

PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS: AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRESS

Mr. Latif Ahmad Dar

**Teacher Department of school Education
Kashmir**

Email: darlatif20@gmail.com

Mr. Fidha Hussain Malla

Reserarch Scholar CPU Kota Rajasthan

Email: fidahussainmall1990@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Panchayat Raj System provides the administrative apparatus for implementation of the programmes of rural development. These institutions are established in India as vehicles of socio-economic transformation in rural India. The British rule in India paved the way for the development of local-self government bodies in urban and rural areas. A new age of participatory governance and development was heralded in India in 1958 after the implementation of Panchayat Raj System. The 73rd amendment contains provision for devolution of powers and responsibilities to the panchayats to collect revenues, design development plans and implement various grassroots level development programmes in India. The Constitutional status is given to Panchayati Raj System by the Government of India. These bodies are permitted to launch many schemes and programme to improve the infrastructure, facilitate implementation of development programmes and improve the standard of living of people in the rural and tribal areas. The Millennium Development Goals emphasize the environmental sustainability and inclusive development of the marginalized sections of society. The effective involvement of the Panchayat Raj Institutions in the process of rural development is constrained by some difficulties facing these institutions. The social responsibility of Panchayati Raj Institutions, public and private organizations assumes profound significance from grassroots development point of view

KEYWORDS Panchayati Raj, Socio economic progress, decentralization, grants.

INTRODUCTION

Panchayati Raj plays an important role in Indian democracy. The term Panchayati Raj is a system in which gram panchayats are basic units of administration.. It is intended to evolve a system of democratic decentralization and devolution of people . The Panchayati Raj Institutions play a major role in the socio and economic development of people at the grassroot level. Several awards are given to panchayats in different States on this occasion to encourage a spirit of competition among them. India has had a long tradition of panchayats in one form or another. In the olden days, the inhabitants of a village used to meet together under the leadership of village elders to discuss and resolve village problems. This system displayed the spirit of participatory democracy. Mahatma Gandhi advocated for 'Gram Swaraj' and argued for the handing over certain powers to the villagers. In a vast sub-continent like India centralization of administration and developmental activities brings about the isolation of people from the national mainstream. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar had justified the need for creation of small states and Panchayat Raj Institutions to ensure inclusive development of rural and tribal people. He wanted the villages to become rural republics and independent centers of good governance and development. He also wanted to eradicate

feudalism in India and facilitate exploitation and backwardness free grassroots development in India. In this article, the role of Panchayati Raj is grassroots development with reference to India's socio economic progress in recent times. The objectives of Panchayati Raj include – assistance to the economically weaker sections of the community, cohesion and cooperative self help in the community, development of cooperative institutions, development of local resources including the utilization of manpower, production in agriculture as the highest priority in planning, progressive dispersal of authority and initiative both vertically and horizontally with special emphasis on the role of voluntary organizations, promotion of rural industries and understanding and harmony between the people's representatives and people servants through comprehensive training/education and a clear demarcation of duties and responsibilities. The specific objectives and responsibilities of Panchayat Raj Institutions are enumerated in the eleventh schedule and the Five Year Plans,

LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of literature is the most important aspect in any research work. It is a measure stating the recent output on a particular area of research and organized in a helpful sequence to strengthen the present research techniques. The main objective of the review of literature is to understand the research activities that have taken place in a particular discipline in general and in the area of research in particular. Here under an attempt is made to review the literature on working of panchayati raj institutions for socio economic development at grassroot level in india

Dr.Rajesh Kumar Sinha. (2018) a journal on Capacity Building of Panchayati Raj Institutions, to run the good governance and effective function for the development of all aspects panchayati raj institutions the central and state government to sustain and strengthening of rural development in India to develop capacity of panchayati raj institutions through training and all.

Vaishnavi.A & Dhivya. R, (2018) Role of Local Self Government in the Protection of Environment, To conclude, in democratic local self-government is one of the most innovative governance, In the Panchayati Raj set up, there are several mechanisms and agencies through which information regarding public good and welfare can be communicated to the villagers, local bodies, encouragement by the state governments given to local bodies, the honesty and sincerity of the non-officials who administer the local bodies, and corruption-free controlling authorities.

