

ISSN: 0974-2735

BIHAR JOURNAL OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

(A Bi-Annual Refereed Research Journal of IIPA Bihar Regional Branch, Patna)
(Place in UGC-CARE Reference List of Quality Journals, S.Sc.)

New Series
Vol. XIX, No. 1

Vol. XIX

No. 1

Jan.-June, 2022



(On the occasion of 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav', India @ 75th Year)

Editor
R.K. Verma

Indian Institute of Public Administration

Bihar Regional Branch, Patna

Indian Institute of Public Administration Bihar Regional Branch ,Patna

Executive Council

Chairman	:	Shri Vijoy Prakash, IAS (retd.)
Vice - Chairmen	:	Professor Jitendra Narayan Dr. Nihora Prasad Yadav Dr. Binod Kumar Jha
Secretary	:	Dr. Ravindra Kumar Verma
Treasurer	:	Dr. Archana Kumari
Joint Secretary	:	Dr. Dilip Kumar Dr. Rajesh Kumar
Executive Members	:	Shri Anand Vardhan Sinha, IAS (retd.) Sri Abdul Hamid Dr. Henna Tabassum Dr. Kavita Kumari

About the IIPA, Bihar Regional Branch, Patna

On the recommendation of Paul H. Appleby, the then Prime Minister Pt Jawahar Lal Nehru established the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) on March 29, 1954 with its HQ at IP Estate, Ring Road, New Delhi- 110 002 under the supervision of DoPT, Government of India. Its main aim is to equip the public servants with knowledge, skills and behaviour required for managing the tasks of governance. Bihar Regional Branch, commenced in the year 1961, is one of the 22 regional branches in India as part of the apex body of IIPA with an objective to undertake activities in furtherance of discipline of Public Administration and good governance. The Branch has five pronged activities like - research/evaluation studies, seminar / conferences / workshops etc., training / orientation / awareness programmes, collaboration with governmental & non-governmental agencies and publication of Journal, books, Monographs etc.

Website: www.iipabiharbranch.org

E-mails: iipabihar@gmail.com; bjpa2004@gmail.com

Mob No.: 7762882579, 9473431548, 9693781950

New Series

ISSN: 0974-2735

Vol. XIX, No. 1

Jan-June, 2022

BIHAR JOURNAL OF **PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

(A Bi-annual Refereed Research Journal of IIPA Bihar Regional Branch, Patna)
(Place in UGC-CARE Reference List of Quality Journals, Social Sciences)



(On the occasion of 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav', India @ 75th Year)

Editor

R.K. Verma

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Bihar Regional Branch

Vermas, Shiva Path, New Purendrapur, Patna 800 001

Editorial Board

Chief Editor

Professor S.P. Shahi

Editor

Dr. Ravindra Kumar Verma

Joint Editors

Dr Bakshi Amit Kumar Sinha
(CEP&PF, under GoB, Patna)

Dr Sangeeta Vishwanath (GWC, Guljarbagh, Patna)

Members

Prof. Sushma Yadav,

(Prof. of Pol. Sc., V.C., BPS Women Univ.,) Haryana and Member UGC)

Prof. Rash Bihari Prasad Singh

Shri Anand Vardhan Sinha, IAS (R)

(Former, Chairman, Board of Revenue, Govt. of Bihar)

Prof. Suresh Mishra

(Prof. IIPA, New Delhi)

Dr. Navanit Sinha

(Former Member EC, IIPA, New Delhi)

Dr. Ravi Kumar Sinha

Prof. of English & Principal, R.N. College, Hajipur)

Prof S.P. Singh

(Dean, social Sciences,

Prof. S.S. Patagundi

(Former HoD, Pol. Sc., Karnataka Univ.,
Dharwad, Karnatak)

Chankya National Law University, Patna)

Prof. Binoy Soren

Professor & Head,
Univ. Dept. of Pol. Sc., Patna University, Patna

Prof. Ram Ranbir Singh

Former Dean of the faculty of Social Sciences,
VKSU & Editor, Review of Politics)

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

INLAND	FIVE YEARS	TWO YEARS	SINGLE COPY
Institution	Rs 6500	Rs 3500	Rs 900
Individual	Rs 5000	Rs 3000	Rs 750
Students	Rs 4000	Rs 3000	Rs 750
Foreign (Except Nepal)			
Institutional	US \$ 200	US \$ 20	US \$ 10
Individual	US \$ 150	US \$ 15	US \$ 07

Correspondence for subscription and editorial should be made to the Editor Dr R K Verma, Shiva Path, New Purendrapur, Patna - 800 001. Contact - e-mails <iipabihar@gmail.com>, <bjpa2004@gmail.com>, Mob. Nos. 9473431548, 7762882579. Payments may be made through Bank DD/Cheque drawn in favour of **IIPA BIHAR REGIONAL BRANCH, payable at Patna or through RTGS / NEFT – Beneficiary : IIPA BIHAR REGIONAL BRANCH**

A/C No. **000234005002918** IFSC: **YESB0BSCB01** Bank: **Bihar State Cooperative Bank Ltd** Branch: **New Secretariat, Patna.**

Website<www.iipabiharbranch.org>

Note: Views expressed in articles/reviews/notes published in the Journal are the personal opinions of the respective authors; neither of IIPA, Bihar Regional Branch nor of the editors.

