



## REVIEW OF RESEARCH

ISSN: 2249-894X

IMPACT FACTOR : 5.2331(UIF)

VOLUME - 7 | ISSUE - 4 | JANUARY - 2018



---

### PRINCIPLES AND PROBLEMS OF PANCHAYAT RAJ IN TAMIL NADU

**Dr. S. Murugavalli**

**Assistant Professor of History, P.G & Research Dept, of Historical Studies,  
S. S. Govt Arts College, Tiruttani.**

#### **ABSTRACT—**

Panchayat have for centuries formed an Integral part of village administration in our country. Panchayatiraj system provides the basis of Democracy of the lowest level. “Panchayat has an ancient flavor; it is a good word. Its literal meaning means an ‘assembly of five’ elected by villagers. It represents the system by which the innumerable village republics of India were governed” “When



Panchayatiraj is established public opinion will do what violence can never do ... In Panchayatiraj only the Panchayat will be obeyed and the Panchayat can only work through the law of their making”.

**KEYWORDS :** Panchayatiraj system, established public opinion.

#### **ORIGIN OF LOCAL –SELF GOVERNMENT**

Right through ages, Panchayat had been an integral part of administration in our country. “The village communities characterized by agrarian economies had existed in India from the earliest times”.

The Modern history of local self government began with the Local Fund Act of 1871, issued during the days of Lord Mayo. Lord Rippon the apostle of Local self government introduced the system with the object, “to advance and promote the political and popular education of the people, and to induce the best and most intelligent men in the community to come forward and take a share in the management of their own local affairs”. The Local Boards Act passed in 1884 laid the basis for the growth of deep rooted democracy at district, Taluk, and Local level (Union Board – a Revenue Villages of any portion or portions thereof which may be declared to be a Union by the government in council).

The next major development in the growth of local self government was provided by the 1920 Act. The government of India Act of 1935 introduced Provincial Autonomy which in turn gave impetus to the development of Local body institutions. The Madras village Panchayat Act of 1941, curtailed the Power of the village Panchayat and further inroads on the functioning of the Panchayats were introduced by the village Panchayat Act, 1946.

A new chapter in the development of Local self-government was opened with the advent of Freedom. The Directive Principles of state policy embodied in the constitution of Indian Republic clearly enjoin the establishment of Panchayatiraj institutions. Article 40 of the constitution lays down.

“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”.

In pursuance of constitutional provision several state governments passed Acts to organise village Panchayat. The Madras government passed Madras Village Panchayat Act, 1950. The idea of launching

Community Development and national Extension Service Programme, inaugurated in 1952 did not yield the desired result. Ultimately Balwant Rai G. Mehta Committee was constituted (1957) TO FIND OUT SOLUTION FOR THE EFFECTIVE WORKING OF Local self – government. The recommendations of Balwantraji Committee urged that ‘The Public participation in community works should be organized through statutory representative bodies’. It inaugurated Panchayati raj which was hailed by Jawaharlal Nehru as the ‘most revolutionary and historical step in the context of New India’ Tamil Nadu was one among the nineteen states to fall in line with the centre’s direction and passed the Panchayatiraj Act, 1958.

The death of Nehru brought decline in the spirit and democratic decentralization received a set back. The Asoka Mehta Committee of 1977 marked a turning point. But due to the apathy of political parties local body elections were not conducted for about fifteen years in Tamil Nadu.

The present Panchayatiraj act as enshrined in the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment of the constitution was passed on December 22, 1992 and President gave his assent on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1993. This Act was brought into force by a government notification on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1993 as the constitution (73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment) Act 1992. The Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act 1994 (Tamilnadu Act 21 of 1994) was passed in line with the Central Government. Elections to the Local bodies were conducted in October 1996 for the first time under the new Act.

### 73RD AMENDMENT AND ITS ENFORCEMENT IN TAMIL NADU

Gandhiji’s dream of every village being a Republic has been translated into a reality with the introduction of the three tier Panchayatiraj system to enlist the people’s participation in rural reconstruction. The new Act provides constitutional status to the Panchayatiraj institutions.