Prof. Basavaraj S. Benni, (2017) A Study on Panchayati Raj Institutions In Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, this study conclude and given importance women participation, for empowerment of women government of India have provided many various program like MNREGA, SGRY, IAY, (RGGVY) from which shows progression of tribal village and also new schemes SHGs due to this have eradicating of poverty

Mohd Waliullah, (2017) Rural Development Policies In India: A Study Of Employment Generation Schemes &MGNREGA, this study state the direct impact of employment guarantee schemes on rural poor life in the form of livelihood security and improving nutrition, health, education and sanitation etc by providing 100 days guaranteed daily wage employment and prevent labuor migration

Sagar N, H L Shilpa (2017) E-Services of Gram Panchayath System, E-Services for gram panchayath aim is to provide the information about the services or schemes and by using this they can apply application for each service of gram panchayath,it update handle by the staff and officer of grama panchayat. People can visit grama panchayat and get information.

Mrs. Vani H, Prof. Ravindranath N. Kadam, (2017) Panchayat Raj Institutions and Rural Development in India: Structural and Functional Dimensions, Description of panchayats is found in the ancient Indian text

„Rigveda“ in the form of „Sabhas“ and „Samities“. Panchayat literally means assembly (yat) of five (panch) wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the village community, present PRI effective and meaningful functioning of these bodies would depend on active involvement contribution and participation of its citizens, both male and female. The role of such institutions is so vital in the rural development.

Ministry of Rural Development Government of India (2016) Report on Strengthening Capacity of Panchayati Raj Institutions Managing Maintenance of Rural Roads, out come this report is this capacity was further strengthened by the involvement of the locally based private construction industry. Local engineers and administrators have proven themselves well able provide some training In terms of physical works, all envisaged outputs were completed in advance of the originally planned schedule. Commencing works in 1998, all 600 km of rural roads, markets and other infrastructure construction and rehabilitation were completed before 2002, well within the original budget estimates. The road works also included the construction of 988 culverts and 98 small bridges.

Florin Shelomith Soans, Shripathi Kalluraya P, (2015), an article on Decentralization and development: Indian experience the system of decentralization is well established in India and its contributing for the development in respect of gross Domestic Product of Indian economy

Dr. V.Govindu (2015) Financial Assignments to Panchayat Raj Institutions in India- A Perspective, financing of the functions, Article 243H of the 73rd Amendment act states that the state may be law (a) authorize a Panchayat to levy, collect and appropriate such taxes, duties, tolls, and fees; (b) assign to a Panchayat such taxes, duties tolls, and fees; and (c) provide for making such grants-in-aid

to the Panchayats from the Consolidated Fund of the State.

Chikkam Satyanarayana,(2015)Devolution of functions, functionaries and funds to Panchayat Raj Institutions, functions to be delivered by each tier 29 subjects mentioned in the constitution ,powers given by the State Governments and shall amend the present Act to authorize the Panchayats to levy, collect and appropriate taxes, duties, tolls and fees to augment their resources. An officer from State Account Service may be appointed at District and Mandal levels to prepare and audit the accounts of the Panchayats,trained officer should oppoint, Social Audit through Gram Sabha is essential, Panchayats to prepare their annual plans. Durga Kalyan G,(2014),a article on Accounting & Audit System in Panchayati Raj Institutions in India, this study conclude that ombudsman in needed for to maintain and deals accounting audit system for panchayat raj institutions ,accounting software and technical guidance and supervision is needed fiscal responsibility regime and government of India to support state.

Tame Ramya, (2014), Socio-Economic Status & Associate Problem of the Tribal; A Case Study of a Village in Kurug Kumey District of Arunanchal Pradesh, this paper state that entire discussion in this paper to give almost idea ,socio-economic structure Niyeshi tribal village result come out the village have facing numerous troubles like ,poverty ,female illiteracy, lack of sanitation,hiya villages advance social economic condition of tribal village but nyishi tribal villages of hiya and the myriad problems and prospect of their development, government can be eradicate such trouble through divers plan and implementing of programme.