Contents

From the Desk of the Guest Editors	iii
Editorial	iv
1. E-governance Reforms in Road Transport Sector and Economic Growth in Bihar <i>Sanjay Kumar Agrawal</i>	1-15
2. Local Area Development Scheme and Panchayats in India: (Need for interface between the elected Panchayat representatives and MPs/MLAs) <i>D. Ravinder</i>	16-25
3. Assessment of Capacity Building Training Programmes in Bridging the Competency Gaps <i>Amitabh Ranjan, A M Agrawal & Sushmita Goswami</i>	26-38
4. Evolving Role of Strategic Communication in Hybrid Warfare: A Case for India's Civil-Military Interaction <i>Nishtha Kaushiki</i>	39-46
5. Expanding Social Audit to Development Programmes Beyond MGNREGA <i>Rajesh Kumar Sinha</i>	47-56
6. Policy of e-Governance and Bureaucracy in India <i>Munin Baruah</i>	57-69
7. Child Malnourishment in Bihar: A District Level Analysis <i>Ashi Rooth Stuart and Swastika Satyam</i>	70-82
8. The Policy of ICT Based Multi-learning at Secondary Level: An Evaluation of Unnayan Bihar Scheme <i>Ashutosh Prabhakar and Deepak Kumar</i>	83-90
9. Intellectual Property Rights and Laws in India: A Study in the Context of Pharmaceutical Products in India <i>Salim Javed and Majid Mahboob Khan</i>	91-102

10. **Construction of Caste as an Administrative Episteme —
A Case of Neglected Materiality** 103-113
Abhishek Juneja and Amir Mahmood
11. **Catalysing Cooperative Movement in India: Prospects of
Ministry of Cooperation** 114-121
Vineeth Thomas
12. **Social Relationship Among Rural Youth and Policy Prospects:
A Study of Balasore District, Odisha** 122-132
Avay Kumar Parida
13. **Understanding the Changing Notions of Centre-State
Financial Relations Under the GST regime** 133-141
Rinki Dahiya and Priya Dahiya
14. **Structure and Functions of Local Governance in Ancient India:
A Study of its Relevance** 142-156
Alaknanda Pravin Shringare, Prakash Desai, Seema Fernandes
15. **Democratic Backsliding of Public Administration in
Authoritarian Regimes: A Cross Country Analysis** 157-168
Ramarao Bonagani
16. **Participation for Rural Development: A Study of
Panchayati Raj with Special Reference to Bihar** 169-177
Iha Rashmi Verma
17. **Deciphering Digital Education in India During and
Beyond Pandemic: A Systems Analysis** 178-188
Jaya Kritika Ojha
18. **Effects of Divorce on Children: A Review of Socio-economic,
Legal and Policy Aspects** 189-198
Vani Bhushan
19. **Constitutional Reforms Act 2005 of UK: A Comparison
with Procedure of Appointment of Judges in India** 199-205
Suvesh Kumar and Manu Singh
20. **Law Making in India and U K: A Comparative Study of
Parliamentary Debates (A Case of Industrial Design Act)** 206-213
Vandana Singh
21. **Arresting Corruption in Indian Administration:
An Examination of Law to Punish Bribe Givers** 214-221
Babu. G

22. **Humanistic Approach to Development:
With Special Reference to Spiritual Technology of Jainism** 222-227
K K Naulakha
23. **Making Delivery of Public Services Effective and Efficient** 228-231
Mohinder Singh
24. **Neo Liberalism, Caste and Gender in Rural Bihar: An Analysis
Based on Web Series *Nirmal Pathak ki Wapsi*** 232-237
Anchit Pandey
25. **Book Review** 238-239
Shefali Roy
26. **बिहार में वर्तमान कृषि नीति: चुनौतियाँ एवं सम्भावनाएं** 240-250
चन्दन कुमार
27. **तालिबान शासित अफगानिस्तान के प्रति भारत के कुटनीतिक विकल्प** 251-258
शीला कुमारी
28. **शिक्षा नीति 2020 एवं आत्म निर्भर भारत: एक टिप्पणी** 259-265
सुकान्तिका वत्स



STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN ANCIENT INDIA: A STUDY OF ITS RELEVANCE

Alaknanda Pravin Shringare*, Prakash Desai, Seema Fernandes*****

Abstract

Although the local self-governance has emerged as the key to prosperity, development and good governance in the late 20th Century, yet its history dates back to ancient India. It can be safely hypothesized that the panchayats or local governments in ancient India were the independent republics, autonomous and self-sufficient and better entities than that of the present local governance. In view of the characteristics and performance of the present panchayati system, it becomes an urgent imperative to trace and explore about Panchayats of ancient period which may be of much relevance today. With this view in mind the present paper intends to analyse the nature, functions and organizational structure of local governments in ancient India that provided a good model of self-governance.

Keywords: Local Self-governance, Organisation, Structure, Brahmana, Varnasystem, Little Republics, Village Headman, Sabha, Ancient India

INTRODUCTION

Local governments are crucial for the governance of the country. Internationally, towards the end of 20th century and the beginning of 21st century, there has been a renewed interest in the idea of local governance as an important unit in the

* Dr. Alaknanda Pravin Shringare, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Goa University, Taleigao Plateau, Panji

** Prakash Desai, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Goa University, Taleigao Plateau, Panji

***Dr. Seema Fernandes, Assistant Director, Goa Institute of Public Administration and Rural Development (SIRD/ATI), Panji

broad concept of good governance. Local governments gained significance in the new governance process as essential units for better administration and effective implementation of public policies. They provide a medium through which people can directly participate in the decision-making process.

