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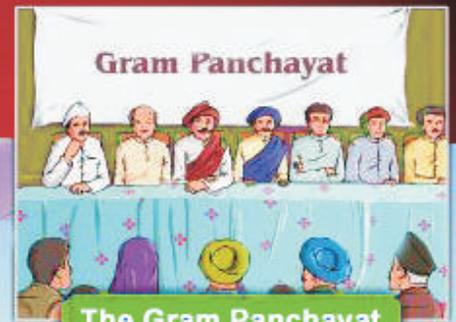
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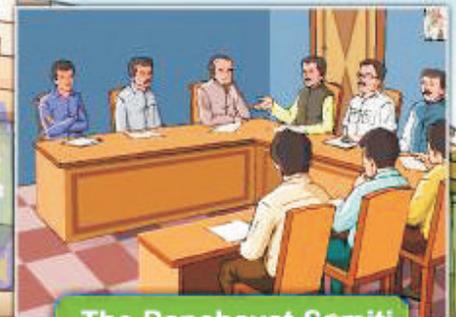
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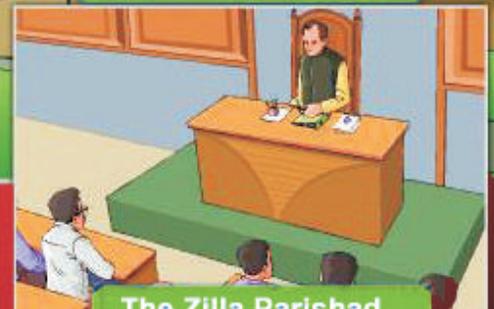
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Kurukshetra seeks to carry the message of Rural Development to all people. It serves as a forum for free, frank and serious discussion on the problems of Rural Development with special focus on Rural Uplift.

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INSIDE

Decentralization is the process whereby authority is restructured between institutions of governance at the central, regional and local levels with power and functions transferred to the lowest institutional or social level. It is an important apparatus through which democracy becomes truly representative and real. Decentralization ensures grassroots level people's participation in decision-making process.

Decentralization of power to the local authorities is the most effective way to empower people. It not only helps in increasing efficiency but is a sure method to promote equitable growth.

In India, Panchayati Raj system is identified as the prime instrument of decentralization through which democracy becomes truly representative and responsive. The Panchayati Raj institutions are considered as local self-government meant for providing basic infrastructure facilities, empowering weaker sections of the society and initiate the development process at the grass-roots level of rural India, where the sole of India lives.

India has created history in fiscal federalism in the world through the landmark 73rd and 74th Amendments to its Constitution in 1992 which adds a three tier of local self-government to its federal structure. With the passage of 73rd Amendment Act, people's participation in the process of planning, decision-making, implementation and delivery system in rural India has been recognized. The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 that came into force with effect from 24th April, 1993 has vested constitutional status on Panchayati Raj institutions. This date thus marks a defining moment in the history of decentralization of political power to the grassroots level. The impact of the 73rd Amendment in rural India is very visible as it has changed power equations irreversibly.

Ever since the 73rd Amendment came into force, the process of political empowerment of the Panchayats has largely been achieved. While Panchayat elections have been regularly held in all the States and Union Territories reservations have been provided to the women, Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the Other Backward Classes in proportion to their share of the population in each panchayat area.

Several Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSSs) programmes are directly implemented through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) including the flagship National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS).

Efforts are underway to find out to what extent has there been devolution of powers and functions to Panchayats. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj is undertaking a study on this subject. PRIs will be instrumental in achieving inclusive democracy and growth in our country. □

PANCHAYATI RAJ - THREE TIER SYSTEM IN INDIA

Lakhimi Dutta

The Panchayati Raj is a South Asian Political system mainly in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. The word “panchayat” literally means “assembly” of five wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the local community.

