

GRASS-ROOT DEMOCRACY

MODULE 5

ABOUT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

- After the independence (1947), Prime Minister Nehru inaugurated the Community Development Programme (CDP) on the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi (October 2) in 1952. In the Panchayati Raj inaugural Speech Pt. Neharu said, "Local Self-government is must and must be the basis of any true system of democracy. People have got into the habit to thinking of democracy at the top and so much below. Democracy at the top may not be a success unless you build its foundation from below" (Malviya, 1974). The egalitarian ideals of decentralization, development, and increased, continuous and active popular participation in the process of nation-building can be secured only through the working of an efficient system of local government. Without a well-organized system of local government, no democratic political system can be predictable to become steady and really industrialized.

CONCEPT ABOUT CDP

- The Community Development Programme was followed by the National Extension Service in 1953. NES blocks were earmarked as the lowest unit of development of administration. But both the programmes had a flaw: neither of the two was free from the control of bureaucracy. This inadequacy prompted the government to appoint a committee headed by Balwant Ray Mehta in 1957. The committee recommended a three-tier system of Panchayati Raj from village to the district level, Gram Panchayat at the village level, Panchayat Samiti at the block level and Zilla Parishad at the district level (Dash, 2007). As per the Balwant Ray Mehta Committee, Panchayati Raj was launched on 2nd October 1957 in Nagaur district of Rajasthan. Andhra Pradesh and many state governments followed Rajasthan. Yet, by the mid-sixties the hype to strengthen the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) gave way to a growing tendency of centralization and the PRIs descended to ground zero. In course of further development, the L. M. Singhvi Committee (1986), recommended constitutional status for Panchayati Raj. In July-August 1989 the then Congress government introduced the 64th Constitutional Amendment Bill with a view to streamline the Panchayati Raj (Dash, 2007).

73rd CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

- Panchayati raj under the 73rd constitutional amendment: 73rd Constitutional Amendment was enacted in the regime of P. V. Narasimha Rao's government which was passed by Parliament on 23rd December 1992 and became effective on 24th April 1993. This Act has added Part - IX to the Constitution of India. It is entitled as 'The Panchayats' and consists of provisions from article 243. The Act has given a practical shape to Article 40 of the Constitution and gives a constitutional status to PRIs.

THREE-TIER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ

- The structure of the Panchayati Raj is composed of three units:
- The Village Panchayat is the lowermost unit. There is a Panchayat for each village or a group of villages in case the population of these villages happens to be too small. The Panchayat primarily consists of representatives elected by the people of the village. Only the persons who are registered as voters and do not hold any office of profit under the government are eligible for election to the Panchayat. The persons convicted by the court for criminal offences are disqualified from election of the Panchayat. There is also facility for co-option of two women and one member of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, if they do not get adequate representation in the normal course. Every Panchayat elects a President or Sarpanch and a Vice-President or Upsarpanch. In some states the Sarpanch is directly elected by the Gram Sabha either through the show of hands or through secret ballot while in other states the mode of election is indirect.

THREE-TIER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ

- The Sarpanch has a key position in Gram Panchayat system. He supervises and coordinates the various activities of the Panchayat. The Panchayat Secretary and the Village Level Worker are the two officers at the Panchayat level to assist the Sarpanch in administration. The Panchayat Secretary assists the Panchayat in recording decisions, keeping minutes, preparing budget estimates and reports, and does other various jobs like preparing notices, explaining circulars, organising Gram Sabha meetings etc. The Village Level Worker now called Village Development Officer assists the Panchayat in drawing up agricultural production plans, helps farmers in securing loans for agriculture, arranges the supply of inputs like seeds and fertilizers, and educates farmers about modern agricultural practices. He serves as the principal link between the Panchayat and the Panchayat Samiti.

VILLAGE PANCHAYAT

- The President of the Panchayat Samiti is called the Pradhan, who is elected by an electoral college consist of all members of the Panchayat Samiti and all the Panchas of the Gram Panchayat falling within the areas. Besides the Pradhan, the Up-pradhan is also elected. The Pradhan assembles and presides over the Panchayat Samiti meetings. He guides the Panchayats in making plans and carrying out production programmes. He ensures the implementation of the decisions and resolutions of the Samiti and its Standing Committees. Pradhan exercises administrative control over the Vikas Adhikari (BDO) and his staff. He is a member of the Zilla Parishad by virtue of his office as a Pradhan. He is the ex- officio chairman of the Standing Committees of the Samiti.

VILLAGE PANCHAYAT

- Main function of the Panchayat Samiti is to synchronize the activities of the various Panchayats within its jurisdiction. The Panchayat Samiti oversees the work of the Panchayats and scrutinises their budgets. It also reserves the right to suggest measures for improving the functioning of the Panchayats. The Samiti is charged with the responsibility of preparing and implementing plans for the development of agriculture, animal, husbandry, fisheries, small scale and cottage industries, rural health tropic etc.

ZILLA PARISAD

- The Zilla Parishad has top position in the three-tier structure of the Panchayati Raj system. Usually, the Zilla Parishad consists of representatives of the Panchayat Samiti; all the members of the State Legislature and the Parliament representing a part or whole of the district; all district level officers of the Medical, Public Health, Public Works, Engineering, Agriculture, Veterinary, Education and other development departments. There is also a provision for special representation of women, members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes provided they are not adequately represented in the normal course. The Collector is also a member of the Zilla Parishad.
- The Chairman of the Zilla Parishad is elected from among its members. There is a Chief Executive Officer in the Zilla Parishad. He is deputed to the Zilla Parishad by the State Government. There are subject matter specialists or officers at the district level in all the states for various development.