The salient features of the Act are: i) To provide three tier system of Panchayatiraj for all states having population of over 20 lakhs. ii) To hold Panchayat elections regularly every five years.

iii) To provide reservation of seats for Scheduled Caste / Tribes and Women (not less than 1/3 of the total seats)

iv) To Appoint state finance commission to make recommendation regarding financial powers of the Panchayat’s and

v) To constitute district planning committee to prepare draft development plan for the district as whole.

According to the constitutions, Panchayats shall be given powers and authority to function as Institutions of self-government. The powers and responsibilities to be delegated to Panchayat at appropriate level are:

- a) Preparation of plan for economic development and social justice.
- b) Implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice in relation to 29 subjects given in the Eleventh schedule of the constitutions and
- c) To levy, collect and appropriate taxes, duties, tolls and fees.

Except Bihar, all states have passed laws to give effect to the provisions contained in the Act, 40. Accordingly in Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act 1994 was passed to give effect to the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment. (and elections were held under the new Act in October 1996).

As per the law the first tier refers to the directly elected Panchayat President and ward members. The second tier indicates the Panchayat Union Council whose Chairman is indirectly elected by the elected territorial ward members of the Union council. The third tier refers to the District Panchayat council consisted of a chairman indirectly elected by the territorial ward members who in turn are directly elected by the electorate of the demarcated territorial areas or constituencies spread over the entire district.

Grama Sabha:

One of the salient features of the Tamil Nadu Panchayatiraj Act of 1994 is the Grama Sabha. Under the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment it has been given constitutional status. As per article 243(b) of the constitution of India,

---

GramaSabha means a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of GramaPanchayat.

- a. The GramaSabha Shall:
  - i. approve the village plan
  - ii. Approve the village budget for the year and review the progress of the implementation of all schemes entrusted to the village panchayat.
- b. The government may by notification entrust to the GramaSabha such other functions as may be specified.
- c. It has to meet minimum three times in a year within an interval of not more than six months.

It is the forum where the marginalised poor can influence decisions affecting their lives. It has a key role in bringing about the transparency in the functioning of the GramaPanchayats in ensuring equitable distribution of benefits. It shall seek the active participation of women, schedule caste/ Tribes; It exercises the right to check the accounts of GramaPanchayat. It selects beneficiaries under various schemes of the Central Government as well as the State Government. It approves the works to be under taken for rural development; and move towards full control over management of natural resources of the village. Since the entire system of Panchayatiraj is thrust on GramaSabha the year 1999-2000 was observed as the 'year of GramaSabha'.

The Panchayat Union council representing the second tier of the system and the District Panchayat though representing more wider area and members elected, lack brightness before the village panchayat, because the GramaSabha is the actual body of a 'mini Legislature'.

#### **Problems:**

It is now proper to switch over to the problems and prospective of the Panchayatiraj system that refers to the grassroots level democracy. Since the passing of the Act two elections were conducted – i.e. in 1996 and 2001. It is necessary to review the problems and the prospective with the experience that the system produced.

#### **Lack of Education:**

On the part of Panchayat Presidents, ward members and women in general are suffering from lack of basic qualification which may hamper the progress of the system and misunderstanding of the schemes. But the problem of lack of education does not count more where all files and works related to the Panchayat administration is found in vernacular. Moreover the Panchayat President's are assisted by part-time clerks. The elected members should be trained in the ways of governing themselves, in accessing information, using the information for development and disseminating the information for people's participation.

#### **Role of Women:**

The Act envisages women's role on large scale. There is a general criticism that women elected representatives are always playing a 'second fiddle' role and their men folk who assist them are called as 'backseat drivers'. To make a beginning with elected women representative at village level is a new experiment. But once they are involved and trained properly they will outwith their men counterpart. In Tamilnadu a recent survey has shown that women in local bodies represented more than the seats allotted and expected. (The Hindu, February 17,2002). There are more women in Panchayats than it was thought there would be. Beating the 1/3 reserved category seats mark by nearly 500, women have surpassed all predictions cornering a large number of seats even in non-reserved seats. The self-help group representing more women is a force to reckon with.

