panchayati Raj is an important institution in democratic decentralization. In post-independent India, Orissa is the first state, which introduced Gram Panchayat in 1948. The Orissa Gram Panchayat Act, 1948, came into being to establish Local self-government to ensure people's democracy at the village level. It was the first major innovation in the field of Local self-government in India. With the recommendation of the Balwanta Rai Mehta Committee of 1957 and approved by the National Development Council (NDC), the State Government introduced the three-tier Panchayati Raj System, i.e. Local-Government, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad. Though the Zilla Parishad abolished in 1968, it was reestablished in 1991.

Historically Panchayati Raj System in Orissa is associated with Grama, Gram Sasan, Gram Sabha and Palli Sabha.

**Grama:** It is one or a group of villages named as Grama. A Grama shall be constituted with more than ten thousand populations.

**Gram Sasan:** The Gram Sasan is a body corporate by the name of the Grama to which, it shall acquire, hold and dispose of property. The Grama Sasan shall approve the plans, programmes and projects for socio-economic development before these are taken up by the Grama Panchayat.

**Gram Sabha:** The Gram Sabha is the main organization of panchayati Raj. Its primary objective is to involve people and select beneficiaries in various plans and programmes at the village level.

**Palli Sabha:** In every village, Palli Sabha is constituted. The palli Sabha meets annually in February every year and gives its recommendation to the Gram Panchayat, on the developmental works and programmes and annual budget estimate submitted by the Gram Panchayat.

In addition to this, there came into being a three-tier Panchayati Raj System at village, Block and District level. The term of the Panchayat is for five years. The Chairperson (Sarapanch) is elected directly by the People and the Chairman of the Block level and President of Zilla Parishad are elected indirectly. There are seats reserved for SCs, STs, OBCs and Women at all the three levels. The seats for SCs and STs are reserved in proportion to their population, and one-third of the aggregate for Women. Orissa is the first state, which gave 33% reservation to women. Regarding OBCs reservation, in concern, there 27% seats are reserved for them.

The historic 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act brought little structural changing the Panchyati system of Orissa, since the state had already developed a three tier functioning system. But the fact that it gave constitutional status to such bodies, provided more than to these institutions in terms of their effective implementation. Here I have taken seven states i.e. Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat for comparison with Orissa because each of them have a three tiered systems According to the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act, all the states gave reservation of seats to SCs, STs, OBCs and Women. The seats are reserved for SCs and STs in proportion to their population and One-third seats are reserved for women, but for OBCs, it differs from state to state. The OBCs seats are reserved accordingly: in Orissa 27 per cent;

One-third of the total seats in Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka; 10 per cent in Gujarat; 15 per cent in Rajasthan; and in Uttar Pradesh it is in proportion to their population. As regards the power and functions of the Panchaya, the middle tier Panchayat is the focal point in most states, and the Zilla Parishad only coordinates and supervises the middle tier Panchayat.

In this chapter I wish to evaluate the functioning of the Panchayat system in Koraput district of Orissa, in the comparative light of other districts of the state as well as the other above mentioned states. It is important to bear in mind that various poverty alleviation programmes had been in operation in Koraput. These are : Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana, Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, Employment Assurance Scheme, Indira Awaas Yojana, Social Assistance etc. The targeted groups are Below Poverty Line families.

The Orissa Gram Panchayat Act, 1948, was enacted to establish Local self-government and to ensure people's democracy at the village level<sup>1</sup>. Orissa was the first state in India to introduce Gram Panchayats in 1948. The establishment of Gram Panchayats as the unit of Local Self – Government, replaced the union boards under the Bihar and Orissa Village Administration Act, 1922. The provisions of the Act of 1948 extended to all except the municipal and notified areas of the state. Within a couple of years, Gram Panchayats, came to be established gradually in the areas of newly merged princely states. Thus, the Gram Panchayats at the Village level combined with the existing District boards and Taluka boards at the district and taluka level respectively. With the introduction of the Community Development Programmes and National Extension Service in October 1952, a new administrative set-up called Community

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<sup>1</sup>. Prof. B. K. Chandrashekar (ed.), *Panchayati Raj in India: Status Report 1999*, Rajeev Gandhi Foundation New Delhi, March 2000, p – 168.

Development Block evolved to carry out the development programmes and project<sup>2</sup>. In 1955, a Local Self – Government institution called, as Anchal Sasan (Tehsil) was created in Orissa. An Act was passed in 1954 during the Chief Ministership of Nabakrishna Choudhury, which made the revenue tehsils the units of Local Government above the Panchayats. The Anchal Sasan were given the entire land revenue of the tehsil, including cess and other fees collected by the Tehsildar (Revenue Collector). The Orissa Anchal Sasan Act, 1955, was repealed after the introduction of the Three – Tier Panchayati Raj System recommended by Balwantray Mehta Committee Report. (1957). Accordingly the recommendations were approved by the National Development Council (NDC) and the Government enacted the three – tier Panchayat Raj system of Local Government and the Orissa Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad Act, 1959.<sup>3</sup> The earlier system of Local Self – Government continued to work till January 26, 1961, when the Panchayat Samitis and Zilla Parishads were established as per the provisions of the Orissa Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad Act, 1959. A new Act, i.e., Orissa Gram Panchayat Act, 1964, (passed in 1965) was enacted consolidating all the laws relating to Gram panchayats in Orissa, which replaced the Orissa Gram Panchayat Act, 1948. Under this new Act, elections were held to the Gram Panchayat in 1967 and along with it, Panchayat Samitis and Zilla Parishads were constituted in the same year. This system continued till 1968, but the Swatantra Party led Government abolished the Zilla Parishads on November 1, 1968, by amending the Orissa Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad Act, 1959. This is the brief legislative history of Panchayat Acts in Orissa till the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act.

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<sup>2</sup>. Ratan Ghosh and Alok Kumar Pramanik, *Panchayat System in India*, Kanishka Publishers and New Delhi 1999, p – 139.

<sup>3</sup>. George Mathew, *Status of Panchayati Raj in the States and Union Territories of India – 2000*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi 2000, pp – 229 – 230.

## **Features of Panchayati Raj Institution in Orissa.**

**The salient features of Panchayati Raj Institution in Orissa are as follows:**

- Village, comprising a total population of about 10,000, makes a Panchayat called the Gram Sabha. While the population of about one lakh make an Intermediate Panchayat called Panchayat Samiti and each revenue district a District Council called Zilla Parishad with no limits of population.
- An eligible elector of the lowest level Panchayat is a member of Gram Sabha, and is automatically part of the electoral college which elects the Sarpanch.
- Eligible electorates of each revenue district comprise the electoral college for direct election of the Zilla Parishad Chairman, the election of President to the intermediate levels i.e., Block Chairman is indirect.
- The electoral college for the election of Block Chairman comprises the ward members and Samiti Sabha elected directly at the time of the election of the Sarpanch.
- Of the three-tiers, the intermediate one, which is headed by an indirectly elected chairman.<sup>4</sup>

The Orissa Gram Panchayat Act (1964) has been amended permitting extensive power to "Gram Sabha". According to Gram Panchayat Rule 5 (3) in this regard, the Gram Sabha enjoys the power, such as to approve of schemes, selection of beneficiaries, discussion on Gram Panchayat budget, tax proposals, etc.<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup>. Prof. B. K. Chandrashekar, op. cit. p – 169.

<sup>5</sup>. Ibid, p – 168.

The 1964 Act was further amended in 1994 and 1995 to meet the requirements of the 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment Act. The Act of 1964 as amended up to 1995, empowered the state government to establish and constitute the Grama, Grama Sasan (Village Government), Gram Sabha, the Palli Sabha (Ward Parliament) and the Gram Panchayats<sup>6</sup>. The origin and functions of these institutions are:

**Grاما :**

The State Government may through a notification constitute any village or group of contiguous villages as a Grama and assign to such Grama, a name which shall be of one of the villages comprised within the Grama. The village intervened only by forest areas, hills, streams, rivers and other natural barriers, and lands not forming part of any village may be treated as contiguous villages. As per the provisions, whenever the Government deem it fit, they may cancel any notification in respect of a Grama under Sub-section (1) or may alter the area comprised in a Grama by reducing or adding number of villages comprised within such Grama. No Grama shall be constituted with a population of less than two thousand and more than ten thousand.