H.M.Mohan Kumar and Dr.Ashok Kumar's (2014), an article on Socio-Economic and Political Status of Panchayat Elected Representative. This study concluded that rural population in Mysore district highly educated youngsters are president of their

panchayat, 45.16 percentage members are in below one acre of land holder, 21.39 percentage of panchayat presidents are no education, 79.61 percentage presidents are literate, caste wise representation, general are over represented, among the members of presidents are 27.44 percentage representation of SC/ST category, upper middle caste people are fulltime politicians, majority of presidents are contesting in elections their low income group in recent election got high educated representative, 27.44 percentage occupation background states that they were cultivator, 31.62 percentage, of respondents were fulltime political workers, 20.93 percentage are agricultural labour, 10.69 percentage are engaging occupation in the district.

S.Thanikasalam, Dr.S.Sarawathy (2014), a Study on Role of Grama Panchayat in Rural Development, he stated that implementations of rural development programme has effected even social and political affairs of the people of the selected area. SJGSY, MNREG, Housing Schemes such development programme strengthen village cottage industries as well as improving in economic position and employed various agricultural and allied activities like animal husbandry sheep, goat rearing handicraft small business, handicraft, and gain the additional income to the people created gainful activities for poor in selected area to placed above poverty line even some beneficiary are losses adopted development programme and it is insignificant on other hand poor people who have not cover under the schemes are leading a measurable life.

Thapai Ananda, M. Chinnaswamy Naidu, M. Krishnaveni, (2013) Political Participation of Women In India, Political parties have failed to give adequate number of party tickets for elections to women Even in party organizations they are always have a lesser strength? Women political participation and all these provide that Indian Women constituting half of the population have never been equal to men in terms of their representation.

Dr. Rajesh Timane (2012) A Study of Stakeholder Engagement in Social Audit, outcome of this study stakeholders involved in the Social Audit is a system where the local community scrutinizes all the records and procedures of a programme, social audit a successful institution to endorse the culture of transparency through Gram-Sabha gram-sabha to make them more efficient in participatory management at local level

Md. Rashid and Anjum Sen (2010), paper examines the level of people's participation in panchayat activities and level of people awareness about rural development programme. the study is done against the background of the constitution 73rd amendment act 1992, and Bihar Panchayat Raj act 1993 and 2006, both of which aim to empower the rural people by structuring the Grama Sabha, Grama Sabha happens to be the heart or core of the Panchayat Raj system of local self governance. The study is entirely based on a primary survey conducted in four villages of block in Gaya district of Bihar which is among the least developed and most backward district of India.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the present paper, an analytical method has been used and it is based on the secondary data. The secondary data is collected from Research Papers, Magazines, Books, Journals, Articles, Panchayati Raj websites, District Panchayat websites, and Indian news Papers etc.

IMPORTANCE OF PANCHAYAT RAJ IN INDIA

Mehta (1957:12) recommended democratic decentralization in India and called upon the rulers to redistribute the power to the people through Panchayat Raj Institutions. He suggested that the establishment of elected and organically linked democratic bodies at the village, blocks and district levels would entrust all planning and developmental activities to these bodies. The committee was also in

