

EVOLUTION OF PANCHAYAT RAJ SYSTEM AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT IN TELANGANA STATE**Eshwarlal Korra**

Ph.D. Research Scholar

Dept. of Political Science

Osmania University

Hyderabad-07

korraeshwarlal@gmail.com

Telangana, as a geographical and political entity, was born on June 2, 2014, as the 29th and the youngest state in the Union of India. However, as an economic, social, cultural, and historical entity, it has a glorious history of at least two thousand five hundred years or more. Megalithic stone structures like cairns, cists, dolmens, and menhirs found in several districts of Telangana show that there were human habitations in this part of the country thousands of years ago. The reference to Asmaka Janapada, part of present Telangana, as one of the 16 Janapadas in ancient India' proves that there existed an advanced stage of society.

Pre-history (Up to 1000 BCE)

Even though extensive exploration has not been done, particularly subjected to neglect after 1956, the archaeological department under the Nizams' government had done tremendous work in discovering the traces of pre-historical human habitations in Telangana. These studies found that human habitations in parts of Telangana can be seen from the Paleolithic age consistently. Either the same locations or extended locations showed people continued to live and develop through the later stages of the Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Metal ages. Excavations discovered stone tools, microliths, cists, and dolmens! cairns and menhirs.

Pre-Satavahanas (1000 BCE-300 BCE)

In the historical age beginning from 1000 BCE, there are some references of Telangana as a geographical entity as well as Telugu as a linguistic entity, in the contemporary Buddhist and mythological texts. Though the official research into this Aspect was stalled for about six decades, some enthusiasts like Thakur Rajaram Singh, B N Sastry and Dr D Raja Reddy did their own painstaking explorations and showed that there was a flourishing society before the emergence of the Satavahanas. The Buddhist texts as well as accounts of foreigners like Mages and Arrian talked about this region as having thirty forts, many of which have to be explored.

Satavahanas (250 BCE – 200 CE)

After the fall of the Mouryan Empire, around the third century BC there arose the first significant kingdom under the Satavahanas from this region, The earliest capital of the Satavahanas was Kotalingala and then moved to the other popular capitals like Paithan and Amaravati (Dharanikota) only after two centuries of their rule. However, the first capital was either ignored or brushed aside to give prominence to the later place in coastal Andhra.

Post-Satavahana (200 CE - 950 CE)

After the fall of Satavahanas in the third century AD, Telugu-speaking areas were divided under various small rulers and till the emergence of the Kakatiyas, for about six or

seven centuries this fragmentation continued. Even as the mainstream Andhra historians maintained that it was a dark period in Telangana history without any political formation, the current research found that Telangana was ruled by various kingdoms like the Ikshvakus, Vakatakas, Vishnukundina, Badami Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, Vemulavada Chalukyas, Kalyani Chalukyas, Mudigonda Chalukyas, Kanduri Chadas and Polyasa dynasty. Detailed research into this period is yet to take place.

Kakatiyas (950 CE - 1323 CE)

The sub-feudatories of the Rashtrakutas emerged as independent kings and founded the Kakatiya dynasty around 950 AD this kingdom became strong and united the whole of Telugu-speaking lands and lasted for more than three centuries and a half. The Kakatiyas are known for their irrigation public works, sculpture, and fire arts. Thanks to the well-planned facilities and a perfect system of chain tanks to suit the undulating nature of the terrain, the Kakatiya kingdom flourished economically leading to cultural progress also. Envy of this affluence, several neighboring kingdoms as well as the Delhi Sultanate tried to wage war on Warangal many times and failed. Finally, in 1323, Delhi Army could lay siege on Warangal fort and capture Prataparudra, who, according to the legend, killed himself on the banks of the Narmada unwilling to surrender when he was being taken as a prisoner of war to Delhi.

Post-Kakatiya Interregnum (1323 - 1496)

After Prataparudra was defeated by Malik Kafur in 1323, the Kakatiya kingdom was again fragmented with local governors declaring independence and for about 150 years Telangana was again under different rulers like Mustpuri Nayakas, Padmanayaks, Kalinga Gangas, Gajapatis, and Bahmanis.

Qutbshahis (1496 - 1657)

Sultan Quli Qutb Shah, subedar for Telangana under the Bahamanis, with Golconda as his capital, declared his Independence in 1496 and seven sultans of this dynasty ruled not only Telangana but the entire Telugu-speaking land including parts of present-day Maharashtra and Karnataka. The Moghul empire waged war and defeated Golconda in 1687 and for about three decades Telangana was again witnessed chaos and fragmented rulers.

Asaf Jahis (1724-1948)

In 1712, Emperor Farrukhsiyar appointed Qamar-ud-din Khan as the viceroy of Deccan and gave him the title Nizam-ul-Mulk. He was later recalled to Delhi, with Mubariz Khan appointed as the viceroy. In 1724, Qamar-ud-din Khan defeated Mubariz Khan and reclaimed the Deccan suba. It was established as an autonomous province of the Mughal empire. He took the name Asif Jah, starting what came to be known as the Asif Jahi dynasty. He named the area Hyderabad Deccan. Subsequent rulers retained the title Nizam ul-Mulk and were called Asaf Jahi Nizam or Nizams of Hyderabad. The Medak and Warangal divisions of Telangana were part of their realm.