History shows that, the idea of local governance had evolved gradually in the West. The local governance comprised of two units, one for the city and other for the village. The journey of local governance began with the villages in India, where as in the West it was the cities which made the first claim for the self-government. 'In medieval England and France, for example, the cities obtained grants from the kings, that wholly or substantially freed them from the jurisdiction of national field agents, in England the sheriffs, in France the bailiffs and seneschals' (Fesler, 1965,541). In many countries, local governments are the creations of either central or state governments and in some cases they were also the creations of executive order (Shah and Shah, 2006, 1). In case of modern India, the local governance began with Lord Rippon's Resolution of 1882 and travelled through from three tier Panchayati Raj Institutions as per recommendations of Balwant Mehta to new arrangements under 73rd Constitutional Amendment. These institutions were aimed at realisation of Gandhi's dream of Gram Swaraj or vibrant grassroots democracy and making them effective instrument of rural development. Despite serious efforts, both these goals are not achieved to the desired level. In view of the situation, the present paper attempts to trace and underline the nature, organisation and structure of such bodies in ancient India and assess its relevance to the present times.

EVOLUTION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN ANCIENT INDIA

As observed by Bhatnagar (1932, 529) in the first nine *mandalas* of *Rigveda* there is no any direct or indirect reference to local government. He notes that *Gram* (village) was not a well-organised administrative unit in the early *Rigvedic* period, however, it was during the Brahmana period (1000 B.C. to 500 B.C.) that it was recognised as a distinct territorial administrative unit (Bhatnagar, 1932, 531-535). Tak (1973, .8) noted that the Ramayana and the Mahabharata had mentioned about two types of villages – Ghosh, which was small in size, and Gram which was large in size.

VILLAGE AS SELF-GOVERNING UNIT

It is observed by the scholarship (Sharma, 1996; Tak, 1973; Mookerji, 1958; Altekar, 1934; Thapar, 1984; 2013), that the village communities in ancient India were little republics, which were independent of central control and were self-governing. They had their own political, economic and social structure. The social and economic

structure in ancient India was seen in the form of a pyramid, with the king at the apex, and village communities at the base (Thapar, 2013, 7-8). Various village officers were appointed to meet the needs of people. They occupy hereditary position and derive fixed remuneration or land in lieu of their service. They also maintained their own small army to protect themselves against the invaders. This brings us to the point of analysis that while the local governments are the creations of either state or central government in the contemporary India, the village administration of ancient India functioned as a little republic, independent of central control.

A reference of village administration has been noted in the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Tak (1973, 8) stated:

In the Sabha Parva of Mahabharata, Muni Narada puts a number of questions to Dharam-Raj Yudhishtir. One of the questions is, 'Do the brave and wise Panchas of your nation work for the collection of funds and other allied activities of Panchayat and thus do they add to the general happiness?'

The question raised by Muni Narada signifies the important position held by the Panchayat in the ancient period. The large empires in the ancient India relied on the local governments which were already in existence and were more reliable and suitable for the purpose of effective governance. In the absence of modern means of communication and facilities, and practical impossibility of governing the vast territory without being dependent on the local administrative machineries, local governance gained significant position in the ancient period.

The description of the various functions of the village assembly of ancient India reveals that the village assembly enjoyed vast powers leaving very little space to the central government to interfere in the daily life of the people. Narada observed that central government could interfere in the administration of the local body, if their actions were contrary to one provided in the Vedas or caused waste of money or imply hostility to the king or led to accumulation of arms or their interest contradicted with the interest of the community (Mookerji, 1958, 246). The disputes between two villages were normally referred to the king. The commentary related to Narada explains the limitations on the powers of self-governing institutions, that although the local governments were self governing there were moral and religious limitations on its powers (Mookerji, 1958, 247). They were not supposed to act contrary to the interest of the central government.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The autonomous character of these local bodies was well-developed and supported with well-equipped administrative structures. The ancient Indian local governance gives a picture of a well-organised administrative structure which is much more advanced for its time. Village administration had certain common features, such as

village headman, accountant, village assembly and village council found in Northern and Southern parts of India but were called by different names. A description of village committees is also found in some of the works. The village was the smallest unit of local administration known as *grama* (Chopra et al., 1974, 71). A mention of popular assemblies and institutions like Sabha, Samiti and Vidatha is found in the Rig Veda (Bhattacharyya 1988, 32). A description of some of the important features of village administration is found in the Vedic literature, Arthshastra, Jataka stories and Buddhist writings (Mookerji, 1958; Tak, 1973; Altekar, 1934 and Sharma, 1996). Inscriptions always remained as an important source of information to learn about the village administration of ancient India.