**Grاما Sasan :**

As the Grama Sasan is concerned, in every Grama there shall be a Grama Sasan which shall be composed of all persons registered by virtue of the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1950.

The Grama Sasan shall be a body corporate by the name of the Grama to which it relates, having perpetual succession and common seal, with power, subject to the provision of this Act and the rules made

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<sup>6</sup>. George Mathew (ed.), op. cit. p - -230.

thereunder, to acquire, hold and dispose of property and to contract and may by the said name sue and sued. The office and headquarters of the Gram Sasan shall be situated within the limits of the Grama and unless otherwise ordered by the state Government in village bearing the name of Grama<sup>7</sup>.

In an amendment made in 1997, the power of the Grama Sasan has been considerably increased. The power and function of the Grama Sasan are:

- To identify or select the beneficiaries under poverty alleviation schemes and the similar development programme.
- To organise community service, draw up and implement Agricultural production plans.
- To consider the proposals of the Gram Panchayat to levy taxes, rates, fees etc<sup>8</sup>.

### **Grama Sabha.**

Grama Sabha is the important organization in democratic decentralization system. The primary activities of the Grama Sabha are to involve people in decisionmaking process, by their participation in development programmes, and to ensure restoration of power where it belongs. It was envisaged that the powers could be transferred to the people where institution responsibilities and functions are well demarcated. By empowering people at the grass-root level, people could put their legitimate influence on planning at the village level for ensuring local democracy and equal distribution of power.

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<sup>7</sup>. Dr. Jayadev Pati, *The Orissa Gram Panchayat Manual*, Cuttack Law House, Cuttack 1998, pp – 4 – 5.

<sup>8</sup>. George Mathew (ed.), op. cit. p – 230.

**The functions of Grama Sabha are:**

- There shall be at least two meetings, one in February and the other in June, in every year.
- The quorum for the meetings of the Grama Sabha shall be one – tenth of the members of the Grama Sasan.
- In the event of there being no quorum at any Grama Shabha, it shall stand adjourned to be future day of which notice shall be given in the prescribed manner and no quorum shall be necessary for any such adjourned meeting.
- Subject to other provisions of this Act, it shall be the duty of the Gram Sasan to consider:
  - A. at the Grama Sabha held in February each year, the programmes and works to be undertaken by the Gram Panchayat for the ensuing year and the annual budget for the Grama for that year, having regards to these recommendation;
  - B. at the Grama Sabha held during the month of June each years, the report of the programmes and works undertaken by Grama Panchayat and their progress during the preceding year along with annual report submitted by the Sarapanch;
  - C. at any Grama Sabha, proposals for levy of taxes, rates, rents and fees and the enhancement of rates thereof, organization of community service, drawing up and implementation of agricultural production plans and any other matter as be prescribed<sup>9</sup>.

**Palli Sabha.**

For every village within the Grama, there shall be constituted by the state Government a Palli Sabha. Each Palli Sabha shall consist of all person registered by virtue of the representation of the People Act 1950. The Palli Sabha meet annually in February every year and may also meet at

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<sup>9</sup>. Dr. Jayadev Pati, op. cit. pp – 5 – 6.



other times. It shall be the duty of the Palli Sabha at its annual meeting in February each year to give its recommendation to the Grama Panchayat on the following matters, such as :

- A. the development works and programme that may be taken up,
- B. the annual budget estimate submitted by the Grama Panchayat<sup>10</sup>.

### **Structure of the Panchayati Raj System.**

**The structure of the Panchayati Raj System (three-tier system) are follows:**

#### **Grama Panchayat**

Grama Panchayat is the lower unit in the three-tier Panchayati Raj System in Orissa. To constitute a Grama Panchayat, a Grama is divided into 11 to 25 wards. The voters of each wards elect from among themselves their ward members. The Chairperson called as Sarapancha shall be directly elected by the voters of the Gram Sabha. A Naib-Sarapancha shall be elected by the ward members from among themselves<sup>11</sup>.

#### **Reservation of Seats.**

In Gram Panchayat, seats were reserved for the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in proportion to population of that area. There shall not less than one third seats are reserve for women, belonging to the SCs and STs. As per the provision of the reservation of seats.

The office of the Sarapanch in all the Panchayat shall be reserved for the SLs and the STs respectively in the state. There shall be one-third of the total number of offices of the Sarapanch reserved for women.

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<sup>10</sup>. S. S. Singh, Suresh Mishra and Sanjay Pratap, "*Legislative Status of Panchayati Raj in India*", Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, 1997, P – 356.

<sup>11</sup>. Ratan Ghosh and Alok Kumar Pramanik, op. cit., pp – 140 – 141.

**Qualification :**

The qualification of the Sarapanch and Naib – Sarapanch of the Grama Panchayats are: No member of the Gram Sabha shall be eligible to contest in election as a Sarapanch, if he/she is a candidate for election or hold office as a Sarapanch of any other Grama Panchayat. As a Sarapancha or Naib-Sarapanch if he/she has not attained the age of 21 years and is unable to read and write Oriya. And, as a member for more than one ward in the grama or for more than one Grama Panchayat if he/she is unable to read and write Oriya and has not attained the age of 21 years<sup>12</sup>.

**Term of Office**

The term of Office of the Grama Panchayat is, according to the Act of 1964, was three years, beginning from the date of its first meeting. Since 1977, its term has been raised to five years and the total period of extension has been reduced to one year. According to the Orissa Grama Panchayat (Amendment) Act 1991, the State Government can dissolve all or any one of the Grama panchayats. But such a Grama panchayat should be reconstituted by a fresh election held within a period of six months.

The Sarapanchs, Naib-Sarapanchs and other members also enjoy the term for five years. However, the District Collector can suspend the Sarapanch and Naib-Sarapanch, if he/she feels that they are misusing their powers, by duly reporting the matter to the State Government. The Naib-Srapanchs can also be removed from the office if two-third of the members of the Grama Panchayat pass a resolution (with 15 days notice given to the SDO by one third of the members of the Grama Panchayat through a

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<sup>12</sup>. S. S. Singh, Suresh Mishra and Sanjay Pratap, op. cit. pp- 366 – 367.

resolution expressing no-confidence in him/her) expressing their no-confidence in him/her<sup>13</sup>.

### **Powers and Duties of Sarapanch and Naib-Sarapanch.**

Sarapanch is the head of the Grama Panchayat. The executive powers of the Grama Panchayats is exercised by the Sarapanch.

The duties of the Sarapanch are, that he/she shall convene and preside over the meetings of the Gram Panchayat; execute a documents relating to contacts; be responsible for the proper custody of all records and documents and he/she shall be responsible for the proper working of the Grama Panchayat.

The power and duties of the Naib-Sarapanch are that he/she enjoys the similar power as the sarapanch enjoys, but the Sarapanch may won time to time delegate his power to him/her<sup>14</sup>.

### **Secretary of Grama Panchayat**

There shall be a Panchayat Secretary, who shall be appointed by the Grama Panchayat, with the approval of the District Panchayat Officer<sup>15</sup>.

The duties of the Panchayat Secretary are that the Secretary shall maintain records of the proceeding of the meeting of the Grama Panchayat, shall remain in custody of all records and documents, cash and valuables and exercise and discharge such other powers and duties as assigned to him/her<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup>. Ratna Ghosh and Alok Kumar Praminik, op. cit. p-141.

<sup>14</sup>. S. S. Singh, Suresh Mishra and Sanjay Pratap, op. cit. pp- 357-368.

<sup>15</sup>. Ratan Ghosh and Alok Kumar Pramanik, op. cit. p- 141.

<sup>16</sup>. S. S. Singh, Suresh Mishra and Sanjay Pratap, op. cit. p- 373.

## **Function of the Grama Panchayat**

The function of the Grama Panchayat are divided into two parts : obligatory and discretionary functions.

