

CHAPTER-THREE

PANCHAYATI RAJ IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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3.1 Panchayati Raj in Historical Perspective :

The Panchayati Raj system originated from the period of Rig-Veda¹, when the popular institutions consisting of villagers emerged at the village level for the maintenance of law and order, settlement of disputes, collection of revenue, fixation of taxes and other general welfare activities.

Village panchayats in the early Vedic-period consisted of two bodies, namely, Sabha and Samiti². Sabha was under the control of a village headman appointed by the king.³ The Gramani was controlled and regulated by the advice of the Sabha or Samiti or Panchayat. The number of members of this panchayat or panchomondolis varies from 5 to 10. The reference of this village panchayat is also found in the great epics of the Ramayana or the Mahabharata or the Manu Samhita.⁴

In the later period of Rig-Veda, 'Samiti was abolished and Sabha was converted into a 'royal court' or 'council' or panchayat under the leadership of Gramani.⁵ The village panchayats were independent during those days.

The independence of the village panchayats diminished during

the Mughal period and the Panchayat lost its power to exercise its normal civic, industrial, commercial, social, administrative, legislative and judicial functions. The Mughal rulers did not favour the idea of village republic⁶ and established a centralised form of administration⁷.

Like the Mughals, the British-rulers did not deconcentrate on the powers and functions at the provincial, district and village level. They developed the communication and transport facilities for their own interest. The land administration and collection of revenue were put under the charge of a Subedar or Patwari.

The British-rulers made their first attempt to introduce Local Self Government for rural areas with the passing of the Village Chowkidari Act, 1870. The Act was made operative in the provinces of Bombay, Bengal, Punjab and the North Western Province. Lord Mayo's Resolution of 1870 states, "Local interest, supervising and care are necessary to success in the management of funds devoted to education, sanitation, medical relief and local public works". The Resolution indicated the development of rural local self government.

The village panchayat under the Village Chowkidari Act was not an elected body. The members - both the officials and the non-officials - were appointed by the District Magistrate. The

chairman was appointed from the official side.⁹

The main function of this body was to contain criminal activities and to maintain the law and order problems of the village. It was also assigned to assess and collect local taxes for meeting the allowances of the village-police. So it is revealed from this Act that the village panchayats served the interest of the British-rulers.

The most important step for the rural local self government during the British period was Lord Ripon's Resolution of May 18, 1882. The Resolution stated that : (1) there would be elected non-officials' majority and the official members would in no case be more than one third of the whole (para-12); (2) Government's control was to be exercised from without (para-13); (3) Non-official member would be the chairman of the Board as far as possible¹⁰ (para-18).

The resolutions stated above make it clear that an attempt was made to set up a local body which would perform duties for the welfare of the village-people. The provision for elected non-official-majority and the appointment of the chairman from the non-official side indicated a structural change in the local body. Taluk or the Block was considered as the unit of administration.

But the irony of fate was that Lord Curzon, after coming to power, rejected the resolution. He was not in favour of entrusting a large number of duties to local bodies.

The next important step for establishing democratic institutions at the village-level was the Report of the 'Royal Commission on Decentralisation' of 1909. The Commission recommended the establishment of village panchayats consisting of members elected by the villagers assembled in meeting and assigned with police and welfare functions.¹¹

From the recommendations it is observed that it emphasized the importance of village panchayats on the assumption that development begins at the village-level. In practice, the relaxation of bureaucratic control over local bodies could not be implemented properly. The elected members considered local bodies as the training ground for preparation to become state-level or national-level leaders. So both the officials and the non-officials were tradition bound and power based and were not goal-oriented and goal-directed.¹²

The next important step towards the progress of Rural Local Self Government was the Government of India Resolution, 1913.

Following the Resolution, the British-rulers passed the Acts in the following Provinces for the establishment of village-panchayats.

- (1) Bengal Self Government Act, 1919;
- (2) Bihar Self Government Act, 1920;
- (3) Bombay Village Panchayat Act, 1920;
- (4) Central Provinces and Bihar Panchayat Act, 1920;

- (5) Madras Panchayat Act, 1920;
- (6) Uttar Pradesh Village Panchayat Act, 1920;
- (7) Punjab Panchayat Act, 1922;
- (8) Assam Self Government Act, 1925.

Though several Acts were passed in several provinces to accelerate the speed of rural development with the establishment of "Panchayats" it failed to raise the standard of living of the people at the village-level. The reasons for the failure were the meagre source of income of the Union Board and the Zilla Board and the lack of adequate staff.

Independence ushered in a new era of hopes and aspirations to the people and now the people thought that their demands and wishes could be fulfilled from which they were so long deprived. The statutory formation of panchayat was not the creation of independent India but it existed since 1919 during the British period though a concrete shape of the institution as a vehicle for rural development was still a far cry.

Gandhiji always argued in his speeches and writings for establishing "Village-Swaraj" for ameliorating the conditions of the rural-people. He felt that the village-people should not only be self reliant and self-sufficient but also they should fully participate in matters of their own development. He preached the philosophy of 'Sarvodaya' which implies the welfare of all. The main philosophy behind 'Sarvodaya' is the idea of service based

on love. It is an art and science of mobilising the physical, economic and spiritual resources at the disposal of society in the service of the good of all.¹³

Vinoba Bhave extended the idea of Gandhian 'Sarvodaya' and laid the major emphasis on economic transformation and development of rural India.¹⁴ Jay Prakash Narain wanted to reconstruct Indian policy and create necessary conditions for the realization of 'Sarvodaya' - society. He pointed out that the country's problems could not be solved through active politics and parliamentary legislation.¹⁵

Gandhian view of society had never been considered at the time of preparing the Draft-Constitution. Dr. Ambedkar opposed putting the village and the peasant on the Indian stage. He observed that the village-republic was out of existence after independence. He was of the opinion that the village republic would help to generate 'provincialism' and 'communalism'. He was very glad to learn that the Draft of the constitution considered the individual rather than the village as the unit of administration.¹⁶

Mr. Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Constituent Assembly and other members like J.C. Kumarappa and Shriman Narain, advocated "the idea of utilising adult franchise only for the village panchayat".¹⁷ B.N. Rau, the Constitutional Adviser, when requested by the followers of Gandhi to include panchayat, pointed out that

it was too late because it had already been decided by the members of the Constituent Assembly.¹⁸

