

# The Opinion of Dr B. R. Ambedkar on Village Panchayats

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**Abstract** The village panchayat is the most traditional form of local government in the Indian subcontinent. In its literal sense, the word "panchayat" refers to a group of five (or "Panch") respected and wise elders who have been elected by the people of a certain area. Historically, these assemblies have been used to resolve disagreements between communities and individuals. Local self-government was established in Bombay in 1869 when the British established a district local fund. With the formation of district local boards in 1882, Lord Ripon instituted local self-government in India. A modest attempt is made in this article, following the 73rd constitutional amendment, to identify the operational characteristics of panchayati raj entities. M. K. Gandhi's "Gram Swaraj" and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's wholly opposed position on the intrinsic defects of villages that prohibit panchayats from forming as institutions of self-government dominate India's post-independence discourse on local self-government. To better comprehend India's contemporary panchayat governance structure, an introduction to the country's history of local self-government before and after independence is provided. To better understand panchayats' three-tier structure, the impediments to their efficient operation are underlined. Finding out the roles of panchayats is of limited use without enough financial decentralization. As long as those at the top of society have power, they make it hard for the poor to join in. Thus the aim of the study is to highlight the views of architect of Indian constitution on village panchayats.

**Key Words:** Ambedkar, Opinion, Panchayat, Government, Evolution and Institutions

## 1. Introduction

India's lengthy history and rich cultural traditions began with "democratic" institutions. Notwithstanding being built on the social and political organization of small habitations, these institutions are nevertheless considered as important to social and political control despite caste and gender inequality. Metcalfe said, "Village communities are little republics, possessing practically everything they wish." Despite dynasties crumbling and upheavals, rural society hasn't changed. This union of village communities, each of which works as a microstate, has helped Indian peoples' survival and right to independence and self-determination. Later, these "Sabhas" developed into "panchayats," which dispensed justice and resolved local conflicts. They interacted with local chiefs and maharajas. Each village had its own government. After British colonization, administration was reorganized. The Government of India Act of 1919 was the first to establish local self-governing organisations. In the aftermath of the partition, many provinces and princely states issued legislation, including the Panchayat Act in Punjab in 1922, the Village Panchayat Act in Madras, the Self-Government Act in Bengal, and the Central Provinces in Berar and Uttar Pradesh in 1925. The 1935 Government of India Act granted provincial autonomy and elected governments. Draft constitution lacked panchayat raj section. In the debate over whether the village was "a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness, and communalism" (Dr. B.R. Ambedkar) or whether "Indian independence must begin at the bottom" to ensure "every village is self-sufficient and capable of managing its affairs," Article 40 of the Constitution was created. Since decrepit feudal landlordism and its coercive exploitation began to fall apart, these two points of view have been advancing until they fused with the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act of 1996 (PESA). Formal frameworks hadn't yet permeated these institutions, and self-governance was still egalitarian. Since independence, various government committees have addressed rural governance. Balawantrao Mehta Committee, formed to assess Community Development and National Extension Service Programs, advised giving village panchayats legal recognition, fundamental tasks, power, and resources in their November 24, 1957 report.

## 2. Objectives Of The Study

3. To explain and analyze the opinion of Dr. Br. Ambedkar architect of Indian constitution on Village panchayats as well as his stand for social justice

## 4. Methodology

The current investigation is both in-depth and retrospective. This means the study is visible to the audience. The investigation relies on both mandatory and optional sources. Subjective research was conducted. The inquiry looked at optional data from books, online, paper pieces, and worldwide journals and publications. The study also uses numerous people's perspectives