Village Headman

The post of village headman and accountant were usually hereditary (Yerankar, 2004, 87). The village headman was known by different names such as *gramika*, *gramani* or *gramapala* (Chopra et al., 1974, 71). He was an important officer of the village and was represented on the council of *Ratnins* in the Vedic period (Bhat, 1954, 54). The village headman in ancient India was appointed by villagers but in the later period the post became hereditary and other village officials were made subordinate to central authority (Tak, 1973, 8). The administrative machinery during Rig Vedic period functioned under a tribal chief called *rajan* (Sharma, 2005, 110). The headman in the Buddhist period was known as 'Bhojak' who was frequently consulted in the local affairs but was not allowed to violate the public opinion (Tak, 1973, 9) and appears like a village king in the *Jatakas* (Bhat, 1954, 54). He was called by different names in different parts of the country. He was known by the name *Gramika* or *Grameyaka* in Northern India, *Mununda* in the Eastern Deccan, *Gramukuta* or *Pattakila* in Maharashtra, *Gaundain* Karnataka and *Mahattaka* or *Mahantaka* in Uttar Pradesh (Altekar, 1934, 226). His authority was substantially limited by the assemblies like the *sabha* and *samiti*, which discharged judicial and political functions (Jha, 2007, 47).

He was the leader of village military and therefore it was believed that he may have belonged to the Kshatriya caste (Yerankar, 2004, 87-88). Being the leader of village militia, the defence of the village was regarded as one of the important functions of the village headman. In the absence of timely help from the central government at the time of emergency attacks, the village equipped itself to be self-reliant in the matters of defence. Village headman belonging to Kshatriya community also finds a reference in Altekar (1934, 226) who writes that village headman was usually a non-Brahman and as a leader of village military he may have belonged to the Kshatriya caste. He protected his tribe, cattle, waged wars and offered prayer to Gods on behalf of the tribe. (Sharma, 2005, 111)

The important duties of the village headman as mentioned by Altekar (1934, 227-228) were, the defence of village, being in-charge of village militia and collection of government revenue. These duties prove that village headman was the most influential person, indispensable to both people and government.

Village Accountant and Other Village Officers

Yerankar (2004, 88-89) noted that the village accountant was responsible for maintaining the records of resolutions of village council and all the correspondence between district authorities and central government. The post of accountant was also hereditary and he in most cases enjoyed rent free land.

The important jobs assigned to the village accountant were 1) to keep record of rights and transfer of village land 2) to keep papers related to village dues and their fulfilments 3) to keep record of correspondence carried on with the district and central government and 4) to record the decision and resolution of village council (Yerankar, 2004, 88-97).

It was evident from the work of Mookerji (1958, 232) that village assembly was assisted by village secretariat consisting of persons responsible for maintenance of various land records, land transfers, revenue receipts and others. Accountants and arbitrators also frequently find a mention in the inscriptions. Mookerji (1958, 232) observes:

Accounts of land transfers and revenue receipts were kept by a special department called *Tinaikkalam*... The accountant of the office of rents, rates and taxes was called *Tinaikkanakkan*. Records of grants of land made tax free by donations were kept in a separate register called *varippottagam*. Cash accounts were posted in a separate book called the treasury book (*bandara-ppottagam*).

Yerankar (2004, 89) writes that, the Sukraniti makes a mention of four more officials - Sahasadhipati (magistrate), Bhagahara (revenue collector), Sulkagraha (toll collector) and Pratihara (the gatekeeper). There is a possibility that these officials have existed only in big villages while in smaller villages their functions were being performed by the village headman and the accountant (Yerankar, 2004, 89). A mention of one more official 'Gopalka' can be found in the Buddhist period whose main duty was to protect village cattle heads (Tak, 1972, 9). Thus, the ancient period witnessed a well-organised administrative structure at local level.

Village Assemblies

A mention of popular assemblies and institutions like Sabha, Samiti (Bhatnagar, 1932; Mookerji, 1958; Sharma, 1996; Altekar, 1997; Yerankar, 2004), Vidhatha (Bhatnagar, 1932; Sharma, 1996) and Jana (Sharma, 1996; Misra, 1973) can be found in Rig Veda.

Sharma (1996, 116) pointed out that, a precise distinction between the structure and functions of Sabha and Samiti is difficult to make. The only difference being the judicial function, which was performed only by Sabha and not by the Samiti. Sabha, writes Bhattacharya (1988, 32), was an assembly for distribution of wealth for secular, religious and war purposes. A more detailed description of the composition and functions of the village assemblies of Tamil Nadu and their committees can be found in the Inscription of the Chola dynasty (900-1300 A.D.) (Yerankar, 2004, 91).

Mookerji (1958, 202-203) writes that, most of the villages in ancient India had primary village assembly called *Sabha*. The Sabha was the council of elder members of the tribe and it is also pointed out that perhaps women attended the meetings of Sabha (Jha, 2007, 47-48). A reference of Sabha as a place for discussion which women also attended during Rig Vedic period can also be found in the work of Bhattacharyya (1988, 32) and Sharma (1996, 106). Sharma (1996, 105-106) made a mention of Rig Vedic reference of women going to the Sabha and this practice of women attending Sabha stopped in the later Vedic period. The Sabha discussed over social, religious and political matters in its meetings (Altekar, 1997, 232). Sharma (1996, 107-109) pointed out that Sabha performed the political, administrative, religious and judicial functions.

Mookerji (1958, 202-203) in his work made a mention of organizational structure of local government with *Sabha* as assembly of the Brahmanas, and *Urur* was the assembly of the village inhabitants representing different castes, creeds and communities. This village assembly was known by different names in different parts of India: in Uttar Pradesh it was known as mahattamas, 'mahattarasin Maharashtra, mahajanans in Karnatak and perumakkalin Tamil country all mean the same thing, Great Men of the Village' (Yerankar, 2004, 89). The meetings of the assembly were held mostly in the public hall of the village. One of the duties of the village assembly as mentioned in the Smritis was the maintenance of village public hall (Mookerji, 1958, 197). Yerankar (2004, 89) mentions that, probably all the respectable households were the members of the assembly and were invited to the assembly by the beat of drum in Tamil country.

