

Evaluation Of Panchayatiraj In Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

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The state of Andhra Pradesh was formed in 1956 as a result of the reorganization of state in India. "The States of Madras and Hyderabad were divided on linguistic basis, and 21 Telugu speaking districts belonging to three broad regions coastal (Andhra) Rayalseema and Telangana were brought together. Though each of the regions was characterized by district historical, geographical and economic background".¹ Developments in the three regions were uneven at the time of state formation, due to variations in important factors such as political legacy, land relations, rainfall, soil fertility, terrain, cropping pattern and other agricultural practices, irrigation and other infrastructure facilities, literacy and health standards.

Keywords:

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Introduction

Andhra Pradesh is the fifth largest state in India, in terms of both area and population. "In 2001, the state's population stood at 75.73 Million (census of India 2001), which accounts for 7.4% of India's total population. The data on workforce distribution indicate a high magnitude of dependency on agriculture. Nearly 80% of the total workers in the state are still engaged in agriculture". "The social system of the state is similar to that of the rest of the country. Institutions such as the caste and joint family are important in this state as they are else where". Literacy rate in Andhra Pradesh has increased.

The main food crop cultivated are: rice, pulses oil seeds, especially groundnut, cotton, chillies sugarcane, tobacco, and turmeric are the principal commercial crops of the state. (Government of Andhra Pradesh 2001). Agricultural productivity per hectare has shown an increase since 1970 - 1, it has become capital intensive and losses due to natural disaster, post or price fluctuations in the market. The share of agriculture in the Net state Domestic product fell to about 25% in 2000-1, from about 60% at the time of state formation.

Andhra Pradesh like most states in India, has a multi-structured economy, ranging from shifting cultivation in areas of Srikakulam district to high-tech industries in Hyderabad. A.P. was a late entrant into the country's industrial scene. "The share of the manufacturing sector in the net state domestic product has increased from 7.2% in 1960-1 to 12.9% in 1999 in the state was mainly propelled by public sector industry, especially in pharmaceuticals, electrical equipment, heavy engineering and machinery, iron and steel and fertilizers".

"Socio-Economic Developments in the three regions are uneven because of variations in the important factors such as political legacy, land relation, rainfall, soil fertility, terrain, cropping patterns, agricultural practices, irrigation and other infrastructures facilities, literacy and health standards".*



Looking Back: Panchayati Raj System Before First Phase:-

Naturally, before the formation of present Andhra Pradesh, “the pattern of local self-government was modelled on the ones already operating in Madras District Board Act, 1920, Madras village panchayats Act, 1950, Hyderabad District Board Act, 1951 and Hyderabad Village Panchayats Act, 1951, etc”.

Evolution of Panchayati Raj in India After 1950

The changes in the structure of rural Local Government and in the functions made over to rural local bodies were based on the recommendations of Balwantrai Mehta. This was a departure from what prevailed in the later stages of British rule. After the inauguration of the community development projects in 1952 and the National Extension Service Programme in 1953 and their consequent ineffective functioning made the planning commission to appoint a study team under the Chairmanship of Balwantrai Mehta on January 7, 1957 to study and to report on community development projects and the National Extension Service Programmes and to probe into their functioning so as to suggest ways and means to ensure economy and efficiency.

Second Five Year Plan had further emphasized the need for a well-organized democratic structure of administration at the district level through which the village must be structurally linked with the popular organization at the higher level. In persuasion of this emphasis the Balwantrai Mehta Committee made an exhaustive enquiry and the team submitted its report on November 24, 1957. The team made many important recommendations. The Balwantrai Mehta Committee envisaged a three-tier system of rural Local Government namely Panchayati Raj consisting of village panchayat at the village level, the Panchayati samithi at the block level, and the zilla parishad at the district level. The Mehta team felt that the community development and National Extension Service failed to mobilize popular initiative and that this was due to the absence of statutorily elected democratic institutions at the local level.

The village panchayats act as agents of panchayat samithis in executing special schemes. The team did not record that panchayats should be entrusted with developmental functions except to a limited extent. The Balwantrai Mehta Team envisages the panchayat samithis as the main responsible body for developmental activities in Panchayati Raj system. These activities include the development of agriculture, improvement of cattle, sheep, poultry etc., promotion of local industries, supply of drinking water, maintenance of public health and sanitation, relief of distress due to natural calamities, construction of roads, management of schools and host of such works.