Panchayati Raj is a system of governance in which gram panchayats are the basic units of administration. Mahatma Gandhi advocated panchayati Raj, a decentralized form of government. It is the oldest system of local government in the Indian sub continent. This system was adopted by state governments during the 1950s and 60s as laws were passed to establish panchayats in various states. It also found backing in Indian constitution with the 73rd Amendment in 1992 to accommodate the idea. In the history of Panchayati Raj in India, on 24th April, 1993, the constitutional (73rd Amendment) Act 1992 came into force to provide constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj institutions. Currently, the Panchayati Raj system exists in all the states except Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram and the all Union Territories except Delhi.

The Three-Tier System of Panchayati Raj in India :

The states of Goa, Jammu and Kashmir, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Sikim have two-tier panchayats- one at the village level and the second at the Zila or District level. In Jammu and Kashmir, block is the second level. In all other states Panchayati Raj is a three-tier system- village as first level, block or janapad as second level and zila or district as the third level.

Village Level :

Village is the basic unit of Panchayati Raj Institutions. It is generally a revenue unit. The unit of local government here is called village panchayat. In the structure of the Panchayati Raj, the village panchayat is the lowest unit. The panchayat chiefly consists of representatives elected by the people of the village.

Only the persons who are registered as voters and do not hold any office of profit under



the government are eligible for election to the panchayat. The persons convicted by the court for criminal offences are disqualified from election of the panchayat.

There is also provision for co-option of two women and one member of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, if they do not get adequate representation in the normal course.

The panchayat as a body is accountable to the general body of the village known as Gram Sabha which meets at least twice a year. The Gram Panchayat must present its budget, accounts of the previous year and annual administrative report before the Gram Sabha. Furthermore, it has to secure the latter's approval of the village production plan, proposals for taxation and development programmes before they are enforced by the panchayat.

Every panchayat elects a president or Sarpanch and a Vice-President or Up-Sarpanch. In some states, the Sarpanch is directly elected by the gram sabha either through the show of hands or through secret ballot while in other states the mode of election is indirect. The Sarpanch occupies a pivotal position in gram panchayat system. He supervises and coordinates the various activities of the panchayat. The panchayat secretary and the village level worker are the two officers at the panchayat level to assist the Sarpanch in administration.

Functions :

The panchayats have two types of functions –

1. Mandatory 2. Discretionary

1. Mandatory Functions : Sanitation, conservancy and drainage, prevention of public nuisances, drinking water, construction and maintenance of village roads, construction and repair of public buildings, registration of births and deaths, opening and maintenance of cremation and burial grounds, rural electrification, poverty alleviation programme, preparation of annual budget and development plans, construction and maintenance of cattle sheds, ponds etc. social farm forestry, fuel and fodder, slaughter houses, public parks and playgrounds, agriculture, poultry and fisheries etc.

2. Discretionary Functions : Agriculture, animal husbandry and dairy development, minor irrigation, small scale industries, housing, electricity and non-conventional energy, rural development programmes, education cultural affairs and heritage, public health etc.

In addition, the village panchayats may be assigned additional functions by the state governments and Zila Parishads.

Sources of Revenue :

A gram panchayat fund has been created on the pattern of the consolidated fund of the state. All money received by the Gram Panchayat like contribution or grants made by the State Government, Union Government, Zila Parishad and all sums received by the panchayat in the form of taxes, rates, duties, fees, loans, fines and penalties, compensation, court decree, sale proceeds and income from panchayat property etc. go into that fund.

Village Panchayats have been empowered to levy taxes or fees on subjects like houses and buildings, professions, trades, callings and employments, fees on registration of vehicles, fairs and melas, sanitary arrangements, water tax, lighting tax, tax on sale of firewood, tax on slaughter houses, private fisheries, license fee on tea stalls, hotels or restaurants, carts, carriages, boats, rickshaws etc.