It is important to note that, the 'Sabha was the assembly of the Brahmanas in which other castes had no place' (Mookerji, 1958, 309). It is evident from the various inscriptions from Karnataka that the number of the Mahajanans (Great Men of the village) was very large, which varied from 200 to 500 and sometimes even 1000 (Yerankar, 2004, 89). The 'Sabha was the supreme governing body of the village, but the village was not, of course, inhabited by the Brahmanas alone, but by people of other castes as well' (Mookerji, 1958, 309). Thus population composition of the village was heterogeneous 'but governed by a homogeneous body' (Mookerji, 1958, 309).

Yerankar (2004, .91) also points out that, 'the Primary Assembly of the village was known as *ur* in the case of ordinary villages and *Sabha* in the case of *Agrahara* villages, mostly tenanted by learned Brahmanas'. Mookerji further elaborated on this aspect and stated that 'some of the *Smritis* refer to assemblies of Brahmanas but these were created by the king (*raja*) and not by the public bodies (*samuhakrta*)' (Mookerji, 1958,162). The most important qualifications for to get represented in the village assemblies were: knowledge of religious literature, possession of property and education (Mookerji, 1958, 201-202).

The village headman, as well as the village accountant, was guided by the village council. Bhattacharya (1988, 32) explains about *Samiti* or village council which had the responsibility for decisions on war and due to this, attending the council became important for the tribal chief. Village Council is a body consisting of village elders which guided the village headman and the accountant in carrying out day-to-day activities of the village. Bhatnagar (1932, 533), observes that, the *Samiti* was primarily religious gathering which later became a gathering of those who were well-versed in vedic philosophy and literature.

As observed by Sharma (2006, 109-113), in the early vedic period the *sabha* and *samiti* were very important institutions and were attended by the King, who could not ignore the support of *sabha* and *samiti*. In the later vedic times, they lost their significance as the power of king increased (Sharma, 2006, 185-191). The institution of *Vidatha* completely disappeared (Jha, 2007, 58) and women ceased to be a member of *sabha* (Sharma, 1996, 106). Thus, the later vedic times started showing the signs of exclusive nature of the institutions with respect to the representation of everyone in the society.

Temple

Temple had significant place in the public, intellectual and spiritual life of the people (Mookerji, 1958, 209). It also served as a school of local administration. Due to the offerings made by people, temple property needed to be regulated –it required a separate bureaucratic set up, similar to the present day temple trusts or management that administer the property of the temple. In ancient India temple administered its work through its various committees and temple staff comprising of worshippers, accountants, *purohita* (priests), goldsmiths, dancing girls, painters, men who ring the bell, makers of garlands, watchmen, the blower of the conch and torch-bearers (Mookerji, 1958, 210). Thus, temples were an important part of local administration in ancient India whereas they are not a part of village local administration in contemporary India. Temples being a part of the local administration conveys the idea that in the ancient India there was no differentiation between religious and political life.

Functions of the local governing institutions

The functions of local governments are broadly classified by Mookerji (1958,212) into two types: internal and external functions, depicting their relation with central authority and people, for whose well-being the village government was responsible.

Internal Functions

Security of life and property of the people: It is evident from the earlier discussion that each village was also a military unit and it is the responsibility of the Chief of the village to protect the life and property of the people. Self-rule of the ancient period also involved self-defence. There were incidences of internal quarrels which were managed by the village assembly by penalizing the wrong doer. Resolutions were adopted by the assembly,

that the residents should not do anything against the interests of the village, temple and similar institutions; that, if they do so, they must suffer as *gramadrohins* (traitors against the village) do and not be allowed the privilege of touching Siva (Mookerji, 1958, 213)

The village also had adequate military to protect its people from internal or external attack.

Civil Functions or grama-karya: The village assembly administered its various functions through its different committees. It was in control of entire land of the village including the private land. The assembly exercises the right of pre-emption as it prohibits sale or transfer of land to outsiders (Mookerji, 1958, 229). The assembly had power to acquire new land for agriculture. It was responsible for the construction of road, tank and other public utility works. The village land which was commonly held by the assembly was distributed among the villagers for the payment of tax on the same. The assembly could also sell or transfer the land if so desired. The above powers held by the ancient Indian institutions with respect to control and management of the land shows that they were more autonomous and powerful. On the contrary, modern local self-governing institutions albeit being a part of democracy, are not in such position as to have effective control over their local resources.

External Functions

Mookerji (1958, 234-237) listed functions such as collection of royal revenue, land survey and imposing penalties for arrears which are mainly related to revenue collection as the external functions of the village assembly.

Revenue collection: The assembly was responsible for collection and payment of royal revenue. Accounts of the village assembly were audited by the king (Mookerji, 1958, 235). The revenue was fixed after the land survey carried out by the king's

officers in co-operation with the assembly. In case of non-payment of royal dues, the land was confiscated and sold to recover the dues. Mookerji (1958, 249) also writes that, Kautilya's 'Arthashastra' makes a mention of collection of taxes as an important link between central and local government.

