

PANCHAYAT RAJ SYSTEM

Balvant Ray G.Mehta recommended Democratic Decentralization(Panchayat Raj).

DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALISATION

The word 'democracy' is derived from the Greek 'demos' means 'the people'; 'cracy' means 'rule of'. It is the 'rule of people'. It is governance of the people, by the people, for the people. The rule by majority is an important feature of this programme.

Decentralisation means devolution of central authority among local units close to the areas served. Where authority devolves by this process on people's institution, it is 'democratic decentralisation'.

The State of Madras tried this as a pilot project as early as 1957. Based on the success in this State it was Rajasthan which became the pioneer to bring the whole state under democratic decentralisation on Oct. 2, 1959.

PANCHAYAT RAJ - MEANING

The concept 'democratic decentralisation' was not easily understood by the people. Therefore, as decided by the then Prime Minister the three-tier administration was introduced in the name of "Panchayat Raj". Panchayat Raj means the system of Government. Horizontally it is a network of village panchayats. Vertically, it is an organic growth of panchayat rising upto national level. Panchayat Raj was easily accepted because it meant administration by mutual consultation, consent and consensus. It fitted closely into the ancient cultural patterns in India.

THREE TIERS OF PANCHAYAT RAJ

THE GRAM PANCHAYAT: The first formal democratic institution under the directive principle in the Indian constitution is the Gram Panchayat or Panchayat. It is the primary unit of local self-government. Panchayat is a cabinet of the village elders, directly elected by the adult citizens of the village. For reservation of seats for women and SC and STs. The panchayat has a tenure of five years and is directly elected. The meeting is to be convened atleast once in six months. It has income through taxes to perform its functions. The main functions of Panchayats are:

- (i) representative function, where the main role is to voice and represent the opinion;
- (ii) regulatory and administrative functions, which consists of regulating the conduct of individuals and institutions and also collection of taxes;
- (iii) Service or developmental function, such as promotion of education, health, agriculture, etc.

THE PANCHAYAT SAMITHI OR PANCHAYAT UNION: This is the second tier of the administration at Block level. It consists of Panchayat Union Chairman, presidents of all panchayats in the area, local MLAs, MLCs, MPs etc., with the right to vote, but not to hold office and nominated persons. Reservation and cooperation are given for women, SCs and STs and persons with experience in administration and public life. Block Development Officer is appointed by the Government. He functions as the leader of the Block.

FUNCTIONS OF THE BLOCK

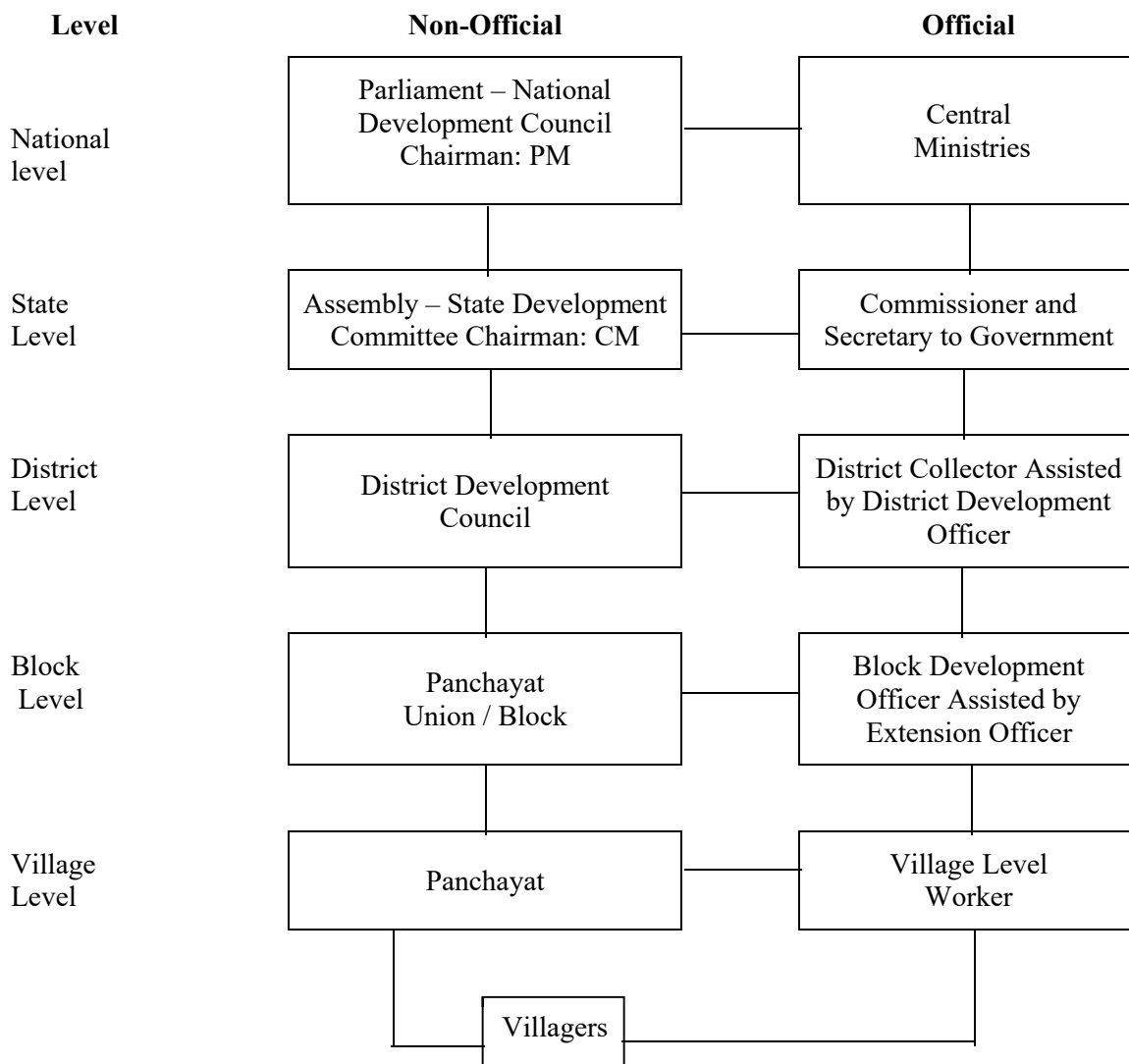
- (1) It has to instill among people within its jurisdiction a spirit of self-help and initiative and work for raising the standard of living;
- (2) It has to support for the implementation of development programmes;
- (3) It has the welfare and development activities in the fields of agriculture, animal husbandry, health, sanitation, elementary education, cottage industries and social.
- (4) It has to use the village housing project funds and loans.

DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (ZILA PARISHAD)

This is the third tier of Panchayat Raj functioning at district level. The members are all Panchayat Union Chairman, District Collector, MLAs, MLCs, MPs of the district with right to vote but not to hold office and women, SC, ST and persons interested in rural development are also given representation. District Collector leads the work with the help of District Development Officers.

FUNCTIONS

It works as advisory body for blocks. It approves budget and plan of blocks. It allots funds to the blocks. It approves budget and plan of blocks. It allots funds to the blocks. Secondary education is the responsibility of this council. It should advise Government in all matters relating to rural development in the district. It has to review the results achieved under various items in all the blocks.



Extension Organisation in Panchayat Raj Set-up

ROLE OF OFFICIALS: No doubt that any programme is peoples' programme. Local leaders knew the people and know the local needs and potentialities. However, the officials are the most competent persons to judge what is good for people. So, their roles are:

1. To identify the felt needs of the people.
2. To fix priorities for peoples' needs, with their assistance;
3. To list out the local resources available;
4. To harness available and potential resources;
5. To encourage peoples' involvement in programmes;
6. To develop a community outlook among the people;
7. To educate the people to think in terms of planned development;
8. To mobilise required resources;
9. To act as SMS at the time of programme development and implementation; and
10. To assist people in evaluating their progress.

SOURCES OF INCOME FOR PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS

The main source of income is from **Government grants**. Some income is also derived from **local taxes on property and profession or trade, etc.** Some revenue are also accrued from surcharges on land revenue, water rates, etc. Income is also received from fees for local services, and rent or income from owned land and property. On the whole most of the Institutions have meagre incomes from taxes and other local resources. They are mostly depending upon the Government grants.

SALIENT FEATURES OF PANCHAYAT RAJ (Achievements)

- (1) Panchayat raj system gave significant progress in the fields of primary and secondary education, communication, agricultural extension, cooperation, health, etc.
- (2) People could get drinking water. In some places people had protected water supply. Village streets, electric light provision, village sanitation, etc., had enough resources.
- (3) Rural awakening was brought up among rural people, as a result villagers became conscious of their rights and improved their standard of living.

SHORTCOMINGS AND FAILURE

- (1) Panchayat raj representative had a feeling that there is a dilution of their authorities and responsibilities in actual functioning.
- (2) There were cases which utilised directly the services of block level technical staff without involving the non-official.
- (3) Frequent transfer of staff gave poor image to the bodies.
- (4) Failure to mobilise resources to the extent necessary.

RESERVATION OF SEATS

1. Seats shall be reserved for:
 - a. the scheduled castes; and
 - b. the scheduled tribes

DURATION OF PANCHAYATS: Five years