Several members criticised the view of Ambedkar. H.V.Kamath described the attitude of Ambedkar 'as typical of the Urban-highbrow'. He appreciated the Gandhian teaching of love of the village and for encouraging the people 'to strive for Panchayati Raj'.¹⁹ T.Prakasam condemned the views of Dr. Ambedkar and pointed out that 'the village panchayat should be one which is upto date, which gives real power to rule and to get money and expend it, in the hands of the villagers'. Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar, Prof. N.G.Ranga, Mr. Mahavir Tyagi, Mr. M.Ananthasayanam Ayyangar, Mr. N.Madhava Rau vehemently criticised the attitude of Dr. Ambedkar and expressed their opinion to include village-panchayat in the Draft Constitution.²¹

After a long debate and discussion in the Constituent Assembly, it was suggested to include Panchayats in the 'Directive Principles of State Policy'. Art.40 of the Constitution thus reads, "The state shall take steps to organise village-panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government"²²

In post-independence India, the Five Year Plans sought to initiate the process of rural development activities through the Community Development as a method and National Extension Service as an agency.²³

"Community Development is identified with almost any form of local betterment which is in some way achieved with the willing cooperation of the people."²⁴ It was 'conceived, planned and initiated as a people's selfhelp programme'.²⁵ The Community Development Programme was launched on Oct. 2, 1952 on a pilot scheme over 55 selected blocks all over India to extend the development of the rural areas²⁶ "not only as units of decentralised administration but almost simultaneously as units of decentralised autonomy".²⁷

The aims of the Community Development Programme and National Extension Service were more or less similar. But the National Extension Service was a permanent organisation and was intended to cover the entire country in a relatively shorter period. The National Extension Service was launched in 1953.²⁸

So far as the organisational pattern of the Community Development was concerned, it was observed that there were three basic units - the Village, the Mandi and the Development Block. On the operational side, there were Project Executive Officers responsible for executing the Community Development Programme in their areas. The Project Executive Officer was to be assisted by a staff of nearly 125 Supervisors and Village Level Workers.²⁹

In the First Five Year Plan, panchayats at the village-level were organised to perform "agency functions" of the higher authorities. It was admitted frankly that it would be difficult

to make a marked impression on rural life, for, only a village organisation representing the community as a whole could provide the necessary leadership.³⁰ During this plan period panchayats were set up in many states. Block Advisory Committees (Block Development Committees) at each block and Adhoc - Committees were also set up. The Second Five Year Plan also emphasized the establishment of appropriate agency at the village-level.³¹ So it was observed that the institutionalisation of people's involvement and participation did not go beyond the creation of adhoc-bodies and some concomitant adjustments.³² The Balvantray Mehta Study Team which was constituted to evaluate the workings of the Community Development Programme and the National Extension Service, and submitted its report on the 24th November, 1957, observed, "Development can not progress without responsibility and power. Community Development can be real only when the community understands its problems, realises its responsibilities, exercises the necessary powers through its chosen representatives and maintains a constant and intelligent vigilance on local administration. With this objective, we recommend an early establishment of statutory elective local bodies and devolution to them of the necessary resources, power and authority."³³

The Committee recommended the three-tier-Panchayat system, namely, the Village Panchayat would consist of members elected directly by the people on the basis of adult franchise. The women members would be coopted and one each from Scheduled Caste

and Scheduled Tribe would be represented. It would perform certain obligatory duties and execute the schemes of Panchayat Samiti.³⁴

Panchayat Samiti, the next tier of the organisation, would be indirectly elected by the Village Panchayat at the block level. On the official side, all the staff-members of the Block would be subordinate to Panchayat Samiti and the Block Development Officer would act as the Executive Officer of the Panchayat Samiti. This body would perform specific types of functions. The Panchayat Samiti members would elect the members of the Zilla Parishad which would approve the annual budget of the Panchayat Samiti, coordinate Block plans, distribute government funds allotted to Panchayat Samiti and guide the activities of the Panchayat Samiti.³⁵

The Mehta Committee-Report was accepted by the Government of India and the proposals were made operative in different States of India according to the structure and pattern suitable to the conditions of each State.

Though the Mehta Committee admitted that democratic decentralisation of power had become urgent, it failed to recommend directly-elected panchayats at the three-levels.⁵⁶

The foregoing discussion points out that the Panchayati Raj seems to have passed through three phases : the phase of ascendancy (1959-64); the phase of stagnation (1965-69); and the phase of decline (1969-77).

Panchayati Raj which was so long operated to perform rural development activities since the period of Community Development to Balvantray Mehta period has achieved a limited success in several States. Gram Panchayats have done well in states like Kerala. In Maharashtra and Gujarat like Panchayati Raj a system as a whole has a record of better performance. In Rajasthan, Panchayati Raj has shown very good results. The second tier has achieved progress both in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. In Andhra Pradesh, the Zilla Parishad has become successful in providing leadership. In West Bengal, the Anchal Panchayats had in the past considerably achieved better performance.³⁷

On the other hand, Panchayati Raj has also generally failed to deliver the goods to the rural people. The reasons for the failure are : Structural inadequacy which results into imbalance in relationship between the non-officials and the officials, subsidiary legislation by the State Government to curtail decision-making power of the elected bodies, meagre source of income, role of bureaucracy, etc.

The Community Development Programme with its stress on institulisation of people's involvement and participation did not go beyond the creation of adhoc bodies and some concomitant adjustments. During the B.Mehta period the Panchayati Raj institutions were also denied a sound democratic basis and proper administrative nourishment. The genuine devolution of administrative and financial powers to the grass-root institutions

of rural government was a mere slogan and the panchayat institutions were left in a moribund condition. Thus the Asoka Mehta Committee was set up in 1978 by the Janata Government in order to re-build and re-structure the Panchayati Raj institutions. The Committee submitted its report on the 21st august, 1978 after the elections of Panchayati Raj institutions in West Bengal.

The important recommendations of the Committee were -

(1) The structural and functional pattern of Panchayati Raj institutions should be changed in order to ensure effective people's participation in growth - economic, social and political.

The decentralisation of power, planning process and developmental activities below the state level is necessary from the political and socio-developmental perspectives. The first point of decentralisation should be the district below the state level.

A Mandal Panchayat should be constituted next to the district covering a number of villages in order to establish linkages transcending the traditional village. It will be the hub of developmental activities.

A Village Committee could be constituted by the Mandal Panchayat to look after municipal and civic functions and other related welfare activities.

The Zilla Parishad should consist of six categories of members. The Zilla Parishad would function through a number of Committees like Agriculture, Education, Small Industries, Finance and Public Works.

In order to formulate plans and periodic review a Planning Committee at the district level would be constituted with the following members - all the members of the Zilla Parishad and M.L.As and M.Ps from the concerned district.