## 5. Discussion And Result

Since the earliest days of the Mahabharata epic, the institution of Panchayat has provided a system of control and power in rural areas. Panchayat is a Sanskrit term for a group of five villagers, sometimes known as "punches." The traditional responsibilities of the Panchayat are confined to maintaining peace in the village, mediating disputes between diverse groups, and making decisions for the benefit of the whole community, regardless of caste or class. Eventually, however, during the mediaeval and modern periods of history, the rulers, particularly the Mughals and the British, also utilized them to collect a fee from landowners, known as a 'fiagaan', for the usage of the lands. The processes of urbanization and industrialization, as well as newly implemented land regulations, significantly altered the village's social structure. As a result of these modernizing processes, peasants were granted occupational mobility, and they actively sought out new employment options. Because of the development of knowledge, they were also able to earn a higher wage outside of the neighbourhood. The downfall of the barter economy, the disintegration of the "Jajmani System," and the emergence of communication technologies like as rail and bus transportation that allowed residents to contact with the outside world were all results of these alterations to the social structure of the village. The political battle for independence from British rule roused a greater proportion of the rural populace to action. The Panchayat was viewed as the best instrument for bringing about change in the people's way of life, despite the fact that the village retained many of its original qualities. When the Community Development Programme was implemented in rural parts of our country during the age of independence, panchayats were already considered vital organisations. Gram Sabha or Village Panchayat was established at the local level through a democratic process of scrutinizing the delegates. In line with the recommendations of several committees, notably the Balwant Rai and Ashok Mehta Committee, a three-tiered Panchayat Raj was subsequently established across the nation's rural regions. Despite the decentralization of Panchayats, the three-tiered approach of our caste-based rural society (Gram Sabha, Panchayat Samiti, and Zila Parishad) was proven to be ineffective owing to internecine clashes amongst Panchayat members who belonged to various caste groups. In a substantial number of states, they became practically ineffective and dysfunctional.

The Indian government enacted the 73 Amendment Act in order to revitalize and strengthen these laws. This law mandated enhanced money transfers to the villages as well as aid in increasing their capacity to create different development activities that would improve the socioeconomic position of people, especially the weaker groups, women, and landless laborers. Under Article 11 of the Act, up to 29 functions are proposed to be transferred to the Panchayat; however, the majority of Panchayats across India have not yet transferred the bulk of these responsibilities. Each state drafted the Panchayati Raj Act, which has been in effect for the past two decades. To give socioeconomic activities to villages, particularly the weaker sections (SC/STs), women, and landless, it is essential to know and investigate how the Panchayat functions inside the village structure.

Following India's independence in 1948, when the Indian Constitution was being formed, the Constituent Assembly engaged in heated dispute about the role of village Panchayats in the country's political system. While Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the leader of the Drafting Committee, did not seek to incorporate this institution in the Constitution, the Gandhi desired for India to have a polity in which the Panchayat level has the most authority and the central government has limited influence. According to him, the hamlet was "a den of ignorance, communalism, and localism." He favoured a person over a village as the Constitution's fundamental unit. As a Dalit, he feared that landlords and higher castes would use the Panchayats to oppress and exploit the weaker sections in rural society.

In the end, however, the Gandhianism were able to incorporate village panchayats in Part IV, Article 40 of the Indian Constitution, which addresses the Directive Principles of State Policy. This article says, "The State should make efforts to establish local Panchayats and offer them the requisite authority and capacity to serve as autonomous units of governance." A number of states approved Gram Panchayat Acts, which permitted the creation of democratically elected Gram Panchayats, shortly after the 1950 ratification of the Constitution. They were given judicial, civic, and developmental tasks. The Community Development Programme was initiated by the government of India in 1952. In 1953, this program's counterpart, the National Extension Service Scheme, was formed in service regions to cover the whole rural portion of the nation. These projects aimed to instill in rural inhabitants a zeal for development. These were meant to bring in a subtle revolution in rural society. This hope, however, was crushed when these programmes failed to win over the broader population. Recognizing the failure of the programmes, the Government of India requested that the Committee on Plan Projects of the Planning Commission investigate the causes of the programmers' failure and give proposals for their simplification. For this purpose, the Committee organized a Study Team under the command of Balwant Rai Mehta in 1957.

The Team was entrusted with investigating if district boards, Gram Panchayats, and other local government institutions could be utilized successfully to implement the Community Development Programme and the National Extension Service Scheme. It was meant to provide ideas for alternative rural local government forms and tactics for achieving this objective.