Post-independence

When India became independent from the British Empire in 1947, Hyderabad remained an independent princely state for a period of 13 months. The peasants of Telangana waged an armed struggle to liberate the region. Scores of people lost their lives in the armed struggle. On 17 September 1948, the Indian government conducted a military operation called Operation Polo to bring Hyderabad state into the Indian Union. It appointed a civil servant, M. K. Yellodi, as the first chief minister of Hyderabad State on 26 January 1950.

In 1952, Dr. Burgula Ramakrishna Rao was elected chief minister of the Hyderabad State in the first democratic election. During this time, there was an agitation by locals in the state to ensure proper representation was given to locals (mulkis) of Hyderabad.

First Telangana Movement

In the early 1950s, people of the Telangana region in Hyderabad state started organizing themselves with a demand for a separate state. In 1963 the Indian government appointed the States Reorganization Commission (SRC) to look into various statehood demands in the country. The Commission was headed by Fazal Ali, Kavalam Madhaya Panikkar and H.N. Kunzru.

The SRC toured the whole country to seek representations from various sections of the society. People of the Telangana region submitted several memorandums to the SRC and expressed their wish to constitute Telangana & a separate state. Telangana intellectuals such as late Prof Jayashankar and political leaders such as Sri HC Head, Sri Konda Venkat Ranga Reddy gave memorandum, containing historic, political, economic, social and cultural justifications for creating the Telangana state. The Commission submitted its report on 30 September 1955, and recommended formation of Telangana state, Telangana leaders insisted on a Gentlemen's Agreement before the merger could take place. The agreement was signed by Andhra and Telangana leaders and provided safeguards with the purpose of preventing discrimination against Telangana by the Andhra leaders. However, the agreement was violated from day one by the Andhra leaders.

1969 Telangana Agitation

Non-implementation of the Gentlemen's Agreement and continued discrimination to Telangana region in government jobs, education, and public spending resulted in the 1969 statehood agitation. In January 1969, students intensified the protests for a separate state. On 19 January, an party accord was reached to ensure the proper implementation of Telangana safeguards. Accord's main points were 1) All Don-Telangana employees holding posts reserved for Telangana locals will be transferred immediately. 2) Telangana surpluses will be used for Telangana development. 3) Appeal to Telangana students to call off the agitation. After several days of talks with leaders of both regions, on 12 April 1969, the Prime Minister developed an Eight Point Plan. Sri M. Chenna Reddy. founded the Telangana Praja Samithi (TPS) political party in 1969 to spearhead the statehood movement. Mrs. Indira Gandhi had called snap parliamentary elections in March 1971. In these parliamentary elections, Telangana Praja Samithi won 10 out of the 14 Parliament seats in Telangana. She was reluctant to accept the Telangana statehood demand at that juncture. Sri M Chenna Reddy then merged TPS in Congress (R) party, after formulating a Six-1 Point Formula to safeguard Telangana's interests The statehood movement continued until 1973, but! subsided later.

Final Telangana Movement

Since the mid-1990s, the people of Telangana started organizing themselves under various organizations with a demand for a separate state of Telangana. In 1997, the state unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) passed a resolution seeking a separate Telangana. Though the party created the states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Uttarakhand in 2000, it did not create a separate Telangana state citing the resistance of its coalition partner, the Telugu Desam Party. Sri Kalvakuntla Chandrashekar Rao (KCR), who was then the Deputy Speaker of AP State Assembly, had started background work on the Telangana issue in early 2000.

And after detailed discussions and deliberations with a plethora of Telangana intellectuals, KCR announced the launch of Telangana Rashtra Samithi on April 27th, 2001.

Intensifying the movement

On Nov 29th, 2009, KCR announced an indefinite hunger strike demanding statehood to Telangana. But en route, the state police had arrested him and sent to Khammam sub-jail. The movement spread like wildfire with students, employees, and people's organizations plunging into it. In the next 10 days, the whole of the Telangana region came to a standstill. The state government, headed by Sri K Rosaiah had called for an all-party meeting on 7th December. Leaders of the TDP and PRP parties promised that they would support a Telangana statehood resolution if it was tabled in the state Assembly. As KCR's health was deteriorating very fast, on Dec 9th 2009. the UPA government announced that the process of statehood for Telangana would be initiated. But within 2 weeks, resistance from Boemandhra leadership resulted in the UPA backtracking on this issue. KCR then brought all political Forces in the Telangana region together to form the Telangana JAC - an umbrella body of several organizations and parties, with Prof Kodandaran as its Chairman. TRS cadre and leaders actively participated in several agitations and protests launched by TJAC.

State Formation

After 4 years of peaceful and impactful protests, the UPA government started the statehood process in July 2013 and concluded the process by bypassing the statehood bill in both houses of Parliament in Feb 2014.