In order to ensure clearer orientation towards development programme and to facilitate healthier linkages with higher level political process political parties should participate in the Panchayati Raj elections.

All the development functions relating to district would have to be transferred in the hands of the Zilla Parishad. The Panchayati Raj institutions should be empowered to take their own decisions and plan according to their own requirements. The Zilla Parishad should be responsible for planning at the district level. A team of professional experts would assist for the preparation of the plan at the district level. While formulating the plans the expertise of the district level staff should take into account a cross section of all shades of public opinion relevant to the district. The State Government would have to provide continuous assistance in the process of district planning.

All the district level officials should be placed under the Zilla Parishad and lower tiers. In the Zilla Parishad there should be a Chief Executive Officer who should be held responsible for the implementation of the policies and programmes.

Besides allotment of fund by the State Government, the Panchayati Raj institutions should have enough scope for mobilising their own resources. All Panchayati Raj institutions should have the power of imposing taxes. The weaker sections should be exempted from taxes in order to ensure social justice. Separate programmes for training for officials and non-officials should be provided. Moreover, there should be combined courses for both the officials and the elected representatives.

Panchayati Raj institutions should coordinate with the cooperative institutions in order to meet up the economic requirements of the people.

The majority of the State Governments opposed the idea of party-based election and Mandal Panchayat. The Chief Ministers in a meeting held on May, 19, 1979, decided to appoint a Drafting Committee comprising a number of Chief Ministers and Union Minister for Agriculture as its head, to prepare a draft bill. Some of the principles adopted by the Chief Ministers were : the existing three tier structure could be continued, the term of office of these bodies should be five years, supersession may be unavoidable, but elections should be held within 3 to 6 months.

The proposals recommended by the Asoka Mehta Committee were not adequate enough for the complete transfer of power to the local bodies in making decentralisation a living reality. The Panchayati Raj institutions failed to fulfil the characteristics of 'Village-Government' in the real sense of the term.

3.2 Panchayats in West-Bengal : A brief survey from 1957 to the present day.

Panchayats in West Bengal have a long history. West Bengal which has inherited the panchayat system of undivided Bengal, passed through different types of Panchayat system.

At the outset, it is observed that the Local Self Government in Bengal was established with the passing of the Village Chowkidari Act in 1870. The Village Chowkidar was directly controlled and guided by the village body known as Panchayat. The members of the Panchayat were not directly elected by the people and hence it was not a village government in the real sense of the term. The Panchayat consisted of not less than five persons to be appointed by the District Collector or any subordinate officer chosen by him. The only function of this Panchayat was to assess and collect tax.³⁹

This Act became obsolete very soon and hence appeared Lord Ripon's Resolution on May 18, 1882. The important items of this Resolution were: (1) Elected non-official-majority, (2) Non-official - chairman, (3) Government's control over local

bodies to be exercised from without rather than from within,⁴⁰

(4) Sufficient financial resources for the local bodies.

The Bengal Village Self Government Act, 1885, recommended Local Boards at each subdivisional level. This Local Board was out of commission because the Board had to depend upon district for the performance of its activities. The Local Board was an adjunct unit of District Board.⁴¹ The number of members in the Local Board varied from 9 to 30. By this Act, the Village Government was established not from below but from the top.

The Royal Commission on Decentralisation was set up to counter the centralising features of the Village Self Government Act. It recommended that the village should be the basic unit of administration. Panchayat, according to the Commission, "was to be elected by the villagers, assembled in meeting, and be assigned definite functions".⁴² The Commission was in favour of entrusting police and welfare functions in the hands of the local body. The Government of India Act, 1919, accepted the recommendation and consequently set up Union Board for this purpose. The functions included in a Union Board mainly were - police, management of village community affairs, minor roads, water works, public health and sanitation. It had also the powers of taxation necessary for discharging the duties assigned to it.⁴³

It was noticed that the District Board, Local Board and Union Board could not uphold the socio-economic status of the rural people. So the dawn of independence brought an opportunity for the people of the country to stand behind the masses.

The emergence of Panchayati Raj in West Bengal after independence synchronized with the passage of the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1957, with a view to decentralising the power at the grass-roots-level. Panchayati Raj, with the passing of this Act, consisted of two tiers : Gram Panchayat and Anchal Panchayat.

The second phase of development took place when the West Bengal Zilla Parishad Act, 1963, was passed. This Act abolished the Union Board and the Local Board and established two tiers - Anchalik Parishad and Zilla Parishad. So the Panchayat in West Bengal consisted of four tiers - Gram Panchayat, Anchal Panchayat, Anchalik Parishad and Zilla Parishad.

The four-tier structure of West Bengal Panchayat system was formally inaugurated on Oct.2, 1964. Soon after its introduction, the State of West Bengal had been seriously afflicted by food crisis in 1965. As a result, agitations, demonstrations, strikes and bandhs were observed in West Bengal. These practically paralysed the Government. In 1967 the United Front Government came to power for the first time defeating the Congress Party. The Panchayat Minister of the U.F. Government proposed to draw a new scheme of Panchayati Raj, but the Ministry was dismissed within a short time. The Coalition Ministry superseded the U.F. Government. But it was also shortlived. The Second U.F. Government came to power in 1969 and took initiative in proceeding with its earlier scheme. Before anything concrete could be

put into effect, the Ministry was dismissed. In 1972, the Congress Party won the election and formed the Government. This Government passed the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973, which was implemented only with effect from the 4th June, 1978 by the Left Front Government. According to this Act, the Panchayat system consisted of three tiers - Gram Panchayat at the village level, Panchayat Samiti at the block level, Zilla Parishad at the district level.

3.2.1 Structure and powers of Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat under the Act of 1957:

According to the Act of 1957, Gram Sabha in West Bengal was a first step towards the formation of the Panchayati Raj structure. The State Government by notification could determine the area, name and jurisdiction of any Gram Sabha. Gram Panchayat was the Executive Committee of the Gram Sabha. Gram Sabha consisted of all persons whose names were included in the electoral roll for the West Bengal Legislative Assembly.⁴⁴

Though the Act assigned certain duties and powers to the Gram Sabha, it was merely a recommending body. It had no administrative powers. Under the Act of 1957, the Gram Sabha could meet at least twice a year. Apart from this, the Adhyaksha of Gram Panchayat could convene extra ordinary general meetings of the Gram Sabha provided one fifth of the total members expressed their consent in writing to convene such a meeting.

The Adhyaksha acted as the President of the meeting. The meeting of the Gram Sabha would consider the annual budget and the annual report of the Gram Panchayat⁴⁵ and give directions to it for future guidance.⁴⁶ This body was empowered to enquire into the working and management of the Gram Panchayat.