Block Level :

Block or Union is the second or intermediate level of local self government in rural India. It has been named differently in different states. In Andhra Pradesh, it is known as Mandal Parishad, in Assam, it is known as Anchalik Panchayat, in Bihar, Jharkhand, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Tripura, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab and Rajasthan it is known as Panchayat Samiti and so on.

Usually, a Panchayat Samiti consists of 20 to 60 villages depending on area and population. The average population under a Samiti is about 80,000, but the range is from 35,000 to 1,00,000. The Panchayat Samiti generally consists of the following :

1. about twenty members elected by and from the Panches of all the Panchayats falling in the block area.
2. two women members and one member each from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to be co-opted.
3. two local persons possessing experience of public life and administration, which may be beneficial for the rural development.
4. representatives of the co-operatives working within the jurisdiction of the block.
5. one representative elected by and from the members of each small municipality lying within the geographical limits of a block.
6. the members of the State and Union legislatures representing the area are to be taken as associate members.

The President of the Panchayat Samiti is the Pradhan, who is elected by an electoral college consists of all members of the panchayat Samiti and all the Panchas of the Gram Panchayat falling within the panchas areas. Besides the Pradhan, the Up-pradhan is also elected. The Pradhan convenes and presides over the Panchayat Samiti meetings. He guides the panchayats in making plans and carrying out production programmes. He ensures the implementation of the decision and resolutions of the Samiti and its standing committees. He exercises administrative control over the Vikas Adhikari (BDO) and his staff. He is a member of the Zila Parishad by virtue of his office as a Pradhan. He is the ex-officio chairman of the standing committees of the Samiti.

As the Chief Executive Officer of the Panchayat Samiti, the Block Development Officer is entrusted with the responsibility for implementing the resolutions of the Samiti and its Standing Committees. He prepares the budget of the Samiti and places it before the Samiti for approval. Preparing the annual report of the Samiti and sending it to the Zila Parishad and State Government also comes within the purview of his responsibility. He is accountable to the president of the Samiti for his action.

Functions :

The principal function of the Panchayat Samiti is to co-ordinate the activities of the various panchayats within its jurisdiction. The Panchayat

Samiti supervises the work of the Panchayats and scrutinizes their budgets. It also reserves the right to suggest measures for improving the functioning of the Panchayats. The Samiti is charged with the responsibility of preparing and implementing plans for the development of agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, small scale and cottage industries, rural health etc.

Sources of Revenue :

All State legislations provide for the creation of Panchayat/ Block Samiti Fund like the Consolidated Fund of the State. All money collected by the Samiti goes into that fund. These are grants given by the State Government or Union Government, donations received, income from properties owned by the Samiti, all taxes, fees, tolls etc. levied by the Samiti, any share of the land revenue or taxes levied by the State Government and assigned to the Samiti, part of the income of the Zila/ District Parishad assigned to the Samiti, all loans raised by the Samiti etc.

District Level :

Except in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, the District / Zila Panchayat constitutes the apex body of the three-tier structure of the Panchayati Raj system. The Panchayat at the district level is called Zila Parishad in most of the States. But, in Goa, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Sikkim and Uttar Pradesh it is called Zila Parishad and in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Gujarat its name is District Panchayat.

Generally, the Zila Parishad consist of representatives of the Panchayat Samiti, all members of the State Legislative and the Parliament representing a part or whole of the district, all district level officers of the Medical, Public Health, Public Works, Engineering, Agriculture, Education and other development departments.

There is also a provision for special representation of women, members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes provided they are not adequately represented in the normal course. The collector is also a member of the Zila Parishad.

The Chairman of the Zila Parishad is elected from among its members. There is a Chief Executive Officer in the Zila Parishad. He is deputed to the Zila Parishad by the State Government. There are subject-matter specialists or officers at the district level in all the states for various development programmes.

The term of each District Panchayat is five years unless dissolved earlier. In most of the States their meeting must be held at least once in three months. However, in Goa, Haryana and Karnataka their meetings must be called at least once in two months.