### **Obligatory Functions**

The Obligatory function of the Grama Panchayat are that, it shall be the duty of the Grama Panchayat within the limits of its funds to undertake, control and administer and be responsible for some of important matters in respect of the grama such as :

- construction, repair, maintain of public streets;
- Lighting, watering and cleaning of public streets and other public place;
- Construction, maintenance and cleaning of drains and drainage works and all public latrines, urinals and similar conveniences and disposal of drain water and sullage;
- Construction and maintenance of works and mean for supply of drinking water for public;
- Scavenging, removal and disposal of filth, rubbish and other polluted matters from the locality;
- Measures for preventing and checking the spread of epidemic or infectious and other dangerous diseases;
- Regulation and abatement of offensive or dangerous trades or practices;
- The registration of birth, death and marriage of that locality;
- The protection, maintenance and development of all properties vested in or entrusted to the management of the Grama Panchayat;
- Establishment, management and maintenance of common grazing grounds and lands for common benefit of the people of the Grama;
- Maintenance of records relating to cattle census, population census and other statistics;

- Rendering all reasonable assistance to the Samiti in matter of establishment and maintenance of schools for primary education;
- Supervision and maintenance of soil conservation works;
- Regulation of meals, fairs and festivals and establishment, maintenance and regulation of markets, hats and cart-stands including stand for carriage or motor vehicles within the meaning of motor vehicles Act, 1939 (4 of 1939) and registration of sales of animals in such markets, hats and fair within the Grama;
- The implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice relation agriculture, including agricultural extension;
- Minor forest produce;
- Small scale industries including food processing industries;
- rural housing, poverty alleviation programme and women and child welfare;
- social welfare including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded;
- public distribution;
- maintenance of community assets.

#### **Discretionary functions**

The Grama Panchayat may, if a majority of its members so decide by a resolution, with the previous approval of the State Government undertaken with the Grama, the control and administration of and be responsible for the matters, such as:

- planting and care of trees on the sides of public streets or in other public places vested in it;
- maintenance of village forest, declared as such by notification by the State Government for the purpose of this Act;
- improved breeding and medical treatment of cattle and prevention of cattle diseases;

- assisting and advising agriculturists in reclaiming and cultivating fallow lands;
- development of co-operation, promotion of co-operative stores for improved seeds and implements, arranging for co-operative management of land and other resources of the village and establishment of Goshalas and diary farms on co-operative lines;
- relief from famine and other calamity;
- establishment and maintenance of libraries and reading rooms;
- organization of fire services and protection of life and property in case of fire;
- maternity and child welfare and establishment of centres and for this purpose;
- establishment and maintenance of Akharas and club for sports and games and other recreations;
- establishment of cattle ponds;
- maintenance of works for providing employment;
- organization, management and promotion of cottage industries;
- construction and maintenance of dharmashala and rest houses;
- organization and maintenance of agricultural and industrial exhibitions;
- statistic of employment;
- public vaccination and inoculation;
- adult education, establishment of primary school with approval of Panchayat Samiti;
- organization a body of Grama Swechha Sevaks for assisting the Grama Panchayat in the discharge of its functions in the matter of social services such as extinguishing village fire, protecting life and property when fire and flood occurs, disposing of dead bodies and rendering such other social and philanthropic services;
- preventing of gambling and implementation of the programme for prohibition;

- construction and maintenance of ponds for agriculture;
- promotion of public safety, health and general welfare<sup>17</sup>.

### **Resources of Grama Panchayat**

Subject to the provisions of this Act and the rules made thereunder it shall be competent for a Grama Panchayat to levy all or any of the tax or fees. The Grama Panchayat imposes taxes on:

- vehicle, that the vehicle owner should pay tax for using road and within the Grama;
- a latrine or conservancy tax payable by the occupiers, owners of lands and buildings situated within the limits of the Grama;
- a water-rate where water is supplied by the Grama Panchayat, based on the costs of supply of water;
- lighting tax, where the lighting of public streets, places or buildings is undertaken by the Grama Panchayat based on the cost of lighting and maintenance of its;
- a drainage tax payable by the owners of lands and buildings situated within the limits of Grama;
- a fee on public market, cart-stands and slaughter within the Grama;
- rent from dealers temporarily occupying open grounds or any structure or building belonging to or maintained by Grama Panchayat;
- fee for use of any building or structures, shops, stalls in the market;
- licence fees on brokers, commission agents for practicing within the Grama;
- any other tax, toll, fee or rate, as may be decided by the Grama Panchayat subjected to the approval of the State Government<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup>. Dr. Jayadev Pati, op. cit, pp- 30-31.

<sup>18</sup>. Ibid. pp- 47-48.

### **Control over Grama Panchayat**

As per the provisions of Grama Panchayat, the Collector of the district or such other officer or person specially authorized by the State Government shall exercise general power of inspection, supervision and control over the exercise of power, discharge of duties and performance of functions by the Grama Panchayat<sup>19</sup>.

### **Vote of no confidence against Sarapanch or Naib-Sarapancha**

As per the provision of no confidence, a meeting of the Grama Panchayat specially convened by the-Sub-Collector in that behalf a resolution shall be pass on the support by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the total membership of the Grama Panchayat, regarding want of confidence in the Sarapanch or Naib-Sarapanch the resolution shall forthwith be forwarded by the Sub-Collector to the Collector, who shall immediately or receipt of the resolution publish the same on his/her notice-board and with effect from the date of such publication the member holding of office of Sarapanch or Naib-Sarapanch shall be deemed to have vacated such office.

According to the provision of no confidence, no such meeting shall be convened except on a requisition signed by at least one-third of the total membership of the Grama Panchayat along with a copy of the resolution proposed to be moved at the meeting. The requisition shall be addressed to the Sub-Divisional officer. The Sub-Collector fix the date for the meeting, for which the notice should be given before fifteen of the fixed date. The voting at all such meetings shall be by secret ballot. If two-third majority of the house voted against the Sarapanch and Naib-Sarapanch, the presiding officer will pass the resolution and they (Sarapanch and Naib-Sarapanch) shall vacate the Office<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup>. Ibid. p- 60.

<sup>20</sup>. Ibid. pp- 17-18.



## **Panchayat Samiti**

In the three-tier Pachayati Raj System in Orissa, the Panchayati Samiti at the block level constitutes the middle-tier and is the most important body from the point of developmental works. In 1959 the Panchayat Samiti, under the recommendation of Balwantrai Mehta Committee (1957) on democratic decentralization, the Government of Orissa enacted the Orissa Zilla Parishad Act, 1959 making provision for the establishment of Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishads. In 1961, the name of the Act was changed to the Orissa Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad Act, 1959 which came into effect on January 26, 1961. After the provisions relating to Zilla Parishads were abolished in 1968 by the Government of Orissa, the Act came to be known as Orissa Panchayat Samiti Act, 1959.

As per the provisions of the 1959 Act, all the 314 Community Development Blocks were converted to Panchayati Raj Blocks and each block having a Panchayat Samiti<sup>21</sup>. The Panchayat Samiti consists of elected members one from each Grama Panchayat area, and ex-officio members, such as all the Sarapanchs of the Grama panchayats in the block, and Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) and the Member of Parliament (MP) representing the area. The Chairperson and Vice-chairperson of Panchayat Samitis are chosen by the elected members from among themselves. The Chairperson is the chief executive of the Panchayat Samiti and is accountable and responsible to it. There shall be Block Development Officer (BDO), who is the executive officer is the main instrument of execution of resolutions, orders, decisions and projects. The budget of the block is prepared by the BDO with the approval of the

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<sup>21</sup>. Ratna Ghosh and Alok Kumar Pramanik, op. cit. p- 134.

Chairperson and placed before the Panchayat Samiti for sanction then it would be submitted to the collector of the district to modify it<sup>22</sup>.

### **Reservation of seats**

In Panchayat Samiti, seats were reserved for the schedule castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs) in proportion to population of that area. There shall be not less than one-third seats are reserve for women, belonging to the SCs and the STs. As per the provision of the reservation of seat, in every Panchayat Samiti 27 per cent of total number of seats are reserved for the Backward Class citizen.

The Office of the Chairman in all the Panchayat Samitis shall be reserved for the SCs and the STs shall bear the same proportion to the total number of such offices as the population of the SCs and STs respectively in the state. There shall be one-third of the total number of offices of chairman of the Panchayat Samiti reserved for women. This reservation of offices of chairman shall be made by the collector by rotation among different Panchayat Samitis<sup>23</sup>.