New Panchayath Raj Act, 2018 in Telangana

The Central Government of India, after 60 years of aspirations and struggle of the people of Telangana, stepped down and established Telangana as the June 2, 2014, 29th state in India. During the Eight years since the formation of Telangana, it has undertaken many developments and welfare programs. The Telangana state government is implementing innovative government policies and schemes, including Administrative, Revenue, Agriculture, Medical and information technology, creating a new trend and adapting to these modern conditions. We all know the fact that most of the people in India have been living in rural areas from the very beginning. The Panchayati Raj system was set up in 1957 under the leadership of Balwant Roy Mehta to strengthen local governments in these rural areas. Local government in India continued from 1959 onwards. Initiation of a Three-tier Panchayati Raj system in Shadnagar, Mahbubnagar district in Combined Andhra Pradesh. Since then, the Central Government has set up a number of commissions and taken reports. Accordingly, the Panchayati Raj Act was introduced in Parliament in 1993 by the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution. The Undivided Government of Andhra Pradesh enacted and implemented the new Panchayati Raj Act in 1994. In the newly formed state of Telangana in the country, the KCR government embarked on a number of reforms to set up a committee of retired IAS officers, subject matter experts, and other ministers under the auspices of the Panchayati Raj Minister under the auspices of Vijayanand, the former Chief Secretary of Kerala, who was in charge of radical changes in the Panchayati Raj institutions to suit the present situation. A subcommittee was also set up. The 2018 Panchayati Raj Act Committee presented to the Chief Minister a bill containing 297 sections, 9 parts, and 8 schedules in the 2018 Telangana Panchayati Raj Act. The Act was passed by the Telangana Legislative Assembly on March 29, 2018. It was approved by the Joint Governor of Andhra Pradesh on March 30, 2018. This

Act The new Panchayati Raj Act came into force on 18th April 2018. In the State of Telangana

Panchayat Raj Implement three – a tier Systems, 32 Zilla Parishad, 539 Mandal Praja Parishad, and 12765 Gram Panchayats.

The government established 4,000 new panchayats over the existing 8,600 through the new Panchayat Raj Act. The bill relating to the Act was passed in the previous budget sessions of the Assembly. The Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) had made it promise to raise the number of panchayats in the State and also to give panchayat status to the agency and Lambada Tandas.

Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao had personally taken interest in the passage of PR bill and also the establishment of Dew panchayats. He said that the establishment of new panchayats would ensure more decentralization of powers and development of the villages.

Funds are given to panchayats through the State and Central Finance Commissions and the State government would help the development of more villages in a quick manner. The new Panchayat Raj Act facilitated the creation of new panchayats by reducing the population criteria and relaxing other ones. The old Act had ruled that a panchayat could be created if a village and its hamlets have a population of 5,000. The new Act had reduced the population required up to 2,500.

The new Act also has given scape to turn the villages into panchayats which are three to four kilometers away from the existing panchayats irrespective of population. Some villages of the agency areas have been upgraded to panchayats even though they have a population of 100 people. With this, the number of villages has reached 12,751.

Panchayat Raj and Urban Local bodies in Telangana

Telangana was part of the erstwhile Hyderabad state that was ruled by Nizam. The Local self-governing structures were not adequately developed during that period as they had been dominated by feudal lords. The land tenures in the state were divided into Diwani or Khalsa lands which were directly under the jurisdiction of the government. The non-Khalsa and some portions of Khalsa land were Owned by wealthier sections who wielded considerable power along with the local village officers who knew patels and patwaris. There were also other sections such as Peshkash, Watan, Jagir and Inam landholders who were also influential at the village level.

In the Post-Independence period, the local self-governing Institutions in the Telangana region were established and devolution of powers was undertaken under the Andhra Pradesh state government. Accordingly, periodic elections were conducted with due to recognition of gram panchayats, Mandal Praja parishath, and Zilla Parishads. The 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitutional brought out revolutionary changes in the Panchayati Raj system and 74th Amendment initiated changes in Urban local self-governing bodies. This has affected the structure, powers, and functions of the local self-governing institution in India in general and Telnagina (as a previous integral region of Andhra Pradesh) in particular. Accordingly, the Andhra Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act (1994) was formulated with 3 tier system.

The government has also evolved a system af Reservations in gram panchayat, Mandal parishad and Zilla parishad elections.

(As per reservations in percentage)

Social Category	Village Sarpanch	MPTC	ZPTC
SC	19.43	19.32	19.32
ST	6.28	6.00	9.15
BC	34	34	34

The following members are elected under direct elections

- a. Members of the Zilla Parishad Territorial constituencies.
- b. Members of the Mandal Parishad Territorial constituencies.
- c. Gram Panchayat sarpanch.
- d. Gram Panchayat ward members.

Again, the Vice president (Upa sarpanch) at the gram panchayat level, president and vice president at the Mandal Parishad level and chairman and vice-chairman at the Zilla Parishad level are indirectly elected. Likewise, in the Urban local self-governing Institutions (a) Councillors of Municipal corporations (b) Members of Municipality and Members of Nurgars panchayats are directly elected a Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the municipal corporations and the chairmen and vice chairman of municipalities are Indirectly elected. For conducting elections to Panchayat Raj institutions and Urban local self governing bodies, the Telangana Government has established a State Election Commission.

e-panchayats

The Telangana government has proposed to introduce - panchayats initiative in 2400 gram panchayats. Under this programme will payments of MGNREGS, pensions, watershed and other government programmes would be administered through single window online, The Minister of Panchayati Raj, K. Traka Ruma Rao, stated that the goal of e-panchayat is to provide computerised services at the local government level. This would enhance transparency, accountability and responsiveness and provide easy accessibility to citizen. This (e-panchayat) is expected to bring in a revolution in enhancing transparency and accountability in all the tam panchayats and make them fully functional like a village secretariat. The government proposes to wlrut e-panchayats with broad hand con nectivity so as to offer complete caputeris services by them, including Tax collection, Layout fees, fee collection on birth and death certificate preparation of "Manvooru-Mana pranalika monitoring expenditure of various schems of the Grimm Panchayats.