The members of the Gram Sabha were to send nine to fifteen representatives from amongst themselves for the constitution of the Gram Panchayat.

These members of the Gram Panchayat, in their first meeting, had to elect one Adhyaksha and Upadhyaksha from amongst themselves.

Gram Sabhas in West Bengal failed to play their role as a General Council of the village and also to make Gram Panchayat responsible to themselves. The reason for their failure was that the Gram Panchayat did not convene the meeting of the Gram Sabha to avoid criticism. Since the meetings of the Gram Panchayat were not regularly held, the Gram Sabha did not find any opportunity to execute the development plans of the village.

3.2.2 Anchal Panchayat under the Act of 1957:

Originally, under the Act of 1957, Anchal-Panchayat consisted of the members to be elected by the Gram-Sabha situated within the jurisdiction of the Anchal Panchayat. But this system was amended in 1965. Every Anchal Panchayat consisted of two types of members - (1) Adhyaksha of all Gram Panchayats falling within the jurisdiction of the Anchal Panchayat; (2) members to

be elected by the members of the Gram Sabha, keeping in view that at least one member was elected for every 500 members of the Gram Sabha.⁴⁷

In this way an organic linkage was created between the two tiers - Gram Panchayat and Anchal Panchayat. The wishes of the Gram Panchayat were represented through the Adhyakshas in the meeting of the Anchal Panchayat. Moreover, the people's wishes also were represented by the members elected by the Gram Panchayat from the constituent Gram Sabha. Anchal Panchayats were to elect one Prodhan and Upa Prodhan from amongst themselves.

The important powers and functions enjoyed by the Anchal Panchayat under the Act of 1957 were the following :

- (1) Management of finance of Anchal Panchayat;
- (2) Collection of tax, fees, toll, etc.;
- (3) Controlling and guiding the Dafadars and Chowkidars of the area of the Anchal Panchayat,
- (4) Constitution and regulation of the Naya Panchayat,
- (5) Performing duties assigned by the State Government.⁴⁸

The Anchal Panchayat was empowered to constitute committees. The committees created certain problems and interfered in the powers and activities of the Anchal Panchayat. Prof. Ashok Mukhopadhyay pointed out that nearly 70 percent of about 300 Prodhans interviewed gave the impressions that they saw in the

committees a rival body usurping the power and initiative of Anchal Panchayat.⁴⁹

2.3 Anchalik Parishad under the Act of 1963 :

As per the recommendations of the Balvantray Mehta Study Team and with the passing of the West Bengal Zilla Parishad Act, 1963, the Government of West Bengal constituted one Anchalik Parishad at each block level.

It was a corporate body which had its own duties and responsibilities.

Anchalik Parishad consisted of the following members :

- (1) All the Prodhans of Anchal Panchayat within the area of the block.
- (2) One Adhyaksha elected by the Adhyakshas of constituent Gram Panchayat.
- (3) The members of Parliament or the members of State Legislative Assembly and the members of the State Legislative Council, excluding the ministers, within the territorial limits of the block.
- (4) Two women and two persons of the locality belonging to the backward communities to be appointed by the State Government.
- (5) Two persons within the territorial limits of the block

having knowledge of, or experience in social work to be co-opted by the members of the Anchalik Parishad.⁵⁰

The B.D.O was an associate member of the Anchalik Parishad. The President and the Vice-President were elected by the members of the Anchalik Parishad in their first meeting. They were elected for four years.⁵¹

The members of the Anchalik Parishad were required to meet once in three months and the decisions on any issue had to be made by a majority support. The B.D.O was the executive officer of the Anchalik Parishad.

The primary duty of this body was to act as a coordinating agency for implementing plans and programmes of the Anchal Panchayat at the block level. It had also the power to undertake certain projects and offer financial help for the same, for example, the projects relating to agriculture, livestock, cottage industries, cooperative movement, water supply, irrigation, public health, communication, primary adult education, social welfare and other welfare activities etc. and the implementation of projects assigned by the State Government or by any other authorities.

Besides financial inadequacy, there were certain other difficulties which hindered the activities of the body. The main difficulties faced by this body related to the problem of relationship-pattern between the officials and the non-officials.

In a study conducted by Prof. Ashok Mukhopadhyay, it was pointed out that the relative age difference of the young officials from the comparatively aged non-officials was the main reason for the unsatisfactory working of the Anchalik Parishad.⁵²

3.2.4 Zilla Parishad under the Act of 1963 :

According to this Act, district was the administrative unit of Local Self Government. Here administrative control was established from the top.⁵³ For all these reasons mentioned above, the West Bengal Zilla Parishad Act, 1963 superseded the Act of 1885. Under the Act of 1963, the Zilla Parishad consisted of both the members and the associated members. Other than the associated members, the Zilla Parishad consisted of the following members :

- (1) Presidents of the constituent Anchalik Parishads of the district, ex-officio.
- (2) Two Adhyakshas.
- (3) M.Ps, M.L.As and M.L.Cs excluding the Ministers elected from the district or residing in the district.
- (4) Chairman of the Municipality or Mayor of a Municipal Corporation in the district.
- (5) President of the School Board, ex-officio.

- (6) Two women residing in the district to be appointed by the State Government provided women had not been represented.⁵⁴

The Zilla Parishad was to elect one Chairman and one Vice-Chairman from amongst the members in its first meeting.

The Zilla Parishad acted as a coordinating machinery between the other tiers. One Executive Officer and one Secretary, both from the category of West Bengal Civil Service, were appointed by the State Government to execute the decisions of the Zilla Parishad. Apart from this, at each Zilla Parishad, there was one District Engineer, one Medical Officer, Higher Technical Staff, etc.

The important functions of the Zilla Parishad were to integrate and coordinate the development plans and programme prepared by the Anchalik Parishad. The Chairman was empowered to examine the records of the Parishad.

Since, under this Act, there was possibility of inducting so many members to be nominated by the State Government in the self-governing bodies, it facilitated the interference by the state in local affairs.