### **Term of the Office**

The term of office of the elected members of the Panchayat Samiti including the Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall be five years commencing on the date of the first meeting referred to the newly elected body<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup>. George Mathew, op. cit. p- 231.

<sup>23</sup>. Rita Das, *The Orissa Panchayat Samiti Manual*, Orissa Law Review, Cuttack, 1997, pp- 5-8.

<sup>24</sup>. *Ibid.*, p- 8.

### **Power and Function of Panchayat Samiti**

A Panchayat Samiti shall, subject to such terms and conditions as Government may, from time to time by order specify, exercise the powers and perform the functions hereinafter provided:

The planning, execution and supervision of the developmental programmes, schemes and works in the block relating to Community Development including those connected to Tribal Development and the other programmes, schemes shall be directed by the Panchayat Samiti.

The Panchayat Samiti also look after the management, control and spread of primary education in the block, management of such trusts and endowments and other institutions as may be entrusted to them under any law for the time being in force or under orders of Government. It also supervise of enforce of laws relating to vaccination and registration of births and deaths, borrowing of money and granting of loans subject to such terms and conditions as may be prescribed for carrying out the purposes of this Act with the previous approval of Government and the supervisory powers over the Grama Panchayats within the block to be exercised in such manner and to such extent as may be prescribed.

### **Power and Function of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman**

The Chairman is the head of the Panchayat Samiti. As a head of the Panchayat Samiti, he/she convene and conduct the meetings of the Panchayat Samiti and have power to inspect and supervise all work undertaken by the Panchayat Samiti. The Vice-Chairman of the Panchayat Samiti shall exercise such powers and perform such functions as the Chairman may, from time to time delegate to Vice-Chairman. When the offices of the Chairman is vacant the Vice-Chairman of the Samiti shall be exercise the powers and perform the function of the Chairman until the new Chairman is elected. When the office of the Chairman is vacant or the

Chairman has been continuously absent from the block for more than fifteen days or is incapacitated for more than fifteen days and there is either a vacancy in the office of the Vice-Chairman or the Vice-Chairman has been continuously absent from the block for more than fifteen days or is incapacitated for more than fifteen days, the powers and functions of the Chairman shall devolve on a member of the Panchayat Samiti from out of a panel of three such members in order of priority nominated by the Chairman in that behalf who shall be the officiating Chairman and shall exercise the powers and perform the functions of the Chairman, subject to such restrictions and conditions as may be prescribed, until a Chairman or Vice-Chairman assumed office on being duly elected or, as the case may be taken charge of their office. The Chairman shall nominate the panel who shall take charge the office of the Panchayat Samiti in the absence of either the Chairman or the Vice-Chairman<sup>25</sup>.

### **Resources of the Panchayat Samiti**

**The source of income of a Panchayat Samiti shall consist of :**

- funds relating to various developmental schemes are transferred by the Government or Head of Departments of the Government to the Panchayat Samiti;
- funds relating to the Community Developmental Programme;
- central and state-aid received from the All-India Bodies and Institutions for the development of cottage and village industries, khadi, silk, coir handicrafts etc.;
- donation and contributions received by the Panchayat Samiti from Panchayats or from the public in any form;
- land-revenue, state taxes or fees as may be prescribed and
- grants from any authorities, or organizations or statutory bodies<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. pp- 10-11.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. pp- 13-14.

### **Removal of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Panchayat Samiti**

As per the removable of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Panchayat Samiti were concerned that, if in the opinion of the Government the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Panchayat Samiti willfully omits or refuses to carry out or violetes the provisions of this Act or any rules bye-laws or orders made or issued thereunder or abuses the power vested in him/her and Government are satisfied that further continuance of such person in office would be detrimental to the interest of the Panchayat Samiti may, by order remove such Chairman, Vice-Chairman or member from office.

As per the provision, no such order for removal shall be made without giving the person concerned a reasonable opportunities of being heard. No person removed from the office of Chairman, Vice-Chairman or any elected member shall for a period of four years from the date of the removal be eligible to hold any of the said offices<sup>27</sup>.

### **Disqualification for Becoming Member**

A person shall not be eligible to stand for election:

- if he/she is not ordinarily residing within the block;
- is of unsound mentally and convicted of an election offence under any law for the time being in force;
- is not a citizen of India and holds any office of profit under the State or Central Government or any Local Authority;
- is a teacher in any school recognized under the provisions of the Orissa Education Code for the time being in force;
- hold the office of a minister either in the Central or in the State Government;

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<sup>27</sup>. Ibid, pp- 18-19.

- as a member of the House of the People or of the Council of States or of the State Legislature;
- has been dismissed from service of the state or central Government;
- has been in arrears of any tax, fee or rate due by him/her to any Gram Panchayat for a continuous period of two years;
- being a member of any Society registered under the Orissa Cooperative Societies Act, 1951, has failed to pay any arrears of any kind accrued due by him/her such society for a continuous period of two years or more;
- is disqualified by or under any law for the time being in force for the purpose of election to the Legislature of the State;
- is less than twenty-one years of age and is not able to read and write Oriya<sup>28</sup>.

#### **Vote of no confidence against Chairman and Vice-Chairman**

A meeting of a Panchayat Samiti specially convened in that behalf a resolution is passed, supported by a majority of not less than two-third of the total number of member having a right to vote recording want of confidence in the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of such Samiti the resolution shall be published by such authority and with effect from the date of such publication the Chairman or Vice-Chairman shall be deemed to have vacated office. No such meeting shall be convened except on a requisition signed by at least one-third of the members with a right to vote, along with a copy of the resolution proposed to be moved at the meeting. The requisition shall be addressed to the Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO). The SDO shall fixed the date meeting and the voting at such meeting shall be secret ballot. No such resolution shall be taken up for consideration, unless it has been proposed by one member and has been seconded by

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. pp- 29-30.

another member at the meeting<sup>29</sup>. At last the proposed resolution passed by two-third majority of the house against the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman, then, his/her candidature shall be forbidden.

### **Control of the Panchayat Samiti**

It shall be the duty of the government or such officers or authorities as they may authorize to see that the proceedings of the Panchayat Samiti are in conformity with the provision of this Act and the rules made there under and that the implementation of the decisions taken therein and all actions taken by the Panchayat Samitis for carrying out the provisions of this Act and the rules made there under are free from fraud, misappropriation embezzlement and other criminal bearings.

The power of entry of Inspecting officers are the Collector of the District or any Officers, who the Government may empower in this behalf may at all time enter on and inspect on any immovable property, or any work in progress under the control of Panchaya Samiti, any school, hospital, dharmashalas or other institution maintained by or under the control of any Panchayat Samiti any records, registers or other documents kept in such institution, and the office of any Panchayat Samiti and any record, registers and documents kept therein.

The Collector of the district or any officer or person whom the Government empower in this behalf may call for any record, register, or other document in the possession or under the control of any Panchayat Samiti and require any Panchayat Samiti or its Chairman to furnish any information or report on any matter connected with such Panchayat Samiti, the Collector or such officer may this proper in regard to its proceeding or duties. The Government may by order in writing cancel any resolution or order passed by a Panchayat Samiti or by any of the authorities of such

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<sup>29</sup>. Ibid. pp- 34-36.

Panchayat Samiti if in their opinion such resolution or order is not legally passed or is excess or abuse of the power conferred by or under this Act, or on its execution is likely to cause danger to human life, health or safety or is likely to a riot.

The Government shall before taking action under above matter give the Panchayat Samiti an opportunity for explanation. If in the opinion of the Collector immediate action is necessary to suspend any such resolution or order on any of the aforesaid grounds, the Collector may by order in writing, suspend the operation of the resolution or order and refer the matter to Government whose decision thereon shall be final<sup>30</sup>.

### **Zilla Parishad**

The Zilla Parishads were constituted as the third-tier in Panchayati Raj System in Orissa. It was first constituted in January 1961, and started functioning well of sometime but unfortunately after seven years of functioning it was became a victim of the party politic and finally abolished it in 1968 on flimsy grounds. After abolition of Zilla Parishad, some alternative arrangements were made in this regard by establishing the District Advisory Councils and District Development Committee. However, after a long spell of 23 years, Zilla Parishads were revived in 1991 by an Act called Orissa Zilla Parishad Act, 1991.

