

The Madras Panchayat System (1972), vol. II

This volume (with the subtitle *A General Assessment*, sponsored by the Balwantrai Mehta Panchayati Raj Foundation, New Delhi) was part of a two-volume survey (vol. I was authored by S. Saraswati) which resulted from extensive archival and fieldwork undertaken when, from 1963, Shri Dharampal was appointed Director of Study and Research of the All India Panchayat Parishad. A main regional focus was in Tamil Nadu where he carried out a detailed examination of the Madras Panchayat system, for which he also consulted colonial documentation in the Tamil Nadu State Archives (TNSA). In his pioneering study, Shri Dharampal underscores—in particular in the Introduction and the concluding section “The Problem”—not only how the indigenous Panchayat-based polity was destroyed as a result of the colonial land revenue system, but also how the colonial bureaucratic apparatus, though out of synch with the real needs of the local communities, was maintained even after Independence. It was the debilitating influence of this dysfunctional system which, according to Dharampalji, constituted one of the main causes for the highly detrimental disjuncture between the need for self-empowerment at the grass-roots level (as propagated by Gandhiji) and Nehruvian centralised statist planning. Incisive reviews of this study were written, among others, by R.K. Patil (*Interdiscipline*, 10/2, 1972, 121-128) and by P.C. Mathur (*Political Science Review* 12/1, 2, 1973, 161-167). The volume has been reprinted in: Dharampal, *Collected Writings*, Other India Press: Mapusa 2000 (reissued 2003 & 2007), vol. IV, pp. 97-300. Translations into Gujarati and Hindi were published in *Dharampal Samagra Lekhan* (11 vols.), edited by Indumati Katdare, Punarutthan Trust, Ahmedabad 2005 and 2007, respectively.