The Panchayat Raj Institutions and Urban self-governing bodies wore working for providing basic infrastructural services at the grass-root level. Further, the institutions are responsible for motivating youth to attain leadership roles in the political sphere. The public representatives and youth of these institutions have played a proactive role in the separate Telangana statehood movement.

The pattern of Panchayati Raj in United Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh was one of the two (the other being Rajasthan's early advocates of the Panchayati Raj in Indic) The State government wanted in accept ing the recommendations of the Balwant Roy Mehta team and enacted legislation in 1959 to introduce the Panchayati Raj in the State. The legislation was mainly based on the model proposed by the Balwant Roy

Mehta Team Although later on a few changes have been made in its organization, the framework has essentially remained the same. However, in its existence, the Panchayati Raj has had its up and downs from unqualified eulogy to a total restructuring of its institutions. The slate will be printed in such a fashion as to indicate broadly the emerging trends.

Panchayati Raj has been introduced in the state mainly with a view to involving the representatives of the people in rural development. Often it is claimed that the Panchayati Raj of today has descended from the Panchayats of ancient India. While there is some substance in this contention. We should not stretch it too far. However, what appears to be probable is that even though it has a direct connection with the system of rural self-government which existed in ancient and medieval times, much of the inspiration for it comes from the Panchayats that existed in the past. It is now known that the system of local self-government flourished in the village from the days of the Satavahans to the days of the Kakatiyas in this part of the country. Dynasty after dynasty changed but villages remained autonomous in several respects. Self-governing institutions flourished at the village level. The village was a compact unit both administratively and economically. Village self-government persisted in this part of the country in some form or the other until the advent of the British. It is now well-known that during British rule, the autonomy of the self-governing institutions received a severe blow. Later, however, the British took a number of steps to introduce institutions of local self-government in the rural areas. Various measures taken during the British period particularly during the later part of the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century became the precursors of today's Panchayati Raj. Though, when the local bodies were started, they were under heavy influence of the Government, they gradually became democratic.

Among the post-independent developments in the field of local self-government in this state, the most noteworthy are the Firkas Development Scheme, the Village Panchayats Act of 1950, and the Community Development and the National Extension Service Blocks. Both the Firkas Development Scheme of T. Prakasan and the Community Development Program introduced most of the programs which are now adopted by the Panchayati Raj bodies. Even in the administrative structure, there are several similarities. The Village Panchayats Act, on the other hand, introduced a number of democratic features in the government of the village. Their powers and functions were also considerably widened.

Some important measures for the rejuvenation of local self-government were started in the Madras state in the years just preceding the Indian independence. In 1946, the Firkas Development Scheme was launched by T. Prakaram who became the Chief Minister of Madras Province when the constitutional Government was restored after during the Second World War. The Khera considered the Firka, a revenue administrative unit of approximately thirty villages as being convenient for intensive development. The scheme was first introduced in 34 Firkas. It was extended to 50 more Firkas in 1950 and 24 more in 1952. T. Director Genial of Rural Welfare headed the scheme at the provisional level and the collector at the district level. Development Committees at the Firka level played an advisory role in the implementation of the development of village infrastructure facilities like communications, drinking facilities, improvement of sanitation, improvement of agriculture, development of Khadi and other village industries, adult education, and the establishment of co-operative societies.

In 1950 a Village Panchayats Act was passed 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, The President of the Panchayat was directly elected and voting by secret ballot was introduced. Reservation of seats was provided only for the Scheduled Castes. The powers and functions of the Panchayat were further widened. The functions of the Panchayats were of two types. They are, obligatory and discretionary.

In 1953 Andhra was separated from the Madras province and the new State of Andhra was formed Andhra Pradesh came into existence on November 1, 1956, consisting of the two regions of Andhra and Telangana. The Village Panchayats Act of 1950 provided class I Panchayats with a population of not less than 5000 and an annual income of not less than Rs. 10.000 and the rest were categorized as class II Panchayats. The number for 1955-1956 was 193 and 3687 respectively. In the meantime, Balwantha Roy Committee in its report strongly recommended the establishment of a three-tier Panchayati Raj system

Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Samithi and Zilla Parishads Act of 1959