2.5 Gram Panchayats Under the Act of 1973 :

Gram Panchayats, under the Act of 1973, consist only of elected members. The number of elected members for each Gram

Panchayat varies between seven and twenty five.⁵⁵ The Gram Panchayat in its first meeting elects one Prodhan and Upa Prodhan, from among the elected members, who have been made removable by a majority vote of the members of the Gram Panchayat at a meeting specifically convened for the purpose.⁵⁶ Every Gram Panchayat holds office for a period of four years and is required to meet at least once in a month.⁵⁷

On the official side of the Gram Panchayat, the Secretary is appointed by the State Government. The Director of Panchayat appoints Secretary on the basis of the recommendation of the Committee at the block level.⁵⁸ Rules relating to the recruitment, terms of service, salary, allowances and the age of retirement of the Secretary of the Gram Panchayat are determined by the West Bengal Government.⁵⁹ The Gram Panchayats, if they require, may appoint some officers and staff with the prior approval of the State Government.⁶⁰ Again, the State Government may send or depute some officers and staff to act under the Gram Panchayat.⁶¹

Moreover, there is one Job Assistant in each Gram Panchayat. The Prodhan of the Gram Panchayat appoints him on the basis of the recommendation of the Committee at the village level. Rules relating to recruitment, salary, allowances and other conditions of service of the Job Assistant are the same as those of the Secretary of the Gram Panchayat. The main function of the Job Assistant is to assist in implementing plans and policies of the Gram Panchayat.

Like other Government employees, the Secretary of the Gram Panchayat is a whole time employee . He enjoys casual leave and other leave facilities. His casual leave is granted by the Prodhan, but the other leaves are granted by the District Panchayat Officer. Although he enjoys these facilities, he is not treated as a government employee.

The Secretary remains responsible for his acts to the Gram Panchayat through the Prodhan. If the Secretary fails to carry out the decision of the Gram Panchayat, the Prodhan may complain to the District Panchayat Officer for taking disciplinary action against the Secretary. The Prodhan may also appeal to the District Magistrate against the action taken by the District Panchayat Officer. The decision of the District Magistrate is final in this regard. This kind of administrative arrangement may arouse thinking in the minds of the Secretary that D.P.O is his boss. Moreover, the Secretary will try to ignore the Prodhan.

To fulfil the needs and wishes of the people at the rural level, the expansion of the idea of social justice and the enhancement of administrative areas increased the activities at the three levels of the Panchayati Raj institutions in West Bengal. The widest range of duties and powers are entrusted with the Gram Panchayats under the 1973 Act, which can be classified under three heads - Obligatory, Discretionary and Assigned. Obligatory duties are mainly related to civic and

municipal functions of a routine nature. Gram Panchayats are obliged to perform those duties under the law. On the other hand, the discretionary duties are those which they perform at their own discretion when the situation so demands. Assigned duties are those which are assigned to them by the State Governments for execution of developmental programmes with full financial assistance.⁶²

The important obligatory duties are laid down in Section 19 of the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973. These are the following :

Sanitation, conservancy and drainage, and the prevention of public nuisances;

curative and preventive measures in respect of malaria, smallpox, cholera or any other epidemic;

supply of drinking water and the cleansing and disinfecting the source of supply and storage of water;

the maintenance, repair and reconstruction of public tanks; common grazing grounds, burning ghats and public graveyards;

organising voluntary labour for community works and works for the improvement of its area;

the control and administration of the Gram Panchayat Fund, the imposition, assessment and collection of the tax - rates or fees;

and the protection and repair of buildings or other property vested in it.

Section 21 has laid down the following discretionary duties :

maintenance of lighting of public streets;

beautification of such streets;

sinking of wells, and excavation of ponds and tanks;

introduction and promotion of cooperative farming, cooperative stores, and other cooperative enterprises;

construction and regulation of markets; fairs and local exhibitions of produce of home industries and local handicrafts;

assistance to agriculturists in the matter of obtaining State-loan and its distribution and repayment;

promotion and encouragement of cottage industries;

regulation of the production and disposal of foodstuffs and other commodities;

establishment and maintenance of libraries and reading rooms;

organisation and establishment of clubs and other recreational centres;

maintenance of records relating to population census, crop census, cattle census and census of unemployed persons and of other statistics;

fire assistance;

burglary and dacoity prevention;

any other local work or service of public utility which is likely to promote the health, comfort, convenience, or material prosperity of the people.

Section - 20 deals with the assigned functions which are listed below.

primary, social, technical or vocational education;

rural dispensaries, health centres and child welfare centres;

irrigation;

Grow-More-Food Campaign;

care of the infirm and the destitute;

rehabilitation of displaced persons;

bringing of waste land into cultivation;

promotion of plantations;

cooperative management of land and other resources of the village;

implementation of land reform measures in the area;

field publicity for developmental work and welfare measures;

3.2.6 Panchayat Samitis under the 1973 Act :

Panchayat Samitis under the Act of 1973 consist of the following categories of members :

- (1) all the Prodhans of the Gram Panchayats within the area of the Block;
- (2) all the elected members of each Panchayat Samiti;
- (3) all the M.L.As, M.Ps (both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha), excluding the Ministers within the Block area.⁶³

The Samiti in its first meeting elects one Sabhapati and Sahakari Sabhapati from amongst the members. Panchayat Samiti is required to meet at least once in three months.⁶⁴ Block Development Officer is the ex-officio Executive Officer of the Panchayat Samiti. Extension Officer, Panchayats, is the Secretary of the Panchayat Samiti.⁶⁵

The Block Development Officer may be recalled by the State Government if a resolution for his removal is passed by at least "two thirds of the total members" of the Anchalik Parishad : in the proposed Panchayat Samiti such a resolution would require "a majority of the total members". The Executive Officer

exercises general powers of control over all officers and employees of the Panchayat Samiti. He may award punishment and recommend the dismissal, removal or reduction in rank of an officer or employee drawing a monthly salary of Rs. 200/-⁶⁶. Panchayat Samiti is empowered to punish the officers and employees drawing a monthly salary of Rs. 200/- or more. An appeal may lie to the Divisional Commissioner against an order of punishment by the Panchayat Samiti.⁶⁷

The scope of activities of the Panchayat Samiti is widened to such an extent that it is not possible for B.D.Os alone to perform the duties of the Executive Officer of the Panchayat Samiti, Inspector of Gram Panchayats and Chief Executive Officer of the Block simultaneously. To lessen down the burden of the B.D.O one Joint B.D.O is appointed to each block.

Besides this, Extension Officer of Panchayats acts under the direct control of B.D.O. He has been made responsible for his activities to the Panchayat Samiti. He is the Secretary of the Artho O Sanstha Sthayee Samiti of the Panchayat Samiti. He has to visit different Gram Panchayats and instruct the Prodhans on how to carry on their affairs. He also acts as the auditor of the Gram Panchayats. The most important duty of the Extension Officer for Panchayats is to assist the B.D.O in performing his duties.