favour of transferring of adequate resources to these bodies to enable them to discharge duties. The Panchayat Raj System was first adopted by the state of Rajasthan in Nagapur district on October 02, 1959. Andhra Pradesh was the second state which introduced this system in the country Mehta (1978:11) committee of Panchayati Raj Institutions indentified three phases of Panchayati Raj in India such as the phase of ascendancy (1959 - 64), the phase of stagnation (1965 - 69) and the phase of decline (1969 - 77). The committee submitted its report in August 1978 and made 132 recommendations to revive and strengthen the declining Panchayati Raj system in the country. The committee suggested that Panchayat Raj Institutions should be constituted in every state at the village, intermediate and district levels Panchayats in a state having a population not exceeding twenty lakhs. Jayaprakash Narayan, founder of total revolution movement during national emergency (1975-77) wanted to liberate Panchayat Raj Institutions from the clutches of political parties. He argued that political faction-fighting would result in self-ruination rather than self reliance. The Government of India had constituted another committee under the leadership of GVK Rao in 1985 to suggest the appropriate improvement in representative character and strengthening of capacity of the People's representative and administrative personnel in Panchayat Raj Institutions. Subsequently, in 1986 another Committee known as L.M. Sanghavi Committee of the Department of Rural Development, Government of India was constituted.

PANCHAYATI RAJ AND GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj was established in the year 2004 to empower Panchayati Raj Institutions and ensure efficient delivery of services and inclusive development of the nation. The Government of India constituted the 13th Finance Commission under the Chairmanship of Vijay Kelkar (2007:10) to examine the sharing of financial resources in the country. The commission recommended share of Panchayats in the Union Revenue Divisible Pool. The concentration of authority and power only in the hands of the federal unit would be

anathema to the whole system (Chatterjee, 2007:04). About 29 subjects are listed in the 11th schedule of the Constitution of India for planning and implementation of various social and economic development programmes at the grassroots level. The planning commission and the Ministry of Rural Development have repeatedly impressed upon the state governments

GRAM PANCHAYATS

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment passed by the Parliament in the year 1993 was a pioneering step in decentralising political power in India. It required Indian States to enact laws for creation of the Panchayat Raj institutions. As a result, Gram Panchayats (GPs) get constituted after conducting elections more or less on regular basis in the States, though one or two instances can be found where elections have been delayed. The 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats in the country have been entrusted to provide basic services in the villages and plan for local economic development. The decision making process of the panchayats is such that the Gram Sabha (GS) discusses the development work plans of the GP called Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) and the elected representatives execute the plans. Formulation of GPDP improves efficiency of public services. Since all eligible voters of the village can participate in the Gram Sabha, it is a channel to include the less privileged section of society and ensure their participation in the village level governance wherein they can advocate their developmental aspirations. This bottom-up approach is meant to reflect felt need of various stakeholders. GS is a vital as a decision-making body at the bottom. This process reflects practice of direct democracy at the village level while governance system at the state and union level is indirect or representative type. The relationship between the elected representatives of the panchayat and gram sabha is visualised to be similar to that of the cabinet and assembly. It is observed that attendance in GS is not high in most of the

GPs except on special occasions like Gandhi Jayanti when special drive for attendance is undertaken by the authorities. This is one way of slowly generating larger public interest on self-governance. Admittedly, local level governance is still in the evolution process in India. We need to encourage the process to play a more effective role. Already visible signs of change can be seen in most of the villages in terms of village roads, water supply, sanitation, storm water drainage, and street-lighting. While connectivity of one village with another is beyond the jurisdiction of a GP, construction and maintenance of roads within the village is the responsibility of the GP. One can now walk without touching mud at least in some parts within a village and GPs are under pressure to construct roads in the left out parts as well. This is exactly as it should be in a functional democracy. The composition of elected representatives like Sarpanch and ward members of the GPs involves various social groups. The government has provision for capacity building of the representatives to facilitate the effective functioning of the GPs. Training usually takes place at the State Rural Development Institutes or district or block level local body offices on issues related to their roles and responsibilities, budget preparation, project execution, and accounting.

