



Mahatma Gandhi and Panchayat Raj system

Anita

Abstract: The vehicle that was most ideal to initiate both political and economic democracy at the grassroots level was the Panchayat Raj system. Mahatma Gandhi's tours all across the country reinforced his convictions that India would benefit if the villages were governed by Village Panchayats based on the principal of "simple living and high thinking". These were village republics which were self-contained and self-reliant and having all that people want. These were the institutions where minimum standard of living could be accorded to all human beings. An individual had maximum freedom and opportunity to develop his personality to the greatest extent. In these republics there would be a diminution of the state and the roots of democracy deepened. According to him centralization cannot be sustained as a system without adequate force. The affairs are to be managed by Panchayats consisting of five persons elected annually. Gandhi aimed at the individual the centre of the local administration. People are expected to take personal interest and turn up in large numbers at the meeting to deliberate problems of common interest such as village industries, agricultural production, obligation and planning. In this research article the researcher will try to conclude the dream of Mahatma Gandhi in the form of Panchayati Raj institution. Secondary data will be used to conclude the research work. The working of Panchayati Raj and the composition will be discussed in this research article.

ISSN : 2348-5612 © URR



9 770234 856124

Key words: Panchayat Raj system, Mahatma Gandhi's, Democracy, Decentralization, Local government.

Introduction: Democracy is considered as one of the best form of government because it ensures liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, equality of status and opportunity, fraternity as well as the right to participate in political decision making. Participation and control of governance by the people of the country is the essence of democracy.

Panchayati Raj Institutions are such an important political innovation of India, for the establishment of grassroots democracy and to ensure the greater people's participations in political system of the country. Panchayati Raj Institutions, the grass-root units of local self-government have been considered as an instrument of socio-economic transformation in rural India. Involvement of people at the grass-roots level is the most important means of bringing about socio-economic development. Panchayati Raj is identified as such an instrumental expression of democratic decentralization in India. Decentralization of power to the Panchayat is seen as a means of empowering people and involving them in decision-making process. Local governments being closer to the people can be more responsive to local needs and can make better use of resources. The democratic system in a country can be ensured only if there is mass participation in the governance. Therefore, the system of democratic decentralization popularly known as Panchayati Raj in India which is considered as an instrument to ensure democracy and socio-economic transformation in society. Panchayati Raj system is an age-old indigenous Indian politico-administrative institution. It owes its origin to the different traditional patterns of governance, in the phase of history in many parts of India. The term „panchayati Raj“ is relatively new, having originated during the British administration. „Raj „literary means „governance“ or government“.

Thus, panchayati Raj is a system of local rural government in India. Conceptually, panchayat can be described as an assembly of the village people or their representatives and the term “panchayat” is a Hindi word, which literally means assembly (ayat) of five (panch) wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the local community.

Mahatma Gandhi equated panchayati with „village republic“. He explained his concept of village panchayat thus, “...the government of the village will be conducted by the panchayat of five persons annually elected by