The Panchayat Samiti with the prior approval of the State

Government may constitute different 'Standing Committees' for the proper functioning of the Samiti. Presently the Panchayat Samiti has the following Standing Committees :

- (1) Artho O Sanstha Sthayee Samiti,
- (2) Janasasthya Sthayee Samiti,
- (3) Purta Karya Sthayee Samiti,
- (4) Krishi Sech O Samabaya Sthayee Samiti,
- (5) Siksha Sthayee Samiti,
- (6) Khudra Silpa, Tran O Janakalyan Sthayee Samiti,
- (7) Unnayan, Parikalpana O Bhumi Sanskar Sthayee Samiti,
- (8) Matsya O Posupalan Sthayee Samiti and
- (9) Khadya O Sarabaraha Sthayee Samiti.

The Sthayee Samitis exercise and perform those powers which are assigned to them, by the Panchayat Samiti. The number of members in each Sthayee Samiti varies from four to eight. Sabhapati is the ex-officio member of all Sthayee Samitis. The Panchayat Samiti elects a minimum of three and a maximum of five members from themselves. The State Government may appoint not more than three officers in each Sthayee Samiti. These officers are not entitled to cast vote and cannot be elected as Chairman of the Sthayee Samiti. The members of each Sthayee Samiti elect one Chairman from amongst themselves. But the Sabhapati becomes the Chairman, ex-officio, of the Artho O Sanstha Sthayee Samiti and the Extension Officer for Panchayat its Secretary, ex-officio.⁶⁸

3.2.7 Functions of the Panchayat Samiti under the 1973 Act :

The main functions of the Panchayat Samiti are to coordinate and integrate the activities of the constituent Gram Panchayats. The Samiti has also the general powers of supervision over the activities of the constituent Gram Panchayats and also to examine and approve the annual budgets of the same bodies.⁶⁹

The Panchayat Samiti can -

(I) undertake any schemes or adopt measures including the giving of financial assistance relating to the development of agriculture, livestock, cottage industries, cooperative movement, rural credit, water supply, irrigation, public health and sanitation;⁷⁰

(II) undertake management of any institution or organisation entrusted to it by the State Government or any other authority.

The Panchayat Samitis coordinate and integrate development plans and schemes prepared by Gram Panchayats in the Blocks, if and when necessary.⁷¹

The State Government may place any road, bridge, ferry, channel, buildings or other property under the control of the Panchayat Samiti.⁷²

The Panchayat Samiti may also transfer to the State Government or to the Zilla Parishad any road or part of a road

or any other property which is under its control.⁷³

The Panchayat Samiti may take over the maintenance and control of any road, bridge, tank, ghat, channel or drain belonging to a private owner or any other authority.⁷⁴

3.2.8 Zilla Parishad under the 1973 Act :

According to this Act, the Zilla Parishad consists of the following members :

- (1) Sabhapatis of the Panchayat Samitis within the district as ex-officio members.
- (2) All the elected members of the Zilla Parishad.
- (3) M.Ps and M.L.As excluding the Ministers within the district.
- (4) Members of the Council of States excluding the Ministers within the area of the district.⁷⁵

The Zilla Parishad is headed by the Sabhadhipati and the Sahakari Sabhadhipati. District Magistrate is the Executive Officer of the Zilla Parishad. One Secretary from the category of West Bengal Civil Service is appointed by the State Government for each Zilla Parishad.

The Executive Officer exercises general powers of control and supervision over the officers and other employees of the Parishad. He acts as a coordinator among the Parishad, its

committees and other officers of the district administration. He makes all the correspondence of the Parishad with the State Government. He keeps all the records and accounts of the Parishad in his custody. He keeps Sabhadhipati aware of the different developmental activities of the Parishad. He is obliged to participate in the meeting of the Zilla Parishad. He remains responsible for executing the policies of the Zilla Parishad. Without his signature, no money can be spent from the fund of the Zilla Parishad.

The main function of the Secretary of the Zilla Parishad is to assist the Executive Officer in discharging his duties.

Like the Panchayat Samiti, the Zilla Parishad has nine Standing Committees. The Zilla Parishad may constitute more committees with the prior approval of the State Government. The structure and composition of each Sthayee Samiti is the same as those of the Panchayat Samiti. The Sthayee Samitis perform such functions as are assigned to them by the Parishad or by the State Government.

3.2.9 Functions of the Zilla Parishad under the 1973 Act :

The Zilla Parishad performs certain duties and functions like the Panchayat Samiti. The Zilla Parishad may -

- (1) undertake any schemes or offer financial assistance for

the development of agriculture, livestock, industries, co-operative movement, rural credit, water supply, irrigation, public health and sanitation, primary, secondary and adult education etc.

- (II) Undertake execution of any scheme, performance of any act, or management of any institution or organisation entrusted to it by the State Government or any other authority.
- (III) Manage or maintain any work of public utility or any institution.
- (IV) Make grants in aid of any school, public institution, or public welfare organisation within the district.
- (V) Examine and sanction the budget estimate of the Panchayat Samiti.
- (VI) Adopt measures for the relief of distress.
- (VII) The State Government may, with the consent of the Zilla Parishad, place any road, bridge, ferry, channel, building or any other property under the control and management of the Zilla Parishad.
- (VIII) May take over the maintenance and control of any road, bridge, tank, ghat, well, channel or drain of a private owner or any other authority on specified agreements.

(IX) May divert, discontinue or close temporarily any road, which is under its control and management or is vested in it, and may, with the approval of the State Government, close any such road permanently.⁷⁶

The Zilla Parishad has general powers of supervision over the activities of the constituent Panchayat Samitis and the Gram Panchayats. Gram Panchayats and Panchayat Samitis are obliged to carry out developmental policies and programmes of the Zilla Parishad.

From the above discussion, it follows that all the members at each tier contest the election with party symbols and are elected directly by the voters whose names are on the electoral roll of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly. Now the philosophy of democratic ideals has been achieved at the three levels of Panchayati Raj institutions in West Bengal.

The important feature of the 1973 Act is that two seats for women and the other two seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are reserved in each Panchayati Raj institution. The similar provision had also been made in the Anchalik Parishad and the Zilla Parishad under the Zilla Parishad Act, 1963. But there was no such provision under the Panchayat Act, 1957. The power to nominate two representatives each from women and Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe category, provided they are not directly elected at each of the three levels of the Panchayati

Raj institution, is reserved in the hands of the Panchayat.

The next important feature of this Act is that it has established a linkage between the national interest and the local interest. The Pradhan's ex-officio membership in the Panchayat Samiti and the Sabhapati's ex-officio membership in the Zilla Parishad make the Panchayat Raj institutions structurally integrated. Moreover, an attempt has been made to achieve coordination between actions and programmes followed at the village-level and at the district level. On the other hand, the M.Ps and the M.L.As are closely associated with the Panchayati Raj structure to give priority to the rural development policies to be worked out both by the Central and the State Governments.