Men predominated in panchayats in rural areas because of religion, caste, and customs and rural women remained largely unrepresented in politics for decades after independence because of the male preponderance in panchayats. Social stratification, autocratic decision-making, restrictive communication routes and a low level of literacy kept them from participating in the political process. Panchayat Raj and community development programmes were instituted after independence, and women's advancement was protected by constitutional protections. Rural women have been able to participate in politics to some extent because of the rapid social change that has occurred due to the expansion of education, the emergence of political parties, the growth of urban contacts, quick means of communication, and the impact of mass media in the rural community. It's only now that rural women are beginning to see the significance in participating in the democratic process of their country. To truly understand what it is, one must look into its history and progress

According to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the hamlet represented a repressive and underdeveloped India. To protect Hindu caste authority, he was hostile to panchayats. Aside from this, he was of the opinion that Indian villages were built on caste and had a little prospect of becoming successful institutions of self-government.

Hindu Code Bill was an idea he had to empower women by granting them equal property rights with men in order to bring about social equality and fairness. There could be no other way, according to him, for the Dalits in India to achieve freedom but via a combination of education, agitation, and organized group efforts. Instead of being known for his nationalist views, he was more widely viewed as a social reformer and egalitarian. In respect to the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, he expressed the view that "The solution lay in building an egalitarian and truly democratic panchayat raj system in the country." By extending Panchayat reservation to the disadvantaged classes, he also campaigned for their involvement in rural governance. He said, "I am afraid that I cannot assent to the first part of the Bill until I am satisfied that every self-governing institution has provisions in it which give depressed classes special representation in order to protect their rights." Ambedkar was referring to decentralization (self governance). Given recent events, it's time to revisit (re-examine) a concern highlighted by the Ambedkar School of Thought. His critical opinion of panchayat raj was formed by the Indian realities of country life during his time." His own personal experiences were also utilized to back it up. Because of this, Gandhi's panchayat raj ideas struck a chord with Ambedkar. Ambedkar saw these towns as "a sink of localism, a nest of ignorance, and a den of communalism." Panchayat Raj was not included in the constitution that was drawn up under his administration.

Panchayat raj institutions were incorporated into the non-justified component of the Indian constitution, article 40 of the guiding principles of state policy when it came to creating village panchayats and giving them the authority and powers they need to govern themselves, the paper recommended that the state do so. A federal or state law was not passed at the time; hence this could not be implemented. social reformer Ambedkar's views on the concept of social equality Some people's lives can be seen as symbols of

freedom, an emblem of progress, and a lasting influence on society. This is the result of history. DR. B. R. Ambedkar was one of those individuals who had a rare combination of wide knowledge, exceptional political talent, and an unwavering commitment toward the advancement of social change. For the first time, the speaker emphasised the need of inclusive growth and cultural fusion without caste discrimination in the process of constructing a new nation. Hindu Code Bill was an idea he had to empower women by granting them equal property rights with men in order to bring about social equality and fairness. An estimated 65 million individuals now call themselves untouchables because of the movement started by him. He was a proponent of peaceful means of bringing about social change. Democracy and equality were essential concepts in his philosophy, and they were based on virtue, reason, and an understanding of the universe.

A three-pronged approach to emancipating the dalits in India could only be achieved via education, protest, and organization, according to him. When Ambedkar prioritized social justice over national movements in India, he was accused of being a hypocrite. As a result, he was considered more as a social reformer and egalitarian than a nationalist. "Annihilation of caste" is the title of his work in which he strongly criticizes the caste system. Toward that aim, he called for inter-caste marriages in our country. Some have reacted angrily to his criticism of the caste system in India, arguing that it is a result of the wide range of vocations practiced by Indians. It's not clear why Ambedkar was so enraged by the Brahmin class. Using Buddhism, he and his allies were able to effectively communicate their opposition to casteism in India. All his life, he worked for social change. That the caste structure separates laborers as much as their work itself is what he contends. It stands in the way of further economic development. Ineffective production arises as a result of reduced mobility. Untouchability is nothing more than a form of slavery, and it's much worse.