---

**Shortage of staff in village panchayat:**

Shortage of staff village panchayat is another acute problem that threatens to stall the growth of the institution. The financial position of the village panchayat's cannot afford to recruit permanent establishment. The problem can be overcome by following the example as set by the neighbouring state, Andhra Pradesh which created village level secretariat (The Hindu, January 02, 2002). Mobilization of more financial resources can also be considered as a way to fight out the problem.

**Question of Leadership:**

In some cases the problem of leadership arises. Among the village panchayat President's elected by reservation, representing the women of the weaker section, there is absence of qualified leadership. It can be considered as a crisis of leadership. But the actual working of the system provides proper answer to this problem. Proper training and guidance will help to solve the crisis in leadership. On the other hand it has been proved in a large number of panchayats, panchayat presidents have made significant contributions including women Panchayat President. For example a good number of presidents had taken efforts to involve themselves in the running of schools, they had moved to harness the potential of present day advancement such as computers.

**Caste Factor:**

Caste Factor is another serious problem posing threat in the smooth functioning of the Panchayatiraj system. Though the constitutional assurance is provided for election of Scheduled Caste / Tribe and Women representatives, the caste ridden society is reluctant to accept the reservations in some areas. For example in Madurai District four Panchayat's (Pappapatti, Keeripatti, Nattamangalam, Kottakachiyandal) did not go to election till date and political parties threatened with a stir plan urging the government to conduct the election. (The Hindu January 24, 2002). Strong political will is needed to proceed with the reservation system.

**Financial problem:**

Financial crunch is yet another serious problem that would affect the effective functioning and successful implementation of various proposed schemes under Panchayatiraj system. In the case of Tamil Nadu the worst ever financial crisis is threatening to cripple the Panchayats. Several Panchayats are unable to pay the monthly salary to the staff. In some village the electricity board has threatened to snap power supply to Panchayat offices for mounting arrears. But the financial problem is only temporary and it can well be overcome by timely release of funds from state finance commission / state government and by Central Assistance.

**GramaSabha and its functioning:**

The functioning of GramaSabha and the conduct of the meetings on the slated dates is not satisfactory. It is reported that the required minimum attendance for the conduct of GramaSabha meeting is not strictly followed and in many cases the village President's do not prepare the annual plan for the village and present the budget for the village panchayat in the meetings. Proper education and propagation in the system leading to more involvement would help to solve the problem. If necessary awareness and training is imparted the problem concerning GramaSabha and its functioning can well be overcome.

**Dominance of the State Government:**

Another serious problem facing the effective functioning of Panchayatiraj system is the dominance of the State Government which is more powerful and can erode into the very working of the grass root organizations by passing vexatious rules and regulations. But the constitutionalisation of the Panchayatiraj institution will serve as a check. Moreover awareness on the part of elected representatives and the general public would also serve as a check against any possible inroad by the State Governments.

---

**REFERENCES**

1. Panchayat Raj – J.D
2. Policy Note
3. Economic Appraisal.
4. Rural Development Department Policy Note Government of TamilNadu-2007.
5. Rural Development Department Policy Note Government of TamilNadu-2011-2012.
6. Rural Development Department Policy Note Government of TamilNadu-2012-2013.
7. Dr.AgilamRamnathan-village panchayatAdministration.,Nakeeran Publications Chennai.
8. Shanmugam – Panchayat Raj Act, Shenbaga Publications, Chennai.
9. Dharmaraj-J – Panchayat Raj, Dency Publications, Sivakasi.
10. NilakandaShastri-K.A – The Cholas, Vol-I,II.
11. The Economic Apeaisal – Evaluation and Applied Research department, Chennai.