Unlike the Acts of 1957 and 1963, under the 1973 Act cooperatives have been kept separate from the Panchayati Raj institutions in West Bengal, although cooperative movement has an important role in the rural economy in India. Maharashtra, for example, has found the cooperatives important and provided for such representation in the Panchayat.

The most important feature of this Act is that there is no provision of Gram Sabha, although there was a reference to such a body in the 1957 Act. The reason for excluding the Gram Sabha from the present Act may be that it may not be possible to discuss the problems of the local area with a large number of people in the meeting of the Gram Sabha. An important Government

Order can be cited in this connection. The Department of Panchayat pointed out in the Government Order that the Panchayat institutions must intimate the people the amount of rupees they received for performing a specific job and also the total amount of money allotted to persons. Moreover, the Panchayats will have to make the people aware of their developmental activities and consult with the people.⁷⁷

The State Government controls the Panchayati Raj institutions through the Directorate of Panchayats and the Secretary to the Department of Community Development and Panchayat. The Directorate of Panchayats collects facts relating to panchayat and submits the report to the Department of Panchayat, and in this way, helps the Department to formulate policies. The Director of Panchayats is recruited from the category of Senior Indian Administrative Service Cadre. He is assisted by two Joint Directors and three Assistant Directors. There is one State Panchayat Officer to conduct the election of the Panchayat. To assist the District Magistrate and Divisional Commissioner in implementing the Panchayat Act and ^{the} Zilla Parishad Acts, three Regional Assistant Directors of Panchayat are posted at Calcutta, Chinsura and Jalpaiguri for the Presidency, Burdwan and Jalpaiguri Divisions. At the district level, the District Panchayat Officer is appointed to keep a close watch on the workings of the Gram Panchayats. At the block level, the Extension Officer for Panchayats acts under the control of the B.D.O.

The foregoing discussion reveals that in the Panchayat Administration there are two sets of actors - Government Officials and the elected representatives. Earlier, the Government Officials played the main role in the matter of policy formulation and its implementation. Now the elected representatives, in the three tier level of Panchayati Raj institutions, formulate policies.

STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION OF THREE-TIER-PANCHAYATI RAJ
INSTITUTIONS ARE INDICATED IN THE DIAGRAM BELOW.

GRAM PANCHAYAT

Elected and Nominated Members

PRODHAN

UPA-PRODHAN

SECRETARY AND OTHER STAFF.

**ANCHAL PANCHAYAT/
PANCHAYAT SAMITI**

Elected, Ex-Officio and Nominated Members.

Sthayee Samitis :

1. Artho O Sanstha
2. Jana Sasthya
3. Purta Karya
4. Krishi Sech O Samabaya
5. Siksha
6. Khudra Silpa Tran O Janakalyan
7. Unnayan Parikalpana O Bhumi Sanskar
8. Matsya O Pasupalan
9. Khadya O Sarabaraha

Sabhapati

Sahakari Sabhapati

Executive Officer

(B. D. O. as an ex-officio)

Secretary

(E. O. P. as an ex-officio)

Other Departments

ZILLA PARISHAD

Elected, Ex Officio and Nominated Members

Sthayee Samitis :

1. Artho O Sanstha
2. Jana Sasthya
3. Purta Karya
4. Krishi Sech O Samabaya
5. Siksha
6. Khudra Silpa Tran O Janakalyan
7. Unnayan Parikalpana O Bhumi Sanskar
8. Matsya O Pasupalan
9. Khadya O Sarabaraha

Sabhadhipati

Sahakari Sabhadhipati

Executive Officer

(D. M. as an ex-officio)

Astt. Executive Officer

(Equivalent to D. M.s status)

Secretary

(Govt. Appointed)

Other Departments

DIAGRAM OF PANCHAYAT ADMINISTRATION IN WEST BENGAL

MINISTER FOR PANCHAYATS

Department of Panchayats

Secretary

Deputy Secretary

Assistant Secretary

Directorate of Panchayats

Director

Joint Director

Deputy Director

Regional Assistant Directors
(Divisional Level)

Assistant Director
(Hd. Or.)

District Panchayat Officer

Inspector of Panchayats
(B. D. O. as ex-officio)

Extension Officer for Panchayats

Gram Panchayat Secretary

NOTES & REFERENCES TO CHAPTER-III

1. R.S.Sharma, Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India, Delhi, 1962, p.122.
2. U.N.Ghosal, "Political Organisations - The Monarchical States", The Cultural Heritage of India, Vol.II, Calcutta Ramkrishna Mission, p.406.
3. The Cambridge History of India, Vol.VI, S.Chand & Chand & Co., March, 1958.
4. R.K.Mukherjee, Local Government in Ancient India, 2nd Edn., Delhi-1958, p.226.
5. R.S.Sharma, op.cit., p.122.
6. R.V.Jathar, Evolution of Panchayati Raj in India, Institute of Economic Research, Dharwar-4, p.9.
7. H.D.Malaviya, Village Panchayats in India, New Delhi, All India Congress Committee, 1956, p.139.
8. R.V.Jathar, op.cit., p.15.
9. Ibid., p.15.
10. Lord Ripon's Resolution, paras 12,13,14,17,18.
11. Report of the Royal Commission on Decentralisation, 1907, p.240.

The Report contains -

"It is most desirable to constitute and develop village-panchayats for the administration of certain local

affairs within the villages. This system must, however, be gradually and cautiously worked. The headman of the village, should be ex-officio chairman of the Panchayat; other members should be obtained by a system of informal election by the villagers. The Panchayat should be a small body of about five members".

12. B.B.Misra, District Administration and Rural Development - Policy Objectives and Administrative Change in Historical Perspective, Oxford University Press, 1983, p.210.
13. Jagadish P.Sharma and Mirian Sharma, "The Sarvodaya Movement and Social Change" in Jagadish P.Sharma ed., Individuals and Ideas in Modern India, Firma K.L.M. Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta, 1982, p.198. Adi H.Doctor in his book on Sarvodaya states "In more precise terms, it is the art and science of mobilising the physical, economic and spiritual resources at the disposal of society in the service of the general good".
14. Ibid., p.200.
15. Ibid., p.205.
16. M.Venkatarangaiya and M.Pattabhiram (ed.), Local Govern in India Select Readings, Allied Publishers, Calcutta, 1969, p.250. In this book Dr. Ambedkar states, "Village is sink of localism a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism".
17. Shiviah et al, Panchayati Raj - An Analytical Survey, National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad, 1977, p.52.
18. Ibid., p.52.