GRANTS

Despite the constitutional empowerment, the local bodies faced problem of inadequate finance to carry out various activities assigned to them. There was a general demand from several quarters to make PRIs financially stronger to meet their needs. Transfers made through the State Finance Commissions were meagre in most States. The Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC) took note of it and substantially increased the grants to the local bodies for the period year 2015-16 to 2019-20. The grants provided are intended to be used to support and strengthen the delivery of important basic public services. The 15th

Finance Commission has further increased the grants in its interim report for year 2020-21 for rural and urban bodies. In order to understand the effectiveness of the FFC grant to the GPs, the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi had conducted a study which had a sample of 120 GPs in 20 districts spread across 16 states in India. It is interesting to note that the study team found that about half of the GPs in the sample are headed by women. In a remote village named Sunarisikuan in Nuapada district of Odisha, women members occupied three-fourth of elected positions and were relatively more active than their men counterparts in the same area. In this village, it was heartening to note the absence of the 'Sarpanch Pati' culture that the Prime Minister had called to end on the Panchayati Raj Day in year 2015.

VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

The overall impact of the FFC grant was a mixed one in the above study. There are many areas that needed further attention for enhancing efficiency and effective delivery of services. Overall, close to 80% of the FFC grants from year 2015-16 to 2018-19 had been utilized in the selected GPs. Road construction and drinking water were top two priority activities. Most of the GPs are found reluctant to raise own source of revenue (OSR) in the selected sample. However, some of the GPs are able to generate OSR in the form of tax or non-tax revenue by renting shops, house tax and clean water fee. GPs in Assam, Kerala, and West Bengal have more varied sources of own revenue. But, the unwillingness by local bodies to collect potential tax revenue in most of the GPs needs a change in the mind set and some amount of persuasion. While convergence of various development programmes has been a priority for the government, it is mostly conspicuous by its absence in the programmes undertaken by the GPs. While roads in two different patches are

being constructed utilising two different sources of funding (e.g. FFC and MPLAD), it is difficult to find one large activity with funding from multiple sources. Different guidelines by different departments were cited as a major constraint for lack of convergence of activities. Separate accountability to different departments is also a problem and provision of accountability to a consortium of funding agencies can overcome this. The line departments cannot by themselves carry out all village level development programmes in the absence of local level initiative and participation. The local people must have a sense of belonging in the schemes. Involvement of GPs in a coordinating role in various projects of line departments would be a way forward for convergence. Some GPs do not have their own building and they share space with schools, anganwadi centre and other places. There are also GPs which have own building but without basic facilities like toilets, drinking water, and electricity connection. Several GPs are having internet connections through broadband and some under e-mitra scheme, but they are not functioning in many cases. For data entry purposes, panchayat official need to visit Block Development offices. Solid waste management and waste disposal, as well as overall cleanliness, still need considerable improvements. It is heartening that there is greater thrust on providing an effective and sustainable solid and liquid waste management system in the recently launched Swacch Bharat (Grameen) Phase-II. Likewise, it is also gratifying that the integrated portal for planning, monitoring, accounting and auditing function of the Panchayat called e-Gramswaraj, which is being launched today, includes a user friendly mobile app that readily provides all information on income and expenditure of GPs. It is suggested that Ministry of Panchayati Raj could design a system of comparative ranking of different GPs in a State as this could help in building a competitive ecosystem at the grassroot level. GPs are third tier in the democratic

participation process by the citizens. The system should be strengthened for active participation by the rural community in Gram Sabha so that people can directly take part in the decision making process and governance of the village. As we celebrate the National Gram Panchayat Day, we may remember that the success of democracy at the top requires that it is built from the bottom. GPs are increasingly going beyond their traditional civic functions and taking up more and more developmental responsibilities. No doubt, more challenges lie ahead for the little republics but they are now poised to overcome such challenges.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of rural development programmes through the Panchayat Raj Institutions has brought a radical change in the socio-economic conditions of the rural people in the villages. The implementation of rural development programmes has affected even the social and political affairs of the people. In the economic sphere, these programmes have shaped an improvement in economic position of the villages. As a result, most of the villagers have acquired an added income. Programmes like MGNREGA, SGRY, IAY (housing scheme) and power scheme such as Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyuthikaran Yojana (RGGVY) have produced various gainful activities for poor to be placed above the poverty line. Furthermore, in the newly erected tribal houses electricity had been provided through RGGVY which indicates a cumulative progression of infrastructural development in the rural areas.

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