The Balwantrai Mehta Team felt that one of the important cause for the failure of the Panchayati Raj system in the past had been the inadequacy of finances. The financial resources at the disposal of the Panchayati Raj bodies were limited. Hence, the team recommended more resources to the Panchayati Raj bodies in the form of prescribed shares of land revenue and some other taxes levied by the State Governments, liberal grants from the State Government and income from taxes levied by the Panchayati Raj bodies themselves like taxes on professions, entertainment, and pilgrim tax. On the basis of the recommendations of Balwantrai Mehta Study Team, Panchayati Raj was introduced in various States and it was launched on October 2, 1959 by Jawaharlal Nehru who pertinently remarked. Some people thought that if the responsibility was handed over to the people, they would probably not be able to shoulder it, but it is only by providing opportunity to the people, they can be trained to handle responsibility.

Panchayati Raj System in Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh is one of the premier states of the Indian Union. It ranks as the fifth largest State in terms of territory and population and is the largest State in South India. It was formed on November 1, 1956 by merging the nine Telugu speaking districts of the old Hyderabad State with the eleven districts of the Andhra State which was separated from the State of Madras in 1953. This is the first linguistic State in the Indian Republic with the city of Hyderabad as its capital.

Local Self Government in Andhra Pradesh flourished right from the days of Satavahanas to the days of Vijayanagara Empire. The village government system of the old paved way to centralised administration under the British and the new situation “strengthened the habit among the people to look into institutions away from the villages for the betterment of their condition. However, in the later part of the 18th century and the

early years of 20th century attempts were made to re-establish certain amount of local self-Government in the Madras province. The first legislative enactment pertaining to rural Local Self Government was the 'Education Cess Act of 1863' passed by the Madras Legislature. A host of similar Acts was passed consequently. The Local Boards Act of 1884 introduced a three-tier system of village unions, taluk boards and district boards wherein all the three together formed the local administrative system. This three-tier system was endorsed by the Royal Decentralization Commission of 1919 also. The Commission however emphasized the need to resuscitate the village community and establish panchayats in villages. In pursuance of the above recommendation the Village Panchayats Act was passed in 1920 by the Madras Legislature widening the functions of Local Government bodies. Under this Act, every village with a population of 500 people and above had a panchayat.

Organization of Gram Panchayat :-

The village is an autonomous republic and its affairs are governed by panchayat. Every Gram Sabha soon after its formation elects from its members an executive committee called the 'Gram Panchayat' the number of members of Gram Panchayat may be between 5 to 9. The head of the village panchayat is known as 'Sarpanch' and until 1981 he was indirectly elected by its members. Since 1981 the Sarpanch has been directly elected by the people of the panchayat area. The term of the office of the members and the sarpanch is five years. Seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Women.

Andhra Pradesh Gram Panchayat Act 1964:

"The Andhra Pradesh Gram Panchayat Act superseded the two gram panchayats acts of Andhra and Telangana, under this act which set the pattern for the further panchayati Raj structure in the state, every village had to have a gram sabha consisting all the eligible voters".¹²

Gram Sabha The Act provided for the constitution of a gram sabha consisting of all persons included in the 'electoral rolls of the panchayat'. It is expected to meet at least twice a year to discuss the matters, relating to accounts and audit report. Administration of proceeding year, welfare and development of the area.

Gram Panchayat:-

A Panchayat is established for a revenue village to be a village, or a part there of any part of a revenue taluka to be a village depending upon the population, income and location, Election to panchayat is held by secret ballot. The number of members of the panchayats varies from 5 to 17, depending upon the size of population of each panchayat area seats have been reserved for the members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes with due regard to their population in the panchayat area, provision has also been made for the reservation of one or two women members. One of the member is elected as Sarpanch, and another as Upa-Sarpanch.

Panchayat Samiti

The panchayat samiti consists of sarpanches of panchayats, Members of legislative assembly (MLAs) of the constituencies falling within the block, J^ILAS specified as a member of the Zilla Parishad, and six co-opted members flvo women, one representative each of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and two persons interested in rural development. These members elect a president and a vice president for a period of five years.