19. M.Venkatarangaiya et al, op.cit., p.250.
20. Ibid., p.251.
21. Ibid., pp.251,252,253.
22. Cited in R.V.Jathar,op.cit., p.43.
23. Shiviah et al, op.cit., p.73.
24. "As far as the role of the official machinery was concerned, the First Plan quoted Krishnamachari report approvingly to the effect that the energies of the entire administrative machinery of the states and the best non-official leadership should be directed to realising the Plan objectives by awakening 'mass enthusiasm' and enlisting the active interest and support of the rural people in improving their own condition". About 'extension' the First Plan had this to say :

"Extension is a continuous process designed to make the rural people aware of their problems, and indicating to them ways and means by which they can solve them. It thus involves not only education of the rural people in determining their problems and the methods of solving them, but also inspiring them towards positive action in doing so."

24. Cited in Shiviah et al, Ibid., p.68.
25. Douglas Ensminger, Rural India in Transition, New Delhi, All India Panchayat Parishad, 1972, p.25.
26. S.Bhatnagar, Rural Local Government in India, Light and Life publishers, New Delhi, 1978, p.27.

27. B.B.Misra, op.cit., p.289.
28. Shiviah et al, op.cit., p.79. "It is significant that Krishnamachari described both C.D.Projects and N.E.S as 'movements', indicating an orientation towards a massive organisational effort involving mobilisation of people". "The whole object of community development programme is to raise the general standard of living of the average man - an object which in the Indian context is quite a revolutionary thing".
29. Ibid., p.78.
30. A.K.Mukhopadhyay, Panchayat Administration in West Bengal, World press, Calcutta, 2nd edn., 1980, p.15.
The First Five Year Plan observed : "The Constitution has provided for democratic institutions at the Centre and in the States, but so long as Local self-governing institutions are not conceived as parts of the same organic constitutional and administrative framework, the structure of democratic government will remain incomplete".

"In practice, few panchayats discharge all the functions entrusted to them, and the activities of many of them suffer from local faction, lack of resources and want of guidance. Panchayats have helped social awakening, but they have not had the same success in raising the level of village life or in fostering self-help in the improvement of village-conditions.
31. Ibid., p.15.
32. Shiviah et al., op.cit., p.1.
33. Report of the Study of Community Projects and National Extension Service, Committee on Plan Projects, Government of India, November, 1957, Vol.I, Sec.2, p.23.

34. A.K.Mukhopadhyay, op.cit., p.17.
35. Ibid., p.17.
36. S.N.Ray : "The New Panchayati Raj Experiment in West Bengal", in Peter. H.Merkl (ed.), New Local Centres in Centralised States, University Press of America, 1985, p.302.
37. Shiviah, Panchayati Raj in Rural Development in India - Some Facets, NIRD.
38. Report of the Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions, August, 1978, New Delhi, Paras-II. 1, II.40.1, IV.4.9, IV.6.1, IV.9.1, IV.10, IV.15, IV.14, V.6.1, VI.1, VI.9.2, VI.10, VIII.2.1, VIII.5.2, IX.12.2, IX.5.4, X.3, X.4, XI.2, XI.3.
39. Sec III, Village Chowkidari Act., 1870.
40. Resolution on Local Self Govt., May 18, 1882, paras 5,12, 13,14,17,18.

Paragraph 5 reads as follows : 'It is not primarily with a view to improvement in administration that this measure is put forward and supported. It is chiefly designed as an instrument of political and popular education'.

Paragraph 6 goes on : "As education advances there is rapidly growing up all over the country an intelligent class of public spirited men who it is not only bad policy but sheer waste of power to fail to utilise".
41. N.C.Roy, Rural Self Govt. in Bengal, University of Calcutta, 1936, p.61.
42. Report of the Commission on Decentralisation, 1907, p.240.

43. N.C.Roy, op.cit., p.162.
44. West Bengal Panchayat Act., 1957, sec.7.
45. West Bengal Panchayat Rules, 1958, Rule.137.
46. U.P.Panchayati Raj Act, 1947, Sec.41(1)(2).
47. West Bengal Panchayat Act., 1957, Sec.26(1).
48. Ibid., Sec. 26(1).
49. Ashok Mukhopadhyay, Panchayat Administration in West Bengal,
World Press, Calcutta, 1978, p.63.
50. West Bengal Zilla Parishad Act, 1963, Sec.52.
51. Ibid., Sec.57.
52. Ashok Mukhopadhyay, op.cit., p.67.
53. District Administration Report, 1912-13, Govt. of Bengal,
p.83.
54. West Bengal Zilla Parishad Act., 1963.
55. West Bengal Panchayat Act., 1973.
56. Ibid., Sec.11.
57. Ibid., Sec.16.
58. Ibid., Sec.35.
59. Ibid., Sec.35(3); West Bengal Panchayat (Gram Panchayat
Administration) Rules, 1981, Rules 30-35.
60. Ibid., Sec.36(1).
61. Ibid., Sec.36(2).

62. S.N.Ray, "The New Panchayati Raj Experiment in West Bengal", in Peter.H.Merkl : New Local Centres in Centralised States, University Press of America, 1985, 308.
63. West Bengal Panchayat Act., 1973, Sec.94(2).
64. Ibid., Sec.98(1)
65. Ibid., Sec.119(1), (1A).
66. Ibid., Sec.121(1), (2).
67. Ibid., Sec.122(2).
68. Ibid., Sec.125(1), (2), (3).
69. Ibid., Sec.109(1) (e)(f).
70. Ibid., Sec.109(1) (f).

A Panchayat Samiti shall have the power to -
(I) undertake schemes or adopt measures, including the giving of financial assistance relating to the development of agriculture, livestock, cottage industries, cooperative movement, rural credit, water supply, irrigation, public health and sanitation including establishment of dispensaries and hospitals, communication, primary or adult education including welfare of students, social welfare and other objects of general public utility.

71. Ibid., Sec.109(II) (IV) (E).

Undertake execution of any scheme, performance of any act or organisation entrusted to it by the State Government or any other authority.

72. Ibid., Sec.110.
73. Ibid., Sec.111.
74. Ibid., Sec.112.
75. Ibid., Sec.140.
76. Ibid., Sec.153(I)(II)(III)(IV)(V)(VI) (c) (d) (e) (f),
155, 157, 158.
77. G.O.No. 7800-Panch
1P-29/80 dt. 10th April, 1980, Deptt. of
Panchayats and C.D.