As regards the Constitution of Zilla Parishad, the Act of 1959, had provided the members of the Zilla parishad are:

- The Chairperson of all Panchayat Samiti in the district;
- Collector of the district (as Chief Executive Officer) and other district officers of medical, educational, public health, agriculture, veterinary,

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. pp- 16-17.



Grama Panchayat, forest, welfare, works, co-operative and such other departments as may be prescribed;

- Sub-Divisional Officers exercising jurisdiction within the district;
- Chairperson of each of the Municipalities and Notified Area Councils; and
- President of each of the Central Co-Operative Banks functioning in the district.

But in the Orissa Zilla Parishad Act, 1991, which has made provision for direct election of members to the Zilla Parishad, those are as follows:

- One member elected directly on the basis of adult suffrage from each constituency of a block within the district (each block comprises of two constituencies);
- Members of the House of the People and of the State Legislative assembly whose constituencies or major portions thereof fall within the district (an M.P. or M.L.A. can not become a member more than one Zilla Parishad at a time);
- Members of the Rajya Sabha having place of residence in the district;
- Project Administrators of Integrated Tribal Development Agencies;
- Project Officers of the District Rural development Agencies;
- District Development Officers<sup>31</sup>.

### **Meeting of the Zilla Parishad**

A Zilla Parishad shall meet not less than four times during any year for the transaction of its business and period of more than three months shall not be allowed to elapse between two successive meetings<sup>32</sup>.

### **Reservation of Seats**

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<sup>31</sup>. Ratna Ghosh and Alok Kumar Pramanik, op. cit, pp- 144-146.

<sup>32</sup>. S. S. Singh, Suresh Mishra and Sanjay Pratap, op. cit. p- 386.

In Zilla Parishad, seats were reserved for the SCs and STs in proportion to their population. Twenty-Seven per cent seats are reserved for Backward Class Citizens (BCC) and not less than One-Third seats were reserved for women including those from SCs, STs and the BCCs<sup>33</sup>.

As per the provision the office of the President in the Zilla Parishads shall be reserved for the SCs and the STs shall bear to the total number of the offices as population of the SCs and STs and one-third of the total number of offices of the President in the Zilla Parishad shall be reserved for women<sup>34</sup>.

#### **Term of the Zilla Parishad**

The term of the elected member of the Zilla Parishad including the President and Vice-President shall continue for five years from the date appointed for its first meeting. There shall be an election to constitute a Zilla Parishad shall be completed before expiry of its five years term. If the Zilla Parishad dissolved before the expiry of its duration then a new Zilla Parishad should be constitute within a six month from the date of its dissolution<sup>35</sup>.

#### **Power and function of Zilla Parishad-**

Every Zilla Parishad shall have the power to, undertake schemes or adopt measures including giving of financial assistance relating to the development of agriculture, social forestry, live stock, industries, co-operative movement, rural credit, water-supply, distribution of essential commodities, rural electrification including distribution of electricity, minor irrigation, public health and sanitation, including establishment of

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<sup>33</sup>. George Mathew, op. cit, p- 232.

<sup>34</sup>. S. S. Singh, Suresh Mishra and Sanjay Pratap, op. cit. 386.

<sup>35</sup>. Ibid, pp- 385-386.

dispensaries and hospitals, communications, primary, secondary and adult education including welfare and other objects of general public utility.

The Zilla Parishad also have undertaken execution of any scheme, perform of any act or management of any institution or organization entrusted to it by the Government or any other authority from time to time. It also manage or maintain any work of Public utility or any institution vested in it or under its control and management and grant aid to any school, public library, public institution or public welfare organization within the district<sup>36</sup>. The Zilla Parishad have power to examine and approve the budget estimates of Panchayat Samitis and co-ordinate and integrate the development plans and schemes prepared by the Panchayat Samitis in the district, it shall make grants to Panchayat Samitis or Grama Panchayats within the district<sup>37</sup>.

### **Standing Committee of Zilla Parishad**

The Standing Committee of Zilla Parishad is concern, for efficient discharge of its functions the Zilla Parishad shall constitute standing committee. At present the Zilla Parishad has six standing committees for six group of functional subjects with five elected members each. The President of the Zilla Parishad is the Ex-Officio Chairperson and the Chief-Executive Officer is the Ex-Officio Secretary of every standing committee. In these committees, seats were reserved for women, SCs and STs. These standing committees have the power to make recommendations unless it obtains the approval of director of Panchayati Raj within one month to modify such recommendations. Thus, for all practical purposes the Zilla Parishad runs according to the decisions of the committees<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup>. Ibid, p- 386.

<sup>37</sup>. Ratna ghaosh and Alok Kumar Pramanik, op, cit. p- 146.

<sup>38</sup>. George Mathew, op. cit. pp- 232-233.

## **Resources of Zilla Parishad**

**The sources of income of a Zilla Parishad shall consist of :**

- the Central or State Government funds allotted to the Zilla Parishad;
- grants from All-India Bodies and Institutions for the development of cottage, village and small scale industries;
- such share of the land cess or any other cess or state taxes allotted under any law or fees as may be prescribed; and
- income from endowments, trusts or other institutions administered by the Zilla Parishad<sup>39</sup>.

## **Removal of President and Vice-President**

Removal of both President and Vice-President is that, if in the opinion of the Government, the President or Vice-President the Zilla Parishad willfully omit or refuses to carry out or violates the provision of this Act or any rules, bye-laws or orders, made or issued thereunder or abuse the powers vested in him/her and Government are satisfied that further continuance of such person in office would be detrimental to the interest of the Parishad, they may, by order published in the prescribed manner, remove such President or Vice-President from office<sup>40</sup>.

The President and Vice-President also removed through a vote of no confidence. A meeting of the Zilla Parishad specially convened in that behalf a resolution is passed, supported by majority of not less than two-thirds of the total members having a right to vote, recording want of confidence in the President or Vice-President of such Zilla Parishad, the resolution shall forth with be published by such authority and in such manner as may be prescribed and with effect from the date of such

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<sup>39</sup>. S. S. Singh, Suresh Mishra and Sanjay Pratap, op. cit. p- 387.

<sup>40</sup>. Ibid. p- 389.

publication the President and Vice-President, shall be deemed to have vacated office<sup>41</sup>.

### **Control of Zilla Parishad**

It shall be the duty of the Government and such officers or authorities as may be authorized by the Government to see the proceedings are conformity with the provisions of this Act and the rules that the Zilla Parishad are free from fraud, misappropriation embezzlement and other criminal bearings.

There is also, the Director or any Officer whom the Government may authorize in this behalf may at any time enter upon and inspect:

- any immovable property or any work in progress under the control of any Zilla Parishad;
- any school, hospitals, dispensary, vaccination station, choultry, dharmashala or other institution maintained by or under the control of any Zilla Parishad and any records, registers or other documents kept in such institution; and
- the office of any Zilla Parishad and any records, registers or other documents kept therein.

The Government may by order in writing cancel any resolution or order passed by Zilla Parishad if that is:

- not legally passed; or
- excess or abuse of the powers conferred by or under this Act or is against the public interest; or
- on its execution, is likely to cause danger to human life, health or safety or is likely to lead to riot or affray<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup>. Ibid. pp- 391-392.

<sup>42</sup>. Ibid., pp- 388-389.

### **Comparision between before and after 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act, Orissa**

Orissa Gram Panchayat Act, 1948, came to establish Local Self-Government. As such, Orissa was the first State in India to introduce Gram Panchayat in 1948. In democratic decentralization system Panchayati Raj is the important step under taken by the Government of India. It is Orissa which is the first state introduce Panchayati Raj System in this country. However, so far the Amendment of the Orissa Gram Panchayat is concern, the post-73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment has not made major changes in pre-73<sup>rd</sup> Panchayati Raj in Orissa. Before 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act, the Government Orissa introduced three-tire Panchayati Raj system.