ZILLA PARISHAD

A zilla parishad consists of all the presidents of panchayat samitis, the district collector, member of the legislative assembly of the state elected from the district, members of the Lok Sabha elected from the constituency which form part of the district, members of the Rajya sabha specified by the government and six co-opted members two women, one representative of the scheduled castes, one representative of the scheduled tribes, and two persons interested in rural development. The term of office of members of the zilla parishad in five years.

The samitis are empowered to levy:

A. Surcharge on land / local cess and on taxes on levied by gram panchayats and
 B. Panchayat Samitis are also entitled to surcharge on stamp duty. The panchayat samitis are entitled to received the funds earmarked for community development and also other funds after excluding establishment charges on a varying per capita basis in inverse proportion to the level of development of each block so that blocks which are less developed will get larger funds compared with other which are better off.

Constitution of Mandal Praja Parishad :-

The Government by notification from time to time as may be specified therein constitute as mandal praja parishad and Gram Panchayats. At the apex of the structure, there are 22 Zilla Parishads with about 50 Mandals each and an average population of 22 lakhs. The government further explained the objective of the mandal system thus:

- To involve people at all levels in the developmental programmes to increase their participation in the making of public policies.
- To provide adequate financial powers to these programmes.
- To implement welfare schemes for the benefit of the poor sections.

The Amended acts, The Andhra Pradesh Gram Panchayats (Amendment) Act, 1976

Raise the minimum strength of the gram panchayat from five to seven (5 to 7) and the maximum from seventeen to nineteen numbers (17 to 19). One seat was reserved for the SCs or STs, if their population was 25 percent or less. If their population was more than 25 percent but did not exceed 50 percent, the seats to be reserved were in proportion to the population.

Under the amendment, the Sarpanch was to be elected directly by all the voters of the panchayat. The election of the sarpanch, the president of the panchayat samiti and the members of the gram panchayat was to be conducted at the same time. The sarpanch could not be removed by the gram panchayats. Only the government could remove him, in case he failed to perform his duties. There had been reports of clashes between the sarpanch and the majority in the gram panchayat leading to operational problems.

The Andhra Pradesh Mandal Parishads Zilla Praja Parishads and Zilla Pranalika Abhivrudhi Sameeksha Mandals Act, 1986

Efforts were also made to bring about changes in the organization of the gram panchayats. As already stated, "the initial thinking was to do away with the gram panchayats altogether and establish upa-mandals as adjuncts to the mandal parishad. However, due to criticism from within and outside the ruling party, the gram panchayats were left intact. They continued to be governed by the 1964, Act

New Structure of Panchayati Raj

The amended legislation provide mandala praja parishads (MPP) at the middle level and zilla praja parishad (ZPP) at the district level. The zilla abhivrudhi sameeksha mandal (ZASM) at the district level is purely an advising body. During 1981 elections, there were 19,511 gram panchayats, 330 panchayat samitis and 23 zilla parishads.

The chief executive of MPP is the president who is directly elected and assisted by vice president who is elected from amongst the members. It consist of the following members.

METHODOLOGY

Research in any discipline is inter linked with methodology, which involves various tools, techniques and approaches.

Among the methodology of resources in social sciences, Historical and Behavioural methods are prominent. Historical method is conventional and descriptive in nature. It does not allow any place for quantification, randomization and formulation of hypothesis. It is concerned with the job of what had and has happened in the past.

CONCLUSIONS

The diagnosis of various weaknesses of the Panchayati Raj system implemented as per the recommendations of Balwantrai Mehta Committee report paved the way for the constitution of Ashok Mehta Committee which in turn strengthened the idea of Balwantrai Mehta in respect of Democratic Decentralization. The implementation of Mandal system in

Andhra Pradesh by the NTR's Telugu Desam Government is more or less based on the report of Ashok Mehta Committee and instead of two-tier structure. Andhra Pradesh has struck on to the three-tier structure with greater emphasis and importance to the middle-tier i.e., Mandala Parishad. No doubt, these reforms and innovations are meant for the convenience of the Government to some extent but for the welfare of the rural masses to a greater extent still it in the right time for such a change. The Mandal system has come to stay with us. But to what extent it rectifies the earlier lapses and strengthens the Local Self-Government system is a point to be studied. However, it is too short a time to evaluate its performance. But there is no structural change in the powers and functions of Gram Panchayats after the enactment of Mandal system in Andhra Pradesh.

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