WELL-DEVELOPED COMMITTEE SYSTEM

A well-developed committee system was an important feature of village administration of ancient India. The available evidences show that, the Panchayats in ancient India were much more advanced for their time. The administration of the village was carried out by five sub-committees of the sabha, where the members of these sub-committees worked in honorary capacity and held office for one year (Yerankar, 2004, 91-95; Altekar, 1997, 231-235). Altekar (1997, 231) further writes that, they can also be removed on the basis of proved misconduct. The membership of the sub-committees was rotated among all the qualified members, while the members once elected were eligible for re-election (Yerankar, 2004, 93; Altekar, 1997, 234). Altekar (1997, 232) pointed out that, the members appointed to these committees were between the age group of 35 to 70. Another important qualification as pointed out by Altekar (1997, 232) to be a member were, to be the owners of property and land, property qualification was relaxed for those who had special knowledge of Vedas, Smritis or bhashyas. This indicates that the membership of the committees was restricted to the propertied and one who had the knowledge of Vedas. This tradition goes against the spirit of modern democracy in the sense that, the very idea of political representation in modern democracies is not made on the basis of the criteria such as property and education. The other point to be noted here is about the exclusive nature of the educational system that was in practice in ancient India. Vedic education was restricted to only twice born varnas. Shudras were left out of this education system and were also deprived of property rights.

There was no uniformity of rules among various village sabhas over the qualification of the members of the committee. The rules evolved over a period of time. The age limit to become the member of the committees or the tenure of office as member of the committee varied from one village council to other. It is interesting to note from the work of Altekar (1997, 233) that each sabha had its own constitution and altered the same when the need was felt to do so. This conveys the idea about the ancient Indian constitutionalism that the procedure to make and unmake the provisions in the constitution was easy and facilitative to the governance.

Mookerji (1958, 167), in his work makes a mention of two inscriptions at Utteramallur of 10th century, which gives detailed description of various committees of village, their designations, methods of selection of members,

eligibility to be selected as members, disqualifications and conditions for the appointment of accountants. The names of the various committees were, Annual Committee, Garden Committee, Tank Committee, Gold Committee, a Committee for supervision of justice and Panca-vara Committee (committee of five) which supervised the work of the other five committees. It is very interesting to note that, for the purpose of selection of members to these various committees, the village was divided into wards or electoral units. Representatives were selected from the different wards on the basis of lot and there was no election or democratic element attached to it.

Mookerji (1958, 175) also brought out in his work the fact that to become the member of any of the committees of the village the person should fulfil certain qualifications. The criteria adopted do not stand the test of democracy, as the knowledge of Vedas (Mantra Brahmana), having a house of his own, taxpaying land were among the various qualifications required to contest for the posts. Thus, the persons who do not possess these qualities were excluded from contesting. The elite dominance over the administration of the village is clearly evident from this. The requirement of qualification can be considered as exclusive and discriminatory if the standards of modern democracy are taken into consideration. The governance becomes non-participatory in the sense that the others were not involved in the decision-making process.

The members of the committee were changed every year, allowing every qualified person in the village an opportunity to be a part of the village administration (Mookerji, 1958, 180-181). Further Mookerji (1958, 181) observes that, 'in the course of a time the general assembly of the village would be practically made up of these ex-administrators'. The number of committees of the village were not same everywhere. Their number differed from village to village. The committee members were expected to take active part in the deliberations of the committees and follow rules of debate strictly. The rules of the debate are depicted in the ninth century A. D. inscription discovered in Tinnevely, which prevents continuous obstructions to the proceedings of the assembly by the members by saying 'nay' which means no, to every proposal brought up before the assembly (Mookerji, 1958, 186). It also contains the further provisions which say that those who obstruct the proceedings of the assembly, will have to pay a fine of five *kasu* (money) on each item (Mookerji, 1958, 186). The above description indicates an importance given to a healthy discussion and the strict measures adopted to reduce the obstructions to the proceedings of the assembly. There were also references of meetings continued at night. Attending the meeting was regarded as essential to the members. Though the modern democratic electoral mechanism was absent in the assemblies, the spirit of modern democracy could be witnessed in the discussions and the kind of importance given to the strict rules for preventing obstructions.

In some village sabha(s) the members of the village sub-committees were selected on the basis of lot (Mookerji, 1958, 199). Members thus selected were given the responsibility of maintaining village garden and orchards, temple land and water facilities. There were also temple committees, land survey committees and other committees appointed as per the need and circumstances.

EARLY VEDIC PERIOD AS EGALITARIAN SOCIETY

Early Vedic period had also exhibited many features of egalitarian society. We find the reference of existence of tribal communities (Misra, 1973; Sharma, 1996) or pastoral communities (Thapar, 1984) known by different names in the early vedic period. According to Sharma (1996, 87) the institution of Vidatha finds more reference in the Rig Veda as compared to Sabha and Samiti which gained prominence during the later Samhitas. Both are tribal assemblies based on egalitarian principle devoid of any class, caste and gender discrimination. The head of the tribal assembly in Vidatha, Agni (Chief Priest) was elected, who was also acted as the war chief as there was no distinction made between the priest and war chief during ancient period (Sharma, 1996, 94). There are no clear evidences to show that Vidatha was an assembly of rich class and Brahmanas. Sharma (1996, 102) states:

Indeed there is more proof of the rise of aristocratic elements in the case of *sabha* and *samitis*, particularly in that of the former, than in the case of *vidatha*. Hence, if one hypothesis can be built on negative evidence, we may suggest that the early *vidathawas* probably a typical institution of the period when the tribe had not broken into classes such as brahmanas and ksatriyas.