Though there was some change in post-73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment but as per the feature of the 73<sup>rd</sup> is concerned, the Government of Orissa constitute a Gram Sabha at village level along with three-tier (Gram Panchayat at village level, Panchayat Samiti at Block level and Zilla Parishad at District level) Panchayat Raj System introduced as well as elected representative in all the three level. It also provided reservation of seats for SCs, STs, OBCs and Women in Gram Panchayat Act, 1948 itself. Though the Zilla Parishad was abolished in 1968 but again it was revived in 1991. Thus, the land mark 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, could not made any major change in Orissa Panchayati Raj System.

### **Comparision of Orissa Panchayati Raj System with Other States**

In Democratic Decentralization, Panchayati Raj System is the major step in India. On this context, Orissa was the first state in India, which introduced Gram Panchayats in 1948. However, so far the comparision of Panchayati Raj of Orissa with other state is concern, the Government Orissa made Panchayati Raj reform at three level (i.e., Prior to 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act) passed in 1991. An important Act was made such as

Orissa Gram Panchayat Amendment Act 1991, Orissa Panchayat Samiti Amendment Act 1991, and Orissa Zilla Parishad Amendment Act 1991. But the reorganization of the Panchayati Raj was undertaken in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh in 1987 and Madhya Pradesh in 1990. In Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal a statutory amendments were made with certain substantive changes in Panchayati Raj by 1991-92. After 1960, Panchayat Institution in Gujarat came to be statutorily constituted in an integrated structure of three-tier. Rajasthan adopted a three tier Panchayati Raj System in 1959. In addition to this three-tier, all the state constituted Gram Sabha at village level to participate in plan and programme. In Orissa, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh the Chairperson (Sarpanch) directly elected by the people but in Karnataka, West Bengal indirectly elected.

Reservation of seats: In Orissa, at all the three level seats are reserved for SCs, STs and OBCs and women including SCs and STs. The seat for SCs, STs and Backward Class are reserved in proportion to their population. One-third of seats are reserved for women in rotation basis. Orissa is the first state in the country to implement thirty three per cent reservation for women in Municipalities and Panchayats at a time when centre was still deliberating on the issue. Similarly in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal Providing reservation to SCs and STs in proportion to their population. But in Karnataka the reservation for SCs and STs is in proportion to their population with minimum fifteen per cent. There One-third of the seats are reserved to women (including SCs and STs) all the three level. As per the reservation for Backward Classes is concerned, there is slightly differs state to state, like, in Orissa twenty seven per cent seats reserved for Backward Class in Zilla Parishad. One-third seats are reserved in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. In Gujarat ten per cent and fifteen in Rajasthan where SCs and STs are below 50-70 per cent, and in Uttar

Pradesh it in proportion to their population but West Bengal have not provided any reservation to Backward Classes.

The Panchayati Raj is important organization in democratic decentralization. As, the power and function of Panchayati Raj is concern, the Gram Panchayat is lower unit at Grass-root level, which is entirely concern about the development of village level. But the other two tier is differs state wise, like in Rajasthan, Karnataka and Orissa the power were largely devolved upon middle tier for undertaking substantial number of developmental functions. The Zilla Parishad mainly responsible for advising, guiding supporting and supervising the middle tier, But in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal the middle tier is more powerful. Besides providing over all guidance, support and supervising the lower and intermediate level Panchayati Raj Institutions, the Zilla Parishad also vested with powers to undertake directly some specified developmental function, particularly of inter block types.

**District Profile:**

Name of the District: Koraput.

Status of the District: Tribal & Backward.

Geographical Area (Sq. KMs): 7, 897,0.

No. of Sub-Divisions: 2.

No. of Tahasils: 7.

No. of Towns: 5.

No. of Municipalities: 1.

No. of N. A. Cs. : 3.

Police- Stations: 20.

No. of C. D. Blocks: 14.

Gram Panchayats: 197.

Villages: 1, 9997.

Lok Sabha Constituency: 1.



Assembly Constituencies: 4.

Population: 1, 029, 986.

Male: 5, 17, 274.

Female: 5, 12,712.

Population of Scheduled Castes: 1, 38, 169.

Male: 69, 257.

Female: 68, 912.

Population of Scheduled Tribes :: 5, 21, 849.

Male: 2, 59, 251.

Female: 2, 62, 598.

Literacy: Scheduled Castes: 20. 18 per cent.

Male: 30. 93 per cent.

Female: 9. 25 per cent.

Scheduled Tribes: 8. 34 per cent.

Male: 14. 61 per cent.

Female: 2.14 per cent.

(Sources: District Statistical Hand Book 1995, Koraput.)

### **Development Schemes in Koraput**

**Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY)**

Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) has been launched in 1999 to ensure development of rural infrastructure at the village level by restructuring the erstwhile Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY).

The primary objective of JGSY is creation of community infrastructure including durable assets at the village level to enable the rural poor to increase the opportunities for sustained employment. The secondary objective is to generate of wage employment for the unemployed poor in the rural areas.

The Priority is given to the creations of infrastructure for SCs and STs, infrastructure support for JGSY, community infrastructure for education and health and other social, economic physical infrastructure<sup>43</sup>.

In Koraput district, the new scheme JGSY is being implemented in all the 197 Gram Panchayats in the district, with effect from 1 April, 1999. This scheme receives funds from both Central and State Government<sup>44</sup>.

The new programme JGSY is being implemented by the Panchayat in Koraput. The development of villages infrastructure needs to be taken up in a planned manner. Thus, it could be done by the Panchayat, because it is familiar with the ground realities and can effectively determine the local needs.

### **Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)**

The Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) has been launched in the district with effect from 1 April, 1999 as a new Self-Employment Programme. With the coming into effect of the SGSY, the earlier programme of Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM), Development of Women and Children in Rural Area (DWCRA), the Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY) as well as Million Well Scheme (MWS) are no longer in operation in the district.

The objective of the SGSY is to bring the self-employed poor families (Swarozgaris) above the poverty line by providing them with

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<sup>43</sup>. *Annual Report 2000-2001, Government of India, Ministry of Rural Development, pp- 9-10.*

<sup>44</sup>. *Information Sheet, Koraput District, Government of Orissa, 2000.*

income-generating assets through a mix of Bank Credit and Government Subsidy.

Families below the poverty line in rural areas constitute the target group of the SGSY. Within the target group, special safeguards have been provided for vulnerable sections, by way of reserving fifty per cent of benefits for SCs/STs, forty per cent for women and three per cent for disabled persons.

The SGSY is being implemented by the District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs), with the active involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), the Banks, the Line Departments and the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)<sup>45</sup>.

The new Self Employment Programme SGSY is implemented in all 14 Blocks of the Koraput district with effect from 1 April, 2000. During the year 1999-2000 as against a target to cover 2846 Swarozgaris in the district under the yojana. The Loan applications of 3388 Sworazgaris were sponsored to various Banks by the BDOs during the year 1999-2000<sup>46</sup>.

In the new self-employment Scheme, the role of the Gram Sabha is more important. The Gram Sabha shall select the beneficiaries in the village and actively participate in various plan and programme. The Gram Panchayat shall select the targeted areas and implement the programme to the Below Poverty Line families.

### **Employment Assurance Scheme**

The Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) was launched on 2 October, 1993. Based on the experience of last five years of

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<sup>45</sup>. Annual Report 2000-2001, op. cit, pp. 24-28.

<sup>46</sup>. Information Sheet 2000, op. cit., p- 7.

implementation of the programme, EAS has been restructured w.e.f. 1 April, 1999 and it has become Single Wage-Employment programme.

The primary objective of the EAS is creation of additional wage-employment through manual work for the rural poor living below the poverty line. The secondary objective is the creation of durable community assets for sustained employment and development.

The EAS is open to all rural poor who are need of wage employment. Since the programme is self-targeting in nature and only the minimum wage are to be paid, it is expected that only person Below the Poverty Line would come for the unskilled work. While providing employment, preference is given to SCs and STs and parents of Child Labour withdrawn from hazardous occupations who are below poverty line<sup>47</sup>.

