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ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The present study is an attempt to analyse the organizational relationship of Panchayati Raj Institution with community development programme. The study analyses that community development programme, instead of being people's programme with government assistance, was becoming more and more government's programme with varying degrees of people's participation. The block advisory committees, created to enlist popular support and participation in the programme, lacked capacity, vitality and power to represent people's point of view. The village panchayat were also found weak and ineffective to mobilize the masses in support of the programme. Besides, in most of the states, there was no organization at the block level to represent the people's will.

KEYWORDS

Panchayati Raj, India.

INTRODUCTION

Democratic decentralization, popularly known as "Panchayati Raj", has historical, ideological and organizational relationship with community development programme. The community development is a national programme; and covers the entire rural population which comprises over 75 per cent of the total Indian population. The present shape of the programme has evolved through several phases. The first began with opening of 15 pilot projects in various states in India. The second was the establishment of 55 community development projects on October 2, 1952. The third phase commenced with the initiation of National Extension Service in October, 1953. The number of blocks went on increasing from year to year, and by October, 1967, the total number of blocks reached 5,265. The goals of the community development programme can be summarized as follows: (i) to increase substantially the agricultural production in the country, improve nation's communication system, health and hygiene, and promote education in villages; and (ii) to generate and direct a process of integrated social, economic and cultural change with the ultimate aim of transforming social and economic life in the villages. Though the official machinery was created to guide and assist the planning and the implementation of the programme, the main responsibility for improving the socio-economic conditions in the village was to rest with the people themselves. It was argued that unless people considered community development as theirs, and valued it as a practical contribution to their own welfare; no substantial result could be gained. Consequently, the people's participation in the planning and the execution of the programme was considered a vital aspect of community development and was sought by setting up of project advisory committees consisting of non-officials in project areas.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i) To analysis of Panchayati Raj institutions in India.
- ii) To check organizational pattern of Panchayati Raj.
- iii) To assess the people's participation in the planning and the execution of the programme.

THE RATIONALES FOR PANCHAYATI RAJ

Three basic rationales can be identified for the creation of Panchayati Raj Institutions as follows:

1. TO MAKE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

It was, therefore, considered important to involve the rural population in the programme in order to obtain a realistic perspective on the appropriateness and effectiveness of community development programme—a perspective free from biases stemming from considerations of careerism and public relation needs of determents and their personnel. It was argued that the villagers were in the best position to define their own needs. The Study Team consequently observed that "so long as we do not discover or create a representative and democratic institution which will supply the local interest, supervision and care necessary to ensure that expenditure of money upon local projects conforms with the needs and wishes of the locality, invest it with adequate power and assign to it appropriate finances, we will never be able to evoke local interest and excite local initiative in the field of development".

2. THE TRANSFER DECISION MAKING AUTHORITY TO VILLAGERS-REGARDING DEVELOPMENTAL WORK

One of the rationales of Panchayati Raj is to transfer decision-making authority to villagers and their elected bodies regarding developmental matters. Though the Second Five Year structure of administration in which village panchayats would be organically linked with popularly elected organizations, such as district boards, whose functions would include the entire general administration and development of the area, administration of justice, and certain functions pertaining to the revenue administration, the district boards had neither the tradition nor the resources to take up this work. They had also been handicapped by having too large a charge to receive their detailed attention. The chairman and members of the district boards were not in a position to give any considerable portion of their time to the affairs of such a vast area.

3. VALUE OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

India is one of the largest democracies in the world. Panchayati Raj is considered a foundation of participatory democracy in India. Jayaprakash Narayan, one of the well-known leaders of Indian democracy, observed that it is a matter of great satisfaction that in our country a beginning has already been made in laying the foundation of participative democracy in the shape of Panchayati Raj or what was called at first "democratic decentralization".

ORGANIZATION PATTERN OF PANCHAYATI RAJ

The Study Team recommended a three tier organizational structure for the Panchayati Raj. The Village Panchayat with elected representatives of the adult population in the village was the lowest unit; the panchayat samiti consisting of the Sarpanchas of Panchayat Samitis in the block area at the intermediate level; and the zila parishad with Chairman of Panchayat Samitis as ex-officio members at the district level. An examination of the organizational structure of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in various states reveals that, though the ideals and basic objectives of the institutions are identical in all the states, their powers, mode of representation of the people, and the nature of inter relationship among them is not uniform. Variations among these institutions have been observed frequently in respect to the unit of devolution at some places it is the district while at the other places it is the block or tehsil and the mode of representation, which in some states is through direct election while in other states it is through indirect election or by both. For example, the State of Rajasthan adopted the Panchayati Raj pattern suggested by the Study Team in toto and accordingly made Panchayat Samiti the most powerful body by making it responsible for the planning and the execution of all the developmental programmes. The Zila Parishad is only a supervisory and coordinating body. A special feature of the scheme is that the Zila Parishad cannot modify the budget proposals of Panchayat Samitis, even though it can return the proposals with a suggestion to modify these. Another feature of the pattern is the total exclusion of officials from membership of both the Samiti and Parishad. The Panchayat Samiti consists of directly elected Sarpanchas of village panchayats in the area, the representatives of scheduled castes, tribes, and cooperatives. The State of Andhra Pradesh