Functions :

The Zila Parishad, for the most part, performs co-ordinating and supervisory functions. It co-ordinates the activities of the Panchayat Samiti falling within its jurisdiction. In certain states the Zila Parishad also approves the budgets of the Panchayat Samitis.

The Zila Parishad also renders necessary advice to the Government with regard to the implementation of the various development schemes. It is also responsible for the maintenance of primary and secondary schools, hospitals, dispensaries, minor irrigation works etc. It also promotes local industries and art.

Sources of Revenue :

The legislations of all states provide for the certain of separate Zila Parishad / District Panchayat Fund which is like the consolidated Fund of the State. The sources of income of the Zila Parishad / District Panchayat are :

- i) Grants-in-aid given by the State Government and the Union Government (general or for any particular project)

- ii) Donations and incomes like rent or lease or sale proceeds of the properties of the Parishad.
- iii) Toll, fees or cess imposed on bridges, ferries, entertainment, fairs, haats etc.
- iv) Share of the land revenue assigned to the parishad.
- v) Several states like U.P., Punjab, Manipur, Maharashtra etc. have empowered them to levy taxes on any matter on which Panchayats at the lower levels are empowered to do.
- vi) Loans raised by it against the security of its properties.
- vii) Contributions made by Panchayat Samitis or any other local authority.

Conclusion :

After the passage of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in 1992, the States were expected to decentralize their authority to the institutions of self-government at the local level. The purpose was to take democracy to the grass-root level so that the people should manage their own affairs at that level. Only the people themselves know what is best for them and what needs to be done. The idea was not only to entrust the people with the power of decision-making but also to give them the authority and capacity of governing themselves.

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LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENTS VETTED VIA DEVOLUTION INDEX

Dr. Mahi Pal

The enactment of the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution (hereafter referred to as the Central Act) was a watershed in the field of decentralization as it, inter-alia, provided certainty, continuity and strength to the Panchayati Raj System (PRS) in the country. Later on, PRS was also extended to the Scheduled Areas by the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled areas) Act 1996 (hereafter referred to as the Extension Act). It appears appropriate to review the functioning of the Panchayats from the point of view of ascertaining as to what extent these institutions have emerged as institutions of self- governments by way of devolving functions, finance and functionaries to them and suggest task ahead for further deepening grassroots democracy in the country.

Central Act has both mandatory and enabling provisions. The state governments were supposed to devolve the functions, finance and functionaries pertaining to 29 subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution to the PRIs to enable these bodies to function as institutions of self government. Panchayats have been made the

institutions of self- government as per 243G of the Constitution. Although, the term 'institution of self-government' (ISG) has not been defined in the Act, the perception and the connotation are well understood. In order to function Panchayats as ISG, the panchayats have to fulfill three basic conditions, namely, (a) institutional existence in the sense that the decisions are taken by the people's representatives; (b) institutional capacity, which means that these institutions have clearly defined functions, functionaries and finances (c) financial viability in terms of sufficiently empowering them in raising resources to meet their responsibilities. In other words, the panchayats should enjoy functional, administrative and financial autonomy at their levels. Let us see as to what extent the Panchayats have emerged as ISG after evaluating the progress made towards empowering these bodies in last two decades.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has given a study to the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi to work out devolution of powers



and functions to the Panchayats across the States based on certain dimensions and indicators. The framework comprises the mandatory provisions given in the Central Act, which are expected to be implemented in letter and spirit by the State Governments. It includes constitution of State Finance Commission (SFC), State Election Commission (SEC), District Planning Committee (DPC), reservation of

women , SCs and STs. Functions include functions assigned to Panchayats like activity mapping, actual involvement of Panchayats in important schemes. Finance includes giving of 13th Finance grants to Panchayats, effectiveness of the SFCs, formula based fiscal transfers to Panchayats, status of Panchayats' own revenues, expenditure of Panchayats, etc. Functionaries comprise administrative infrastructure,

Table 