The Programme is implemented through the Zilla Parishads. The list of the works is finalized by the Zilla Parishad in consultation with the MPs. Where there is no Zilla Parishad, a committee comprising of MLAs, MPs and other public representatives is constituted for the selection of works. Works under EAS are taken up only in those pockets of the Panchayat Samitis/Districts where there is need for creating additional wage-employment.

The EAS is implemented in all the 14 Blocks of the Koraput district since its inception. EAS is the most important wage employment programme in the Koraput district. There are 2, 92, 311 registered job seeker in the district. In most of the Blocks of the district the scope for agriculture employment for these needy job seekers is limited. Due to

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<sup>47</sup>. Annual Report 2000-2001, op. cit. p- 32.

poverty among the rural people and the limited opportunity for employment in agriculture sector, this district needs employment throughout the year through developmental works undertaken through different schemes of DRDA as well as other line department. The communication network was extremely poor in the district hence thrust was given to communication sector under EAS. Important bridges, CD works and links roads have been constructed under this scheme. In addition to this, there is school building, health centre, Anganwadi centre constructed, as well as irrigation facilities shall be made available. Through this programme the rural poor people gets employment throughout the year<sup>48</sup>.

In this scheme the Gram Sabha select the beneficiaries and select the targeted areas in village. For this scheme, funds shall be come through the Panchayat Samitis. The Gram Panchayat make list the targeted area with the consultation of Gram Sabha or Villagers.

### **Rural Housing**

Housing is one of basic requirements of human survival. Under the Rural Housing programme, Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) launched in 1985-86, with the objective of providing assistance to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) rural households belonging primarily to the SCs and STs and freed bonded labour categories. From the year 1993-94, its scope was extended to cover rural BPL, Non-Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe, poor subject to the condition that non SC/ST households shall not receive more than 40 per cent of IAY allocation. Benefits of the scheme have also been extended to families of ex-serviceman of the armed and paramilitary forces

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<sup>48</sup> Information Sheet 2000, op. cit. pp- 12-13.

killed in action. There 3 per cent of the houses are reserved for BPL physically and mentally challenged persons living in rural areas<sup>49</sup>.

The problem of rural housing is acute in koraput district. Most of the families live BPL do no have shelters and they depend on Government sponsored scheme like IAY. The district has 2.21 Lakhs of BPL families out of the total rural household of 2.64 Lakhs. While constructing the Indira Awass it is keeping in mind for sanitary latrine and smokless chullah are an integral part of the IAY<sup>50</sup>.

Under the IAY, the Gram Sabha is empowered to select the beneficiaries under the scheme.

#### **National Social Assistance Programme.**

The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) which came into being for fulfillment of the Directive Principles in Article 41 and Article 42.<sup>51</sup>

The NSAP introduced special assistance for to poor households in the district. This programme has three components : National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS), National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) and National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS).

In Koraput district, Disability Pension was given to the people totally Blind, Orthopedic handicapped and mentally retarded. Under this Social Programme, a Mid-Day meal programme has started to increase the

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<sup>49</sup>. Annual Report 2000-2001, op. cit., pp- 15-16.

<sup>50</sup>. Information Sheet 2000, op. cit., p- 16.

<sup>51</sup>. P. M. Bakshi, *The Constitution of India*, Universal Law Publishing Co., 1997, P- 72.

attendance of children in Primary Schools in the rural areas. Under the Integrated Child Development Scheme, special attentions are given to improve the health condition of children. In every village an Anganwadi Centre has been set up. The Anganwadi workers look after the pregnant women and children. A regular health check up is made at Anganwadi Centre on a fixed check up day. Free food is also provided to both mother and child. Health Centres have been set up for availability of medicine and immunization specially for pregnant women and children in every village<sup>52</sup>.

In this programme the Gram Panchayats are supposed to look after the primary schools and the Anganwadi centre in every village. Samiti also plays a key role in the implementation of the disabled pension programme in the district.

### **Drinking Water Supply**

The provision for providing drinking water in the rural area is the responsibility of the states. Funds are being provided for providing drinking water in the villages right from the First Five-Year Plan. The Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP) was introduced in 1972-73 by the Government of India to accelerate the pace of coverage of drinking water supply.

The primary objectives of the ARWSP are to ensure sustainability of the system and the sources of water and to tackle the problem of water quality in affected habitations and to preserve quality of water by institutionalizing water quality monitoring and surveillance through a Catchment Area Approach.

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<sup>52</sup>. Information Sheet 2000, op. cit., pp- 23-25.

The priority is given to the villages where there is no availability of safe drinking water and special attention is given to the Schools and Anganwadi centres for availability of safe drinking water<sup>53</sup>.

In Koraput district most of the villages do not have safe drinking water. But through this drinking programme, in every village tube-wells are set-up in order to provide drinking water. It is the duty of the Gram Panchayat to provide drinking water to every village .

### **Public Distribution Scheme (PDS)**

The Government of Orissa has introduced targeted Public Distribution Scheme (PDS) from 1 June, 1997. According to this scheme, families Below the Poverty Line (income group of Rs. 11, 000/- or less per annum) in rural areas are eligible to get rice at ten Kgs per month Rs.2/- a Kg. The BPL rice Rs. 2/- a Kg was being distributed through is Gram Panchayats/ Mobile Vans/ Cooperatives among 1,84,834 rural BPL families as identified in 92-93 DRDA survey till 31 March, 2000.

The Food Supplies & CW department, have communicated the revised consumer price of rice BPL families at retail/ sale centers and the scale under TPDS with effected from 1 April 2000. The consumer price for BPL families in fourteen TDP Blocks is Rs. 5/- per Kg of rice.

The monthly requirement of rural BPL rice against the 1992 DRDA enumeration (184834 families) stands at 2957.344 M. Ts. 16 Kgs. per cards per month. But Koraput district, receives only 2871.0 M.Ts. i.e. a shortfall of 86.344 M. Ts. The Government has provision to compensate for the short supply met.

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<sup>53</sup>. Annual Report 2000-2001, pp- 117-118.



As per this scheme, Kerosene Oil is distributed throughout the district to the BPL families. The monthly allotment of Kerosene Oil of Koraput district is 1299.5 KL. As per the Government rules, Kerosene Oil is distributed 4 liters per card per month. Three Kgs of Sugar Per card per month is distributed to the BPL families. Though the provision of Wheat supply is there, there is not much demand for this in the district<sup>54</sup>.

### **Electricity Supply**

As per the Government provision, Electricity is being supplied to BPL families. The Gram Sabha shall select the beneficiaries in village.

### **Rural Connectivity Programme**

The Rural Connectivity Programme is meant to provide to communication facilities to every village of the district. The communication network is extremely poor in the district. Out of the total 197 Gram Panchayats in the district 75 Gram Panchayats are inaccessible during the most part of the year<sup>55</sup>. Under the welfare scheme, presently some rural roads and bridges are constructed in the district..

### **Education Facilities :**

Education is the basic needs for every body. As per the Government provision, the SCs and STs students belonging to the BPL families of Koraput district should get education facilities till tenth class. There has been an Ashram School (the School where lodging and boarding facilities is available) set up, where students only from the BPL families of the SCs and STs community avail the facilities.

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<sup>54</sup>. Information Sheet 2000, op. cit., pp- 26-28.

<sup>55</sup>. Ibid., p- 19.

## **Conclusion**

Panchayati Raj is a major step in the process of democratic decentralization in India. Orissa is the first state to introduce Gram Panchayat in the country. As per the provisions of the Panchayati Raj, the Gram Panchayat is play supposed to an important role in implementing various plans and programmes in the rural areas. In every village constituted Gram Sabha, which is the important organization at the village level. The performance of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Koraput district is far wom satisfactory. The pressure from the vested interest , lack of awareness, pro-active attitudes of the local bureaucracy prevent the welfare schemes from reaching the poor families of the district. However, there is, no doubt that in order bring about all-round development in the district, Panchayati Raj Institutions have to be protected and strengthened.