Many of these recommendations of Balwantha Roy Mehta were accepted by the Government of Andhra Pradesh A Bill incorporating many of these recommendations was introduced in the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly on December 9, 1958 (Panchayat Samithis and Zilla Parishads Bill). Instead of constitution Panchayat Samithi's by indirect elections, the bill dispensed with elections altogether, and Village Panchayat Presidents were made ex-officio members of the Panchayat Samithi. If Panchayat President declines such membership, he would cease to be President. The Panchayat Samithi were to co-opt a woman representative of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, a Director of a Co-operative Society, and two persons with experience in public life. The bill also provides for Members of the State Legislature, the right to participate in the proceedings of the Panchayat Samithi's was to be carried out through the Standing Committees. In case of Zilla Parishads the bill did not accept Mohta Committee's suggestion that district officers connected with the development should be members on them. Opposition parties made some suggestions which included among others more representation for women, Scheduled Tribes and Legislators on Panchayat Samithis, the election of a non-official as Chairman of Zilla Parishad, and election of members to the Standing Committees on a proportional voting system to provide representation to all parties, the election of Chairman for each Standing Committee, reduction of the official element in Panchayat Raj bodies in general, placing the Block Development Officer under the administrative control of the Panchayati Samithi's and its President deletion of the provision giving powers of the conference, supervision to the higher bodies over the lower bodies and doing away with the State government's power to supersede or dissolve Panchayat Samithis or Zilla Parishads.

Some of these suggestions were accepted by the government and some new features were also added. The bill thus provided for:

- a. The election of a non-official as the Zilla Parishad Chairman.
- b. The appointment of the District Collector as an ex-officio Chairman of all Standing Committees of the Zilla Parishads.
- c. The right of the District Collector and Block Development Officer in the case of a Panchayat Samithi and Parishad Secretary in the case of Zilla Parishad to participate in their proceedings and of their Standing Committees without the right to vote. d.

- The election of at least one woman and one representative of Scheduled Castes to the Standing Committee dealing with education and social welfare.
- e. The placing of Block Development Officer under the administrative control of Panchayat Samithi President and of the Secretary of Zilla Parishad under its Chairman.
 - f. The exercise of Emergency Powers by the President in the case of the Panchayat Samithi's an by the District Collector in the case of the Zilla Parishad.
 - g. The constitution of Joint Committees of Panchayat Samithis and other local bodies for specific purposes, and
 - h. The passing of no-confidence on the Chairman of Zilla Parishad and for his removal by the Government.

Finally, provision was made in the bill for the co option of two women and two Scheduled Castes on the Panchayat Samithis. The Panchayat Samithis and Zilla Parishads Act placed thus on the statute book on September 18,1959 and to that efficient the three tier structure.

Amendments to the Panchayat Samithis And Zilla Parishads Act of 1959

Though the Panchayati Raj bodies functioned well for a time, some lacunae in the system soon showed up party politics and personal prestige have definitely had an adverse affect on the effective functioning of the Panchayati Raj System. To improve the functioning of the Panchayati Raj System the Panchayati Samithis and Zilla Parishads Act of 1959 had been amended many times between 1959 and 1966.

In 1961 the Panchayat Samithis and Zilla Parishads Act of 1959 was amended and the number of Standing Committees was increased from 5 to 7. One of the Committees was to deal with exclusively with the welfare of women Another dealt with social welfare, the majority of its members belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The President of the Panchayat Samithi was given more powers or discipline over the staff of his Samithi.

In 1963 the Government of Andhra Pradesh appointed a High-Power Committee to examine the question of territorial re-organization of Blocks. It recommended the reduction of the number of Blocks. It recommended the reduction of the number of Blocks from 488 to 290. The government decided to amend the Panchayat Samithis and Zilla Parishads Act to enable it to re-delimit the Blocks. There was opposition to giving unlimited power to the government to delimit the Blocks. Finally, the government secured the full approval of the Legislative Assembly to re-delimit the Blocks. In December 1963 a new Gram Panchayats Act was passed (known as the Gram Panchayat Act of 1964). The Act was intended to integrate the structure and functioning of Village Panchayats in Telangana and Andhra areas and try to bring into effective operation of the Three-Tier System introduced on the basis of Balwanth Roy Mehta Committee's recommendations. However, the Panchayat Samithis and Zilla Parishads Act of 1959 as usual created two of three tiers.

Unfortunately, the fruits of democratic decentralization resulted in its wake a new kind of conflict in rural political scene. The role of the District Collector was cut into short and the hands of the rural elites were strengthened. In 1967, the District Collectors conference appointed a Committee with majority of civil servants and 2 politicians under the Chairmanship of M.T.Raju. The Committee provided for the creation of a new institution, the

District Development Board (DDB) is to formulate and implement the developmental programmes in the district. In fact, the District Development Board increased the role of the bureaucracy vis-a-vis political leadership contributing centralization at the district level.

Jalagam Vengala Rao Committee, 1968

The creation of the new institution of District Development Board and the enhanced role of bureaucracy was bitterly criticized and resented by the politicians. It was alleged that the functioning of the above Board was counter to the recommendations of Balwanth Roy Mehta and further never synchronized under these the headship of J. Vengala Rao consisting of 13 Members of Legislative Assembly was set up in 1968 to consider all aspects relating to the Panchayati Raj and "to suggest improvements and amendments to the concerned acts."

Some of the major recommendations of the committee were:

- i. Reforms to rationalize the mode and pattern of elections to the Panchayati Raj Institutions.
- ii. Reduction of the importance of the village Sarpanch in the Panchayati Raj set up.
- iii. Giving up the provision for co-option of Village Panchayats, Panchayat Samithis of Zilla Parishads.
- iv. Giving representation to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Women in the Standing Committee by means of co-option, and
- v. Making rule by Standing Committees mandatory, i.e., Sarpanch, the Samithi President or the Zilla Parishad Chairman will have no independent power but would act strictly according to the decision of the Standing Committees.