Remember Ambedkar's view on the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment acts: "the remedy lay in the construction of an egalitarian and truly democratic panchayat raj framework in the country"? His efforts to include the oppressed classes in rural administration also included the creation of panchayats that granted reservations to the poor. A panchayat raj system was introduced for the first time in the Nagapur district of Rajasthan on October 2, 1959. In the 1950s and 1960s, when legislation was passed to establish panchayats in other states, other state administrations adopted same strategy. There were two states, Andhra Pradesh (second) and Maharashtra (ninth). Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes received explicit proportionate allocations for their representation in the Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Act of 1994, with one-third designated for women. Since the late 1980s, a lot of work has been done to revitalize the system and get people from all walks of life involved. To ensure that policies, programmes, and initiatives could be carried out and monitored effectively, B. R. Ambedkar emphasised the importance of include dalits in the decision-making process and administrative apparatus. While supporting the interests of dalits isn't enough, he believes that they may be really protected by their own representation and participation in all levels of decision-making.

All levels of democratic politics were supported, from the legislature to the enforcement of laws by him. Part of Ambedkar's fundamental objective is to increase participation and representation in society. He was in favour of a policy that integrated dalits in society's economic, cultural, and political arenas. As a result, he has a broad approach. Panchayati raj institutions are required by constitutional amendment 73 to set aside chairs and seats for members of the scheduled caste. Seats and offices must be reserved for members of the scheduled castes (dalits) and of Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population in the panchayat, with the caveat that one-third of seats must be set aside for women who belong to these groups, according to Article 243(d) of the Indian Constitution. An further option is included in the law which lets the government establish reserves for other marginalized groups, as is the case here (obcs). Reservations can be distributed in a variety of ways at the state level, but they must be rotated. It was on May 15, 1989, that Rajiv Gandhi presented the Lok Sabha with the 64th amendment to the Indian Constitution. On December 23, 1992, the parliament adopted a slightly modified version of the wording as the 73rd amendment, despite the fact that it could not be implemented during Rajivji's lifetime. National Panchayat Raj Day has been celebrated since 2008 as a result of this change. In areas where the panchayat needed to be made more inclusive, the difficulties remain

## 6. Conclusion

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was a figure of international renown that possessed a thorough understanding of the law as well as an in-depth knowledge of the Constitution. He was known for his contributions to the development of India's legal system. He became an authority on all of the previously existing constitutions and applied that

expertise to the drafting of the Indian Constitution, which is now widely regarded as the model constitution for contemporary nations. His constitutional measures address not only the numerous societal issues that he discussed in his series of lectures, such as discrimination on the basis of Caste Class, color of the skin, and gender, but also discrimination on the basis of race, language, and geographical location. He addressed all of these topics in his series of lectures. His drive came from making unceasing efforts to improve the lives of people in society who were not being served by existing institutions or organisations. Non-institutional social work had been practiced in India for a large amount of time prior to the legalization of Ambedkar's attempts to alleviate the lives of the impoverished. This provided a tremendous impetus to the growth of non-institutional social work. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who is both a social worker and a scientist, have done research with the intention of gaining a deeper understanding of his impact on society's most marginalized and disadvantaged people. Based on the analysis, it is concluded that Ambedkar was cognizant of the political and economical circumstances in Indian society. He had adopted their own methods for remaking Indian society. Although he employed various tactics, his eventual purpose remained the same. He is a supporter of non-violent, non-violent means of bringing about social change. He was worried about how things were going for the weaker members of society. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act has emerged as a significant step in putting Gandhi and Ambedkar's ideas into practise. The Indian rural system saw significant transformation as a result of decentralisation and specific representation for the socially marginalised in decision-making. The aforementioned analysis demonstrates that once the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1993, was put into effect, PRIs as an institution gave the public a chance to participate in making decisions, which also strengthened democracy at its foundational level.

### **Acknowledgement**

I would want to express my deepest gratitude to each and every one of the people who made it possible for me to complete this thesis. I owe an incredible amount of gratitude to everyone whose thoughts and support helped me organise my piece in a manner that was consistent with the period it was written in. Aside from that, I should acknowledge with a great deal of gratitude the significant contribution made by the experts and journalists who had successfully drafted their papers on a related topic; the references they provided gave me an unprecedented game plan to finish my article in a way that was helpful

### **Conflict Of Interest and Funding**

Nil

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