# ***Conclusion***

## CONCLUSION

In the concluding chapter we intend to sum up our arguments presented in the previous chapters and present an overview of the work. The main objective of the thesis is to examine the link between rural development and Panchayati Raj in India. Attempts are made to explore this in a concrete context of a district. The best way to do this is to put it in the larger context of democratic decentralization in India. The first chapter focuses, in a general sort of way, on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj in India. The notion of 'development' that is adopted in this study is a comprehensive one. It not merely covers the aspect of economic growth; it also makes freedom and self-respect central to its definition. The theme of rural development is extremely important in the context of developing countries all over the world. The all-round development of rural areas remains central to the definition of rural development. One of the main objectives of the rural development is to improve the quality of life of rural people. As argued in the work, it contains the dimensions such as 'life-sustenance', 'self respect', and 'freedom. Without these dimensions, any concept of rural development is bound to be lopsided and narrow.

With the colonized countries in Asia and Africa becoming free after the Second World War, the concept of 'development' acquired a new saliency. The economic underdevelopment of these countries made the reconstruction of rural areas a necessity. Most of these countries adopted their own paths of development in which the state played a key role. India was no exception to this general rule. Although, the rural reconstruction programmes were taken up in a proper way by the Indian state only after the country became independent, the ideas concerning it can be found in the colonial period. Some of these well-known experiments were taken up for discussion in this work. The experiments such as Sriniketan experiment, the Gurgoan experiment, and the Etawa Pilot Project were confined to small areas and conducted by exemplary leaders. Most of these programmes were holistic in character and put a great deal of emphasis on 'self-help' and on 'self-reliance'. One of the main objectives of these experiments was to make the villagers use the local

resources for making their living. They also adequately emphasized the sustainability factor while undertaking developmental works. Some of them even used the developmental works, defined in a broad fashion, to break the social barriers among the villagers. The intervention of Gandhi, we have argued in this work, was a significant turning point as far as the rural development in India was concerned. He not merely stressed on the need for economic development in the rural areas, he also put a significant emphasis on moral regeneration of the people. His concept of rural development can only be understood when it is linked to his other moral notions such as 'swaraj' and 'trusteeship'. With his ideas on development as well as his work of reconstruction in villages, Gandhi had influence a lot of people during the colonial period. Some of these experiments conducted during the colonial period had contributed to the thinking on rural development in the early years of independence.

The Community Development Programme was one of the early attempts undertaken by the Indian state to address the issue rural development in India. In spite of its laudable objectives it could not succeed. It could not mobilize the rural people for bringing about changes in the rural areas of the country. The lack of appropriate institutions also contributed to its failure. It is arguable that the Panchayati Raj Institution, in its modern form, came into existence in India as a response to the failures of the Community Development Programme. A committee headed by Balwantray Mehta recommended three-tier structure for Local Self-Government such as Village level, Block level and District level. The positive aspect of this recommendation was that it stressed on decentralization of power and its devolution to local level. But, it did not increase the involvement of local people in the activities of the Panchayati Raj. Another committee under the chairmanship of Ashok Mehta recommended two-tier structure of Panchayati Raj Institution. This committee suggested that the district should be below the state and Block should only have an executive committee of the Zilla Parishad to undertake the developmental programmes at the local level. Finally the process of democratic decentralization took a new turn with the enactment of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act. It not merely gave constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj Institutions, it also

created opportunities for the common people to participate in the process of local governance. In 1996 the Panchayati Raj Extension Act enabled the tribal society to preserve their rights over natural resources.

The second chapter focuses on the role of Panchayati Raj in the implementation of welfare schemes in the rural areas. The Panchayati Raj came into being to decentralize power. It also created opportunities for the ordinary people to participate in the developmental initiatives undertaken by the Panchayat. The recommendation of the three-tier structure of Panchayati Raj such as village, block and district level got the constitutional status by the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act. The developmental initiatives of the state had to be mediated by these institutions. For instance, through the PRIs, the ordinary people could help aggregate their common interests and also can act as effective checks against the arbitrary use of power and resources by the vested interests in the rural areas. The Intermediate Panchayat is an important institution, which connect the village panchayat with the district level institution such as Zilla Parishad. The Zilla Parishad is the key institution for making developmental plans for the concerned area. It also co-ordinate and supervise the intermediate Panchayat and Village Panchayat.

In addition to these, Gram Sabha is the most important organization at the village level. The 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act categorically pointed out that every village should have a Gram Sabha and all the adult person shall be the member of this organization. The gram Sabha is the most basic organization at the village level, which provides direct power into the hands of the local people. It also acts like a “Watch-dog”, which is responsible to the village assembly and it also supervises and monitor the functioning of the Village Panchayat and Government functionaries.

The role of the Panchayati Raj in the context of the implementation of various welfare schemes is crucial. Since independence there were various welfare schemes launched by the government and it has tried to take the benefits of these schemes to the rural people with the help of the Panchayati Raj institutions. Gram

Sabha plays a key role in deciding the target groups and the beneficiaries for specific welfare programmes. It also plays a key role in prioritizing the Government plans and programmes at the local level.

As far as the welfare programmes are concerned, the role of the Block and District level institutions is equally important. The planning at the Block level takes into account the growth potential of the area within the Block in terms of local land, water and other resources. It is also supposed to identify the human resources in general, and in particular the agricultural and non-agricultural families those who are either employed or under employed to formulate special programmes for the rural poor including the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The district planning gives emphasis on peoples needs. It mainly focuses on the development of the backward region and weaker section that should be helped in a sustainable manner. It is the people's participation that generates information for them as well as for the decisions makers and representatives at the local level.

The third chapter focuses on the Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in implementing welfare schemes in the Koraput district of Orissa. In order to understand it, apart from a providing a brief profile of the district, this chapter also discusses the state of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Orissa. The Orissa Gram Panchayat Act, 1948 came to establish Local Self-Government in the state. Orissa was the first state in India to introduce Gram Panchayat in 1948. In 1959 the Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad came into being but in 1968 the Zilla Parishad was abolished. Again, before 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act came into being, the Zilla Parishads were reestablished in 1991. The Act of 1964 empowered the State Government to establish and constitute the Grama Sasan (Village Government), the Gram Sabha, the Palli Sabha (Ward Parliament) and the Gram Panchayats.

A new act titled the 'Orissa Gram Panchayats Act, 1964', was passed in 1965 consolidating all the laws relating to grama panchayats in the state. This act was further amended in 1992. The three-tier Panchayati Raj system came into existence

in Orissa much before the enactment of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act. Therefore, this Act did not bring about any significant change as far as the institutions of local governance was concerned. The term of the all elected representatives is for five years. If it is dissolved before that, then a fresh election shall be held within six months. As per the provision, the chairperson of the village panchayat shall be directly elected and the panchayati samiti and zilla parishad are indirectly elected. The 1991 Amendment Act, seats are reserved for SCs and STs at all the three levels in proportion to their population and one third of the seats are reserved for women. Orissa was the first state in the country to implement 33 per cent reservation of seats for women.

According to the human development indicators, Koraput district is one of the most backward districts of Orissa. A majority of its population belongs to the Scheduled Tribes and castes. The Literacy rate is comparatively much less than the other districts of the state. Against the backdrop of extensive backwardness, the role of local government institutions assumes a special significance. It is not surprising that a majority of the population of the district depends on Government assistance. Over the years, several welfare schemes were launched in the district for the uplift of the rural poor. The Employment generation scheme and other such programmes are meant to address the issue of rural poverty in the district. Through the welfare schemes, attempts have been made and still are made to provide housing facilities for the poor families in the district. Through various schemes, the government has also tried to provide drinking water, health care and education to rural poor. The role of the Panchayati Raj has been quite vital. Often the village panchayats are in charge of supervising these welfare programmes in the districts. The Panchayat Samiti also tends to play a crucial role in implementing the welfare schemes in the district. The Gram Sabha's role in implementing the welfare schemes in the Koraput district can never be underestimated.

The existence of Panchayati Raj Institutions, as our work suggests, is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for empowering the rural poor in India. In



this sense, the story of Koraput is no different from those of other poor districts of India. For an effective functioning of the PRIs, the laws alone are not enough. It is through their collective struggle that the poor in the Koraput district have empowered themselves. PRIs are mere instruments, and like all instruments, they are often used by the people who are rich and powerful. Our work suggests that the Panchayat Raj Institutions have become important sites for struggle for the poor and marginal. Without adequate support from civil society organizations, their struggle to achieve equitable distribution of resources would be an arduous one.

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