A significant difference between *Vidatha* and Sabha and Samiti was the presence and participation of women in the deliberations (Sharma, 1996, 88). Women enjoyed equal voice with men in *Vidatha*.

Sharma (1996, 90) opines that in the early stage of social development most institutions were tribal in nature. He writes:

A study of all the available references reveal that the *vidathawas* the earliest folk assembly of the Indo-Aryans attended by both men and women, performing all kinds of functions, economic, military, religious and social. It answered the needs of a primitive society which hardly knew division of labour or domination of man over woman, and which probably shared its subsistence in common (Sharma, 1996, 103-104).

Sharma (1996, 128), further mentions about another republican form of government Gana, which also combined the elements of the military, religious and social activities of primitive tribes. Gana was a tribal republic and it is believed that 'some tribes had no hereditary chief, but were governed directly by the tribal council' (Sharma, 1996, 128-29). Gana was also an armed organisation where every member of the tribe was part of Gana army. Sharma writes that, Gana was an

Indian institution which was unaffected by Aryan influence (Sharma 1996, 128), represented an egalitarian society devoid of varna distinction.

One can find the reference to Jana in the writings of Misra. Misra(1973, 3-4) writes that, 'the study of the Samhitas of the Rgveda and the Atharvaveda, the earlier Brahmanas and the Upanisads reveals to us the life and organisation of the various tribes termed as 'Janas'. Jana stands for group of tribes whose members descend from a common ancestor. It was a mobile community that later started leading a settled life called as Janapada. Jana held land in common and members of Jana lived in a state of complete freedom (Misra, 1973, 9).

For Thapar (1984, 23-24), the Rig Vedic society was essentially pastoral with cattle herding as the major activity. Cattle being the chief form of wealth, cattle raiding among the clans was common. Cattle raids were a form of acquiring wealth in which the successful leader used to become the Chief (Thapar, 1984, 26). The wealth thus acquired was distributed among the members of the clan but the leader and the priests used to retain large portion of the share. It was the responsibility of the leader of the clan to protect the cattle as well as the clan. In later periods, agriculture being the major activity (Thapar, 1984, 29) the clan took to a settled life and with this came a change in the administrative structure of the community. The Jana (tribe) which incorporated number of *vis* (clans) was bifurcated into *vis* and *rajanya*, the later constituting the ruling family and it was from this family the *raja* (king) was chosen(Thapar, 1984, 30). The bifurcation also indicates the division of the community into senior lineages of the *rajanya* and the junior lineages of *vis* (Thapar, 1984, 30).

Jana gradually evolved into Janapada which stands for citizens, whose period ranges roughly from the XV century B.C. to V century B.C. (Misra, 1973, 13-15).

The smaller unit of Janapada were presided over by the Gramanis. The Gramani according to the Vedic references belonged to the Vaisya Varna. The Pali canon, however, prescribes the career of a gramani open to a Kulaputta or the son of a Ksatriya of high birth. The position of the Gramani as mentioned in the AnguttaraNikaya was extremely dignified and stood next to the Senapati. (Misra, 1973, 163).

There was representation of all classes in the Janapada. The administrative unit of Janapada consisted in the form of group of villages of ten, twenty, hundred and thousand and every unit had an officer for administrative purposes (Misra, 1973, 164). The village also acted as the lowest court (Misra, 1973, 166).

EMERGENCE OF THE VARNA SYSTEM AND DECLINE OF DEMOCRATIC TRADITION

With the development of agriculture, land became an important item of wealth. Though the community was divided into higher (*rajanya*) and lower (*vis*) status the

land was held in common and both the classes enjoyed equal status. As observed by Thapar (1984, 32) over a period of time this division led to further expansion into those who utilize the wealth and those who produce the wealth. Priestly class legitimised larger share of wealth through performance of religious rituals and also raised the status of the *rajanya*. The *rajanya* of the Rig Veda was gradually replaced by the *ksatriya* of the later Vedic period with a greater control over Jana and its territory and the *vis* (now came to me known as *viasya*) being reduced to subordination (Thapar, 1984, 32). The king ruled over all, excluding the Brahmanas, who had their own organization known as the *praised* (pressure group) to advice the king on different occasions (Bhattacharyya, 1988, 33).

With the emergence of Janapada there emerged two classes of the rulers and the ruled. It is during the later Vedic period that an attempt was made to distinguish between the Rajanya and the *vis* or the clan peasantry (Sharma, 1996, 172). A close alliance between the Brahmana and Kshatriya can be seen in the later Vedic period where Brahmanas played a crucial role in strengthening the power of the Kshatriya. Both in an alliance enjoyed positions of power. Attempts were made to establish Varna system with occupational division between the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas. 'Vaishya is ideologically reduced to the position of one who has to pay tribute, one who is meant for being devoured by others, and who is meant for being oppressed by others' (Sharma, 1996, 173). Sharma (1996, 175) further opines that, it was in the early Vedic age that the inter-tribal and intra-tribal conflicts gave rise to Sudra social category. The term '*Sudra/Shudra*' was mentioned for the first time in the Rig Veda in its tenth book' (Sharma, 2005, 113).