C. Narasimham Committee Report, 1972

In 1971, the Government of Andhra Pradesh appointed a High Power Committee under the Chairmanship of C. Narasimham, (a retired I.A.S. officer) to examine the working of the Panchayati Raj and make proposals for reorganizing it. The Committee submitted its report in 1972. Some of the important recommendations made by the committee are:

- a. That Members of Legislative Assembly and Members of Parliament should be completely kept out of Panchayati Raj System
- b. That the Panchayati Raj System be modeled on the Maharashtra pattern.
- c. That the District Collector should be kept out of the Panchayati Raj and instead another I.A.S. officer should be appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Parishad.
- d. Village Panchayat Sarpanch will be elected directly by the people.
- e. The members of Panchayat Samithis will be elected directly by the people.
- f. The members of Zilla Parishads should also be directly elected by the people.

In 1974 the Government of Andhra Pradesh organized five regional Seminars on Panchayati Raj and after ascertaining the view of all concerned introduced in the year 1975 two Bills in the Andhra Pradesh Legislature, one to amend the Gram Panchayats Act and the other to amend the Panchayat Samithis and Zilla Parishad's Act.

In accordance with these amendments, the minimum strength of the Village Panchayat has been increased from 5 to 7 and the maximum from 17 to 19 members. Provision was made for more representation to women and the weaker sections. The Sarpanch and Samithi President would be elected simultaneously by all the voters of the area. The number of Standing Committees of the Panchayat Samithi was reduced from 7 to 5. As regards the Zilla Parishad, the District Collector could not be a member of the Zilla Parishad

nor the Chairman of the Standing Committees. Panchayat Presidents, Members of Legislative Assembly and Members of Parliament will continue to be ex-officio members of the Zilla Parishad.

The amendment has also provided for the appointment of a Chief Executive Officer for each Zilla Parishad on the Maharashtra pattern. Important provisions to control Panchayat Samithis and Zilla Parishads have also been incorporated. Lastly the voting age for citizens participating in the Gram Panchayat elections has been reduced from 21 to 18 years.

Panchayati Raj Under The Act of 1986

In some States there had been attempts to arrest the phase of decline in the Panchayati Raj Movement'. Hence, the phase of Panchayati Raj reform followed. Andhra Pradesh is an example where attempt at rehauling the Panchayati Raj was made in 1986. The Telegu Desam Government, which had come to power in 1983, had promised in its election manifesto that it would work for revitalization of PRIs. The existing Act (1959) was replaced by the Andhra Pradesh Mandal Praja Parishads, Zilla Praja Parishads and Zilla Abhivrudhi Sameeksha Mandali Act of 1986. The proclaimed purpose of the reform was intended to bring about much changes in the structure of the system which would bring the PRIs particularly the lower tiers nearer to the people besides the factors benefits of financial and administrative viability,

The changes envisaged in the Act of 1986 clearly showed the influences of the Ashoka Mehta Committee's 'major recommendations. Gram Panchayats, however, continued to be governed by the 1964 Act.

The Act of 1986 made significant changes in the Panchayati Raj system. It abolished 330 Panchayat Samithis and created 1,104 Mandals varied from 35 to 50 thousand population. The main and foremost objective of Mandal system was to minimize the gap between the officials and the common man. The intention was to bring the administration at the door-step of the rural people. In fact, the Mandal headquarters had been established at a near distance to the surrounding villages. It was intended that all-important departments like revenue, police, co-operative departments, education, health, and agriculture would operate at this level.

The Sarpanches, M.L.As, and M.P.s were made members of the Mandala Praja Parishad. The President was to be directly elected by the voters in the Mandal. In addition to the earlier reservation of 15 percent and 6 percent respectively for the SCs and STs, a further quota of 20 per cent and 9 percent was reserved for the Backward classes (B.Cs) and women respectively. Thus, the total reservation quota was raised from 21 percent to 50 percent. The Mandal president convened, presided over and conducted the meetings and exercised administrative control over the Mandal Parishad Development Officer (MPDO). The government could remove the president or the vice-president of a Mandal if he misused his powers or refused to carry out its orders. The chairperson of the Z.P.P. was to be directly by the voters of the district and had the status of a Minister of State. Out of 22 posts of Chairpersons in the state, 10 were reserved for the weaker sections (STS-1,SCS-3,BCS-4, Women-2). All the Presidents of the M.P.Ps in the district, M.L.A.s and M.P.s of the district were members of the Z.P.P.

Each district, excluding Hyderabad, had a statutory Zilla Pranalika Abhivrudhi Sameeksha Mandal (ZPASM) charged with the functions of advising and reviewing the

development activities undertaken by the ZPP from time to time. This body was headed by a Minister nominated by the Chief Minister. The ZPP chairperson, the District Collector, all the Legislators from the district and some expert members nominated by the government were the members of the body. The District Collector was its Member - Secretary. It was observed that, "due to criticism from the general public about the creation of such a nominated body over and above the ZPP, the government has initially thought of lowering the position of the ZPASM, but it would do so because of considerable pressure from the Ministers and Legislators of the State".