has provided planning and executive powers to both the Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad, Developmental programmes of all the departments of the government, including maintenance of minor irrigation, and welfare of backward classes, have been transferred to the Samiti and the Parishad. The Parishad has, in certain areas, supervisory powers while in others it has executive powers. The mode of representation to Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad Andhra Pradesh is similar to the mode adopted by the State of Rajasthan. The pattern adopted by Maharashtra is different from both Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan. The Zila Parishad in Maharashtra is the most powerful body. The main functions of the Zila Parishad are planning and execution of all developmental programmes, primary basic and secondary education, distribution of fertilizers, agricultural implements, improved seeds, etc. Thus, the Zila Parishad is a strong unit with wide powers and responsibilities Table on next page indicates the different patterns of Panchayati Raj, prevailing in the states of the union based on the devolution of executive powers and the mode of direct election of the representatives to Panchayati Raj Institutions.

ORGANIZATIONAL DILEMMAS IN PANCHAYATI RAJ

The organizational dilemmas of Panchayati Raj seem to arise largely from the nature of organizational relationship: (1) among the personnel working in the block administration, and (2) the block administration and Panchayat Samiti. Sociologists studying modern bureaucracy have pointed out that some structural characteristics of bureaucratic organizations tend to create strains, both in terms 'Of organizational goals, and in the inter-personal relationship among the staff', for example, points to some of the problems that arise when an administrator whose authority is based on incumbency of the office rather, than specialized knowledge exerts control over subordinates whose technical specialization and organizational experience differ from his own. Harvey Smith's study similarly reveals that there can be a serious incongruence between the exercise of scalar and functional authority which tends to create conflict in bureaucratic organizations.

CHART 1: PATTERN OF PANCHAYATI RAJ IN STATE OF THE UNION BY LOCATION OF EXECUTIVE POWER AND DIRECT METHOD OF ELECTION IN NINE STATES

State	Method of election				Executive and supervisory powers			
	Panchayat Samiti		Zila Parishad		Panchayat Samiti		Zila Parishad	
	Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect	Executive	Supervisory	Executive	supervisory
Andhra Pradesh	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	+
Assam	+	-	-	-	+	+	-	+
Gujarat	-	-	+	-	+	+	+	+
Bihar	-	-	+	-	+	+	-	+
Haryana	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	+
Maharashtra	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+
Orissa	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	+
Punjab	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	+
Uttar Pradesh	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	+