The references of sabha and samiti could also be traced back to the later Vedic period. On the question of who constituted the Sabha, Sharma (1996,105) mentions that it was a gathering of the Brahmanas and the elders and was convened for administrative purposes. With the development of class the original character of the Sabha was lost and only the Brahmanas became the members of Sabha while tribesmen could not participate in it. There is a Rig Vedic reference to woman participating in Sabha and were known as Sabhavati (Sharma 1996, 105). This practice of woman attending the Sabha stopped in the later Vedic period (Sharma, 1996, 106). According to Jha (2007, 58), with the emergence of territorial state the common people could not afford to travel the long distance to attend the meetings of the assemblies and only chiefs or wealthy could attend such meetings which gave an aristocratic character to the sabha and samiti.

CONCLUSION

The examination of the organizational structure of the local administration of ancient India shows that on the one hand it had a well-developed organizational structure to support local self-governance but on the other, its nature of representation

remained restrictive and hereditary. The qualifications like possession of property and knowledge of Vedas excluded rest of the society to be part of the village assembly, council and committees.

These lacunas became source material for the thinkers like Ambedkar to question the thinking of Gandhi on the importance being given to local self-governing institutions at village level. Any governance edifice guided by mere political democracy without taking into account the social aspects cannot be the lasting solution for governance. Gandhi and others made effort to politically democratize the governing institutions at local level but did not give much thought to democratization of the society. Absence of the society being democratic in its treatment towards others has even led to non-practice of affirmative action in its true spirit. The political reservation introduced in self-governing institutions at local level has not been successful as it was expected to be realized. Therefore, a new thinking is desired to project the Indic idea of governance at local level as a new institutional mechanism to be followed in rest of the world. A combination of the philosophy of Gandhi and Ambedkar could be the hope for successful functioning of democracy in its wider sense at local level. The new peoples' movements that have come to the fore in India have been fighting state control over local resources/decisions/initiatives and are also trying to realize inclusive participation in local governance. 'Their thinking and activity is a combination of Gandhian and Ambedkarite philosophy which they are trying to realize at village level' (Desai, 2016, 17). Gandhi aspired for self-governance at village level and for Ambedkar this self-governance has to be inclusive to become successful in real democratic sense. Thus, with the help of modern Indian political ideas on governance one can learn and unlearn about governance in ancient India and with a desired revision in terms of social inclusion such governance can be theoretically projected as an ideal model of local governance.

Notes

1. For understanding the evolution of local self-government in India from ancient to modern period read, Mallik, S.N. (1929). Local Self-Government in India. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 145(Part 2),36-44 , <http://www.jstor.com/stable/1016884>
2. *Ratnins* were the members of the council.

REFERENCES

- Altekar, A.S. (1934). *Rashtrakutas and their times*. Poona: Oriental Book Agency.
- Altekar, A. S.(1997). *State and government in ancient India*. Agra: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
- Bhat, J. N. (1954). Ancient Indian democracies. *Civilisations*, 4(1), 51-59.
- Bhatnagar, B. G.(1932). Local self-government in the vedic literature. *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 3, 529-540.

- Bhattacharyya, N.N.(1988). *Ancient Indian history and civilization: Trends and perspectives*. New Delhi: Manohar Publications.
- Cheema, G. S., and Rodinelli D. A. (2007). *Decentralizing Governance: Emerging Concepts and Practices*. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- Chopra, P.N., Puri B. N., and Das, M. N. (1974). *A Social, Cultural and Economic History of India*. Chennai: Macmillan.
- Desai, P.(2016). Perspectives on self-governance or local-governance in India: From Gandhi to new social movements. In Shringare, A., Desai, P. & Tripathi R. (Eds.)*50 years of panchayat raj in Goa: Retrospect and prospects*,(pp. 7-20). Panjim, Goa: Broadway Publishing House.
- deSouza, P.R.(2003). The struggle for local government: Indian democracy's new phase.*Publius* , 33 (4), 99-118, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3331198>
- Fesler, J. W. (1965). Approaches to the understading of decentralization. *The Journal of Politics*, 27(3). 536-566.
- Jha, D. N. (2007).*Ancient India: An Historical Outline*. New Delhi: Manohar Publisher.
- Jodhka,S.S.(2002).Nation and village: Images of rural India in Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar. *Economic and Political Weekly* , 37(32) , (pp. 3343-3353), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4412466>
- Mookerji, R. (1958). *Local government in ancient India*. Delhi: Moti Lal BanarsiDass.
- Misra, S. (1973). *Janapada state in ancient India*. Varanasi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakasana.
- Shah, A., and Shah S. (2006). The new vision of local governance and the evolving role of local government. In Shah, A. (Ed.)*Local Governance in Developing Countries.*, (pp.1-46).<https://gsdrc.org/document-library/the-new-vision-of-local-governance-and-the-evolving-roles-of-local-governments/>
- Sharma, R. S. (1996). *Aspects of political ideas and institutions in ancient India*. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass Publishers.
- Sharma, R. S. (2005). *India's ancient past*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Tak, B. L.(1973). *Sociological dimensions of gram raj*. Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan.
- Thapar, R. (2013). *History and Beyond*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Thapar, R. (2013). *From Lineage to State*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Yerankar, S. (2004). Village Administration in Ancient India. *Indian Journal of Political Science*, 65(1), 87-100.