

SOME SUCCESSFUL PANCHAYATS CASE STUDIES - 1960

1. The Study

Panchayats and co-operatives were the most important institutions on which the success of the new experiments in democratic decentralization was largely dependent. Keeping in view the role of these institutions in the implementation of development programmes, the PEO decided to undertake detailed examination of a few successful Panchayats/Co-operatives mainly to find out the factors responsible for their success. The result of these case studies were presented in two separate reports. The present report related to study of nine successful Panchayats. Seven co-operative societies located in different parts of the country were studied, the similar details thereof were presented under P.E.O. study no. 35.

The institutions were selected on the basis of some broad criteria. These were that they should have been in existence for a reasonably long period of time, shown a capacity to increase their revenue resources, carried out municipal functions and built-up assets should have been able to evolve popular participation and by and large have functioned democratically.

2. Objectives

To discover the factors responsible for the success of these panchayats.

3. Sample Size/Criteria for Selection of Sample

Out of the nine panchayats studied, four among the best panchayats in the country were selected with the help of Ministry of Community Development and Cooperation and the State Governments. The selection of these four panchayats was made in three stages viz., the State, the district and the institution. At every stage, the selection was purposive. The states were first chosen in consultation with the Ministry of Community Development and Cooperation. Thereafter, the Regional Evaluation Officers of PEO contacted the heads of the Departments of panchayats and in consultation with them selected for each state a district where panchayats performed well. From within the selected districts, four panchayats were picked up in consultation with district officers. The

additional six panchayats were selected in a different manner. These were picked up on the basis of the data supplied by the field officers showing better performance than others. Out of the details collected for 10 panchayats, one was dropped as enough data were not collected. Finally nine panchayats were taken up for the study which more or less satisfied the tests used for selecting the successful Panchayats. Out of the nine panchayats two were in Bihar, two in Madhya Pradesh and one each in U.P. Bombay, Andhra Pradesh, Madras and Mysore.

4. Reference Period

The study was conducted in the year 1959 and the data were collected for the years 1955-56 to 1958-59.

5. Main Findings

Most of the Panchayats had good records in respect of Municipal functions e.g. maintenance and lighting of streets, primary education, sanitation, supply of drinking water, etc. Most of them had added,,, directly or indirectly, to the assets of the village Community in the shape of roads, culverts, drinking water wells, tanks, Panchayat Ghars, School houses etc.

2. The records of panchayats were much less satisfactory. As regards their finances they used their powers of taxation scantily; only a few of the taxes which were within their power were actually imposed and the dues from fewer still were collected. Some panches felt that they should have the right to operate the funds freely in the interest of timely execution of village plans.

3. In executing works of common benefit the panchayat were dependent heavily on grants from the state and voluntary Contributions by the people. Some panchayats had income-yielding assets; while others were exploiting fairs and markets to add to their income.

4. In most of the panchayats under study, elections had been uncontested and saved the Community from election tensions. This' traditional technique promoted harmony in the rural society.

5. In only one or two panchayats the villagers took interest in the day-to-day work of the panchayat. In others, they showed hardly any interest and this was so even in areas where according to law the panchayat had to inform the Gaon Sabha once or twice a year of its achievement, and the state of its finances.

6. Most of the selected panchayats. conducted their business in a manner which suggested that they were aware of their responsibility to the village community. The meetings were held regularly; they were generally speaking, well attended and the proceedings were **conducted** according to norm. In some panchayats important issues were put up formally, opposing views presented and decisions were arrived at after discussion.

7. In some areas the village panchayat retained the judicial function; in others the function had been transferred to especially created statutory bodies - Naya panchayats, to save the judicial process from being influenced by factions in the village. The villagers, however, did not seem to have accepted whole heartedly or taken kindly to this reform.

8. The panchayats studied were located in **different** parts of India. But they all possessed certain features in common which seemed to have been responsible for their success. In the first place, most of these panchayat villages were favourably situated in respect of Communication and contact with towns. Good roads & frequent bus service brought the outside world nearer to them. In some cases, the villages were marketing centres or places of pilgrimage. These provided the people plenty of occasions to deal with the urban people which had a stimulating effect on the villages.

Secondly, most of the villages were relatively prosperous. They had more land under irrigation and grew more commercial crops. A number of villagers were well-to-do as they were employed in trade & commerce. The relative prosperity of the villages had greatly helped the panchayats to raise money which helped them in providing some municipal amenities.

Thirdly, most of the villages had been very lucky in respect of leadership. In fact, the success of most panchayats was greatly dependent on the ability of the villagers and village leaders.

9. The panchayat leaders had also shown interest in other organisations inside and outside the village e.g.. the cooperative society; Block Development Committees etc. They had, generally speaking, developed good relations with block and District Authorities. Indeed, with a heavy dependence upon government grants, the proper management of this relationship would appear to be essential to the success of the leaders and their panchayat.