Even after reforms under the Act of 1986, rules and regulations made therein issuing Government Order from time to time, the problems of bureau cratic domination (e.g. role of collector), excessive supervision and control by the government (including suspension and removal powers), formation and continuation of the ZPASM (considered unnecessary as the source of weakening the PR), persisted and criticism from different corners started mounting.

Reservations for the weaker sections to the extent of 50 percent and women had substantially affected the traditional relationships, particularly PR leadership in a number of places, Cases of social tension between the reserved and not reserved classes had been reported.

Furthermore, creation of Mandals in a large number led to different kinds of problems of 'administrative realignments'. They lacked accommodation, infrastructure and sufficient personnel in addition to 'role displacements and conflicts'.

As referred to earlier, the objective behind the creation of the Mandals had been to take administration to the door step of the common man. Interestingly the Gram Panchayat system remained intact. With the defeat of the Telugu Desam Party and the return of the Congress (I) to power in 1989, serious doubts were expressed whether the Mandal system could achieve its objective. Scarce resources and inadequate staff, as some micro-level studies pointed out, had been seen serious impediments to the realization of the objective for which Mandals were created. No doubt, the Mandals proved to be more accessible to the people than the earlier Panchayat Samithies. As far as elections of PRIs are concerned, Andhra Pradesh had elections in 1959, 1964, 1970, 1981 and in 1987 (party based elections for MPPS and ZPPs) under the Act of 1986. Irregularities in conducting the elections, especially political designs and seriousness on the part of ruling elites concerned. Unanimity Vs party elections also remained 1. an issue for quite a number of years in the state. Party-based direct elections for the post of chairperson (ZPP) and president (MPP) and the ex officio membership to these bodies, created a number of operational problems, sometimes leading to a deadlock. The 'in-built conflict mechanism' was thus being realized in the system,

B.P. Vittal Committee

In view of operational problems and mounting criticism of the PR system, the government appointed an expert committee structure, content and mode of elections of PRIs in the state. A few significant recommendations are:

- i. The creation of 500 to 550 taluks in place of the existing 1,104 Mandals,
- ii. The creation of taluk Panchayat Samithis for every 80,000 to 1,00,000 population,
- iii. Elections of PRIs to be fought on a non-partisan basis,
- iv. prohibition on political use of party symbols in elections, and
- v. Indirect elections for the post of chairperson of the Zilla Parishad. .

The committee major recommendations received favourable response of the government. All these developments led to the postponement of PR elections repeatedly on political use of chairperson of the Zilla Parishad. In 1992, the ZPPS and the MPPs were dissolved on expiry of their normal term of 5 years, and administrators had been appointed to manage these institutions.

Vision 2020 - Panchayat Raj Bodies

The Government of Andhra Pradesh has prepared vision 2020 document in order to make local self-government a vibrant and functional unit at the grass root level. The Vision document of Panchayat Raj Department envisages the following commitments in this direction. They are:

1. Strengthening of the Panchayati Raj Institutional structure and systems.
2. Constitution of functional committees.
3. Prevention of criminalization of politics.
4. Audit and Accounts.
5. Role of Gram Sabha.
6. Identification of risk families.
7. Beneficiary committees.
8. Building regulations.
9. Recall of Elected representatives.
10. Devolution of Powers, Functions and Responsibilities.
11. Capacity building of P.R. Functionaries.
12. Strengthening of Finances of Local Bodies.
13. Property Tax Reforms, and
14. Rural Road Development Policy.

The Panchayati Raj Institutions had never been given specific powers responsibilities and funds to carryout their routine functions. Even the elections to these bodies had not been held for years on one or the other pretext. The Andhra Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act 1994 has incorporated all the requirements of the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution. It is a comprehensive legislation covering all the three tiers of Panchayati Raj. As per the Andhra Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 the three tiers of Panchayati Raj structure in the state was slightly modified. The upper tier of the Panchayati Raj body in the state is known as Zilla Parishad, Zilla Parishad is constituted at district level. Generally it is known by the name of respective district, for example, Anantapur Zilla Parishad. It consists of elected members, who are directly elected by the voters of the district from Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituencies: It undertakes a lot of developmental works in the district for the welfare of rural masses. In order to carry out various developmental works in a systematic manner, the members of Zilla Parishad were formed into seven Standing Committees. The intermediate Panchayats in the state is known as Mandal Parishad. For each Revenue Mandal one Mandal Parishad was formed, which known by the name of respective mandal headquarter. It acts as a link between Zilla Parishad and Gram Panchayat. It consists of elected members, who are directly elected by the voters of the mandal from Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituencies. The lowest tier of Panchayat Raj body in the state is called as Gram Panchayat, which also by the name respective village. It plays important role in proper implementation of various developmental works in the village. Andhra Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act Of 1994

In order to incorporate the mandatory provisions as envisaged in the 73rd Constitutional amendment, the Government of Andhra Pradesh enacted a comprehensive law on Panchayati Raj Institutions entitled, "Andhra Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 and the salient features of this Act are as follows:

1. There will be Gram Panchayats at the village level composed of members elected the wards carved out on territorial basis.
2. The Sarpanch for every gram Panchayat shall be elected by the persons, whose names appear in the electoral roll for the Gram Panchayat and his term of office would be five years.
3. There will be a Gram Sabha consisting of all electors in the village, which will meet twice a year.
4. There will be a Mandal Panchayat to every Mandal composed of the members directly elected from the territorial constituencies carved out for the purpose (MPTCs).
5. The President of Mandal Parishad would be elected from among the elected members of the Mandal Panchayat.
6. There will be a Zilla Panchayat for every district consisting all members elected from the Mandals in the District and each Mandal will be a territorial constituency for the purposes (ZPTCs).
7. Only the elected members of the Zilla Parishad will elect the Chairman of the Zilla Parishad.
8. There will be reservations of seats of members as also the offices of Sarpanch, President, Mandal Panchayats and Chairman, Zilla Panchayats for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Women as provided in the Constitution Amendment Act and at 34% to backward classes.
9. There will be an Election Commission for the conduct of elections to conduct elections for Panchayati Raj Bodies headed by a person, who is holding or has held an office not less in rank than that of a Principal Secretary to Government, and
10. There will be Finance Commission headed by a person who has experience in public affairs.

Finally the Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 (Act 13 of 1994) came into force with effect from 27th May, 1994. As per the new Act three tiers of decentralized institutions were working in all 22 districts of the state, except Hyderabad district which is purely urban in nature.

Devolution of Powers And Functions

Article 243(G) of the Indian Constitution stipulates endowment by law and by the legislation of a state such powers and authority and functions as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government. The states were supposed to study this Article along with the Eleventh Schedule and allocate the powers and functions among the three tiers of Panchayats.

The Amendment Act further directs that states should have provisions for the devolution of powers and responsibility upon Panchayats at appropriate level for the following purposes.

- (a) The preparation of plans for economic development and social justice and

- (b) The implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those relations to the matters listed in the Eleventh schedule.

Under the new act, PRIs are expected to perform all development functions as suggested in the Eleventh schedule, as mentioned above. For doing so, proper devolution of functions and powers to local bodies is necessary. In particular, devolution of functions and powers from the regular line departments to the PRIS is a necessary pre-requisite for healthy functioning of local bodies. The next one discuss about how the functional devolution has taken place in Andhra Pradesh. -

In order to perform the numerous functions enlisted in the act, the extent of devolution required should be adequate. Coming to the actual devolution that has taken place, it needs to be stated that the ground reality in Andhra Pradesh is not satisfactory. The following Table: 3.2 gives the status of devolutions of functions to different tiers of Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh.

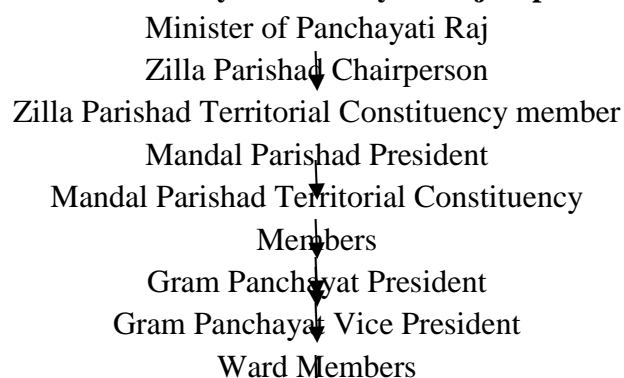
Panchayati Raj System in combined Andhra Pradesh

The present pattern of Panchayati Raj in the combined State is functioning under the Andhra Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act of 1994, which was enacted in the light of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1993

"Keeping in view the past experiences it became imperative to provide Constitutional status to local self-government to impart certainly, continuity and strength. The Constitution's 73rd Amendment essentially lays down certain ground values with basic structural frame work so that it can sustain against external interference and could establish themselves as effective and strong people's institutions". Political and Administrative Organization of Panchayati Raj Department

The effective functioning of a department largely depends on its political and administrative structure. The Panchayati Raj department of Andhra Pradesh is a well organized department. The political organization of the department is given in the below Chart.

Political Hierarchy of Panchayati Raj Department



The Minister of Panchayati Raj is the overall incharge of the department. He is responsible for the execution of all developmental and welfare schemes. The political head of the upper tier of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the state is known Chairperson of Zilla Parishad. He is indirectly elected by the Zilla Parishad Territorial constituency members, who in turn are directly elected by the registered voters of respective constituencies. The chief of intermediate Panchayats in the state is known as Mandal Parishad President. He is also indirectly elected by the MPTC members. The lowest tier of Panchayat in the state is known

as Gram Panchayat. Both the Sarpanch and ward members of the Gram Panchayat at were directly elected by the people. Election to the MPTC and ZPTC members and Chair of Zilla Parishads and Mandal Parishads will held on party basis, while the election to gram panchayats were held on non- party basis.

The principal secretary is the administrative head of the Panchayat Raj Department. In the discharge of his duties he is assisted by Additional Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Under Secretary etc in the secretariat. At the district level the administrative head of Zilla Parishad is the Chief Executive Officer and other staff members of Zilla Parishad. The District Panchayat Officer is the incharge of Gram Panchayats in the district. At intermediate level, the administrative head of the Mandal Parishad is Mandal Parishad Development Officer. At the bottom of the administrative organization lies the village' secretary, who is incharge of Gram Panchayat administration.

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