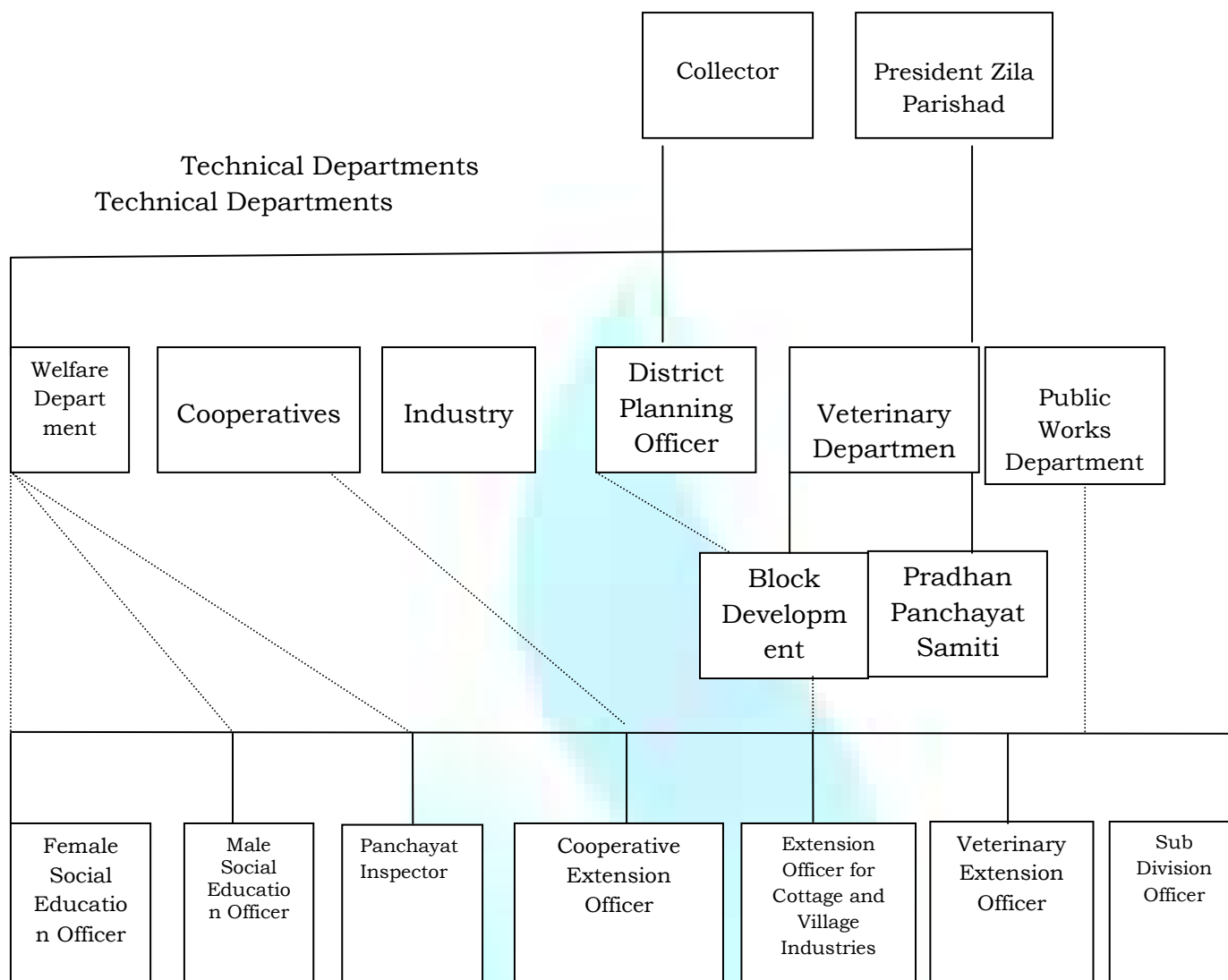
Keys: + Presence of direct election, executive and supervisory power.

- Absence of direct election, executive and supervisory power.

THE MULTIPLE SYSTEM OF CONTROL OVER PERSONNEL

Studies of bureaucratic organizations in the western countries have shown that a dual system of control over the personnel of an organization leads to organizational tension between scalar, and functional authorities when scalar authority (which is based on the office one holds) and functional authority (which rests on the specialized roles one plays in the organization) do not reside in the same person, conflict is likely to occur." In hospitals, for example, where scalar and functional authorities are vested in the hospital administrator and the doctor respectively (the former tends to emphasize administrative procedures and the economy of resources while the latter's overriding concern is with professional standards and the providing of service rather than with administrative rules and policies), the lower ranking personnel are often under the dual control of both the doctor and the administrator whose orders and instructions are frequently contradictory.

CHART 2: ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROL OF EXTENSION OFFICERS AT THE DISTRICT AND PANCHAYAT SAMITI LEVELS



Keys: — Direct Administrative Control
 Indirect Control by Technical Departments

This conceptual framework is very useful in analysing India organization of Panchayati Raj and community development. The administration of Indian community development programme is linked with technical departments, such as agriculture, veterinary science, cooperatives, public health, and like. This has been accomplished by adding community development blocks to the general administration with the Collector at the district level acting as the chief developmental officer, and by putting the technical personnel at the block level under the administrative control of the Block Development Officer while at the district level keeping them professionally responsible to their departmental heads." In other words, extension officers, who are technical personnel in the block, are administratively under the control of the Block Development Officer, while their technical supervision lies in the hands of their District Technical Officers.