ABOUT ZILLA PARISAD

- The Zilla Parishad also renders necessary advice to the Government with regard to the implementation of the various development schemes. It is also responsible for the maintenance of primary and secondary schools, hospitals, dispensaries, minor irrigation works etc. It also promotes local industries and art. The finances of the Zilla Parishad consist of the grants received from the State Government and share in the land cess and other local cess and taxes. Sometimes, it has been allowed by the State Government to levy certain taxes or enhance the taxes already levied by the Panchayat Samitis subject to a certain limit.

ZILLA PARISHAD

- The Chairman of the Zilla Parishad is elected from among its members. There is a Chief Executive Officer in the Zilla Parishad. He is deputed to the Zilla Parishad by the State Government. There are subject matter specialists or officers at the district level in all the states for various development programmes. The Zilla Parishad has duty to performs co-ordinating and supervisory functions. It harmonises the activities of the Panchayat Samitis falling within its jurisdiction. In some states, the Zilla Parishad also approves the budgets of the Panchayat Samitis.

ROLE OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

- Role of municipal government are as under:
- To establish justice.
- To insure domestic tranquility.
- To provide for the common defense.
- To promote the general welfare.
- To secure the blessings of liberty.

74th AMENDMENT

- According to the Constitution of India, 74th Amendment Act of 1992, the latter two categories of towns are to be designated as municipalities or Nagar panchayats with elected bodies. Until the amendments in state municipal legislations, which were mostly made in 1994, municipal authorities were organized on an ultra vires (beyond the authority) basis and the state governments were free to extend or control the functional sphere through executive decisions without an amendment to the legislative provisions.
- After the 74th Amendment was enacted, there are three categories of urban local bodies: -
 - Mahanagar Nigam (municipal corporation)
 - Nagar Palika (Municipality)
 - Nagar Panchayat

CONCEPT

- In India, a Municipal Corporation is known to public by different names which varies from state to state (owing to the official language of the state or due to other regional language variations) all of which are translated to "Municipal Corporation" in English, these names including Nagar Nigam (in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Haryana), Mahanagar Palika (in Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka), Pouro Nigom (in West Bengal), etc. The term Nagar Palika Nigam is used in Madhya Pradesh for Municipal Corporation. In Tripura, the sole Municipal Corporation of the city of Agartala is called Agartala Pur Porishod in Bengali. Also, the Vadodara Municipal Corporation is typically called by the name "Vadodara Mahanagar Seva Sadan". The comprehensive structure of these urban bodies varies from state to state, as per the laws passed by the state legislature (Vidhan Sabha) but the basic structure and function is almost the same. Under the panchayati raj system, it interacts directly with the state government, though it is administratively part of the district it is located in.

COMMITTEE

- Each Municipal Corporation has a committee that comprises of a Mayor with Councilors. They are formed under the Corporations Act of 1835 of Panchayati Raj system which mainly deals in providing essential services in Cosmopolitan Cities. The no. of councilors depend upon the area and population of the city that minimum of 3,00,000. Municipal Corporation members are elected from the several wards of the specific city on the basis of adult franchise for a term of five years. There are seats reserved for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, backward classes and women.

MAYOR

- Mayor is the head of the Municipal Corporations in India. The Municipal Commissioner is the official in charge of this organization. Executive Officers monitor the implementation of all the programs related to planning and development of the corporation with the coordination of Mayor and Councillors.

SIGNIFICANCE OF 73rd AND 74TH AMMENDMENTS

- The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution made provision for Panchayat Raj institutions to be established at the village level and for funds to be made available by state finance commission for village level activities (U.B. Singh, 2002). The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution brought in a Local Government system as the third tier of governance for economic development and social justice. It is well recognized that India is large democracies characterized by a high degree of heterogeneity and inequality across the states.

SIGNIFICANCE OF 73rd AND 74TH AMMENDMENTS

- State governments form an important intermediate tier between national and local governments. The constitution mandates a one-third reservation for women in panchayat assemblies and allocates a portion of panchayat spending for women's planning. Kerala is the only state in India with a sex ratio that is not female adverse, and is generally considered to have excellent gender development indicators: high literacy rates, high average age of marriage, low maternal mortality rate, no female infanticide. Yet the political participation of women remains strangely low, violence against women is snowballing, and women as a group are poorer and more susceptible to unemployment .

SIGNIFICANCE

- In fact, 73rd amendment has created a scope to attain development with social justice, which is mandate of the new Panchayati Raj system. The new system brings all those who are interested to have voice in decision making through their participation in PRIs. The Panchayati Raj system is foundation for the "Social Justice" and "Empowerment" of weaker section on which the development initiative have to be built upon for achieving overall, human welfare of the society. The main claim of the Amendment Act relating to the strengthening of PRIs is that the participation of poorest of the poor in the process of development is ensured. It is doubtful whether the poorer sections could find their way to enter the PRIs through elections.

STRIKING FEATURES

- Striking Features of the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts (1992):
- Panchayats and Municipalities will be "institutions of self-government".
- Basic Units of Democratic System - Gram Sabhas (villages) and Ward Committees (Municipalities) comprising all the adult members registered as voters.
- Three-tier system of panchayats at village, intermediate block/taluk/mandal and district levels.

STRIKING FEATURES

- Smaller states with population below 2 million only two tiers Seats at all levels filled by direct election
- Seats reserved for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and chairpersons of the Panchayats at all levels also shall be reserved for SCs and STs in proportion to their population.
- One-third of the total number of seats reserved for women. One-third of the seats reserved for SCs and STs also reserved for women. One-third offices of chairpersons at all levels reserved for women.
- Uniform five year term and elections to constitute new bodies to be completed before the
- expiry of the term. In the event of dissolution, elections are compulsorily within six months.