SUPERVISION OF TECHNICAL STAFF BY GENERALIST AND BY NON-TECHNICAL ADMINISTRATORS

Tension in bureaucratic organizations tends to arise when technical personnel are subordinated to the authority of the generalist administrator. The authority of the modern administrator is often based on the position he holds rather than the technical knowledge he commands. Yet he is required to supervise and evaluate the work of technical personnel who may have far superior skills in their specialization than him. The administrator, therefore, tends to base his evaluation of the technical staff on what they produce rather than how they produce it. This is objected to by the technical staff who very often tend to emphasize the technical-procedure involved in their jobs rather than how much they produce. The situation in Panchayati Raj Administration is similar to that described above. The tension generally is observed between the Block Development Officer, a generalist in the block team, and the Extension Officers, such as the Veterinary Extension Officer, the Agricultural Extension Officer, etc., about whose technical specialization he knows very little and whose work he must supervise. This leads to resentment which lies in the fact that most Block Development Officers are on deputation from general administration and are not equipped, many a times, with the knowledge and technology of specialties, such as Animal Husbandry, Agriculture, Construction, Cottage Industries, etc., which form an important part of the community development programme. They are nevertheless responsible for sanctioning projects in these fields and evaluating these; and they must also report on the performance of the Extension Officers. The criteria which often seem to govern the sanction of projects by the Block Development Officers are: (1) whether a project meets the administrative requirements, such as budgeting; (2) whether there is a popular demand for the project in the community; and (3) whether the allocation of money for a particular programme would otherwise be spent within the period of allocation. The Extension Officers, on the other hand, tend to judge a project primarily on technical criteria, such as whether it is technically sound and whether it is worth the effort in cost/gain terms. Conflict is created when Block Development Officers by their administrative authority tend to impose their judgments on the Extension Officers.

ROLE CONFLICT AND ORGANIZATIONAL TENSION IN PANCHAYATI RAJ ADMINISTRATION

The role conflicts among the personnel of Panchayat Samiti also seem to be related to what Melvin Seeman calls status dimension (conflict between the value of dependence and independence), and means/ends dimension (conflict between the emphasis on the process of achievement of the role of Block Development Officer, and to what Parsons and Shils call the universalistic (a value orientation towards institutionalized obligation to society) and particularistic (a value orientation towards institutionalized obligations of friendship, kinship, castes and other primary groups) of the block personnel and the Panchayat Samiti leadership respectively.

When the community development programme was launched in India, the staff was drawn from the existing government departments to fill the various positions. The assignment of programme responsibilities to the personnel was done on the basis of his status in the parent department. In spite of the new expectations in the community development programme, attitudes and behaviours of these officers, however, continued to be largely of their old department. There is a strong tradition in most Indian government agencies, particularly in the Revenue Department from which most of the executive officers in the community development administration were recruited, that it is the job of the government officer to govern; and that senior officers should direct, while junior officers should obey. While this might be an appropriate attitude in other areas, it certainly does not suit the philosophy of the community development programme." Thus, Dube observes that in tasks connected with economic development and community development the Indian bureaucracy has been hesitant and unsure, and its standards of performance and levels of achievement have not been equal to its reputation. Its "structure and ethos suited it more for maintenance of law and order than for massive nation building; its adaptation to the emerging milieu has been beset with organizational incompatibility, psychological resistances and value conflicts. In consequence, it suffers from certain lags and finds "itself unable to grapple with the new challenges with ease and confidence". Thus, a highly authoritarian style of Block Development Officers characterized by superior/subordinate relationships to maintain their 'high' status has created several problems in the administration of community development programmes. For one thing, the relationship between Block Development Officers and the Extension Officers, already strained by the resentment of the latter over their subordination to the former becomes further impaired. The strict superior/subordinate relationship orientation has also created a severe problem of communication, between higher and lower ranks, practically at every level in the community development administration. The communication of information is essentially from higher echelons to lower echelons in the forms of directions and instructions. The limited information which flows from lower levels to higher levels goes through a censoring process in such a manner that it is practically useless when it reaches finally the top most level.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis deals with the structural factors responsible for the tension in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The main factors examined are: (i) multiple system of control over the Samiti's staff; (ii) the supervision of technical staff by generalist and lay administrators; and (iii) role conflicts. The analysis suggests several theoretical implications. One, it lends support to the hypothesis advanced by Gouldner that the organizational tension resulting from the supervision of the technical staff by generalist administrators is not peculiarly a phenomenon operating in industrial societies, but is an equally significant structural variable in organizations set-up in rural areas for developmental purposes. Second, the multiple system of control over the staff in the organization tends to set limits upon the degrees to which integration of personnel can take place. Third, the social and cultural environments contribute considerably to the organizational behaviour of the personnel working in formal organization. The particularistic orientation among the non-officials in Panchayati Raj seems to stem from the pressures exerted on them, by what Gouldner calls "social system imperatives", such as loyalties to political, ethnic, religious, kinship and caste groups. Presthus observes that the pattern of bureaucratic behaviour reflects the values of the institutions of socialization of the bureaucrat. Nepotism, favoritism, etc., observed in bureaucratic organizations in many under-developed countries are the manifestations of the patterns of family and kinship relations in which personal loyalties outweigh the demands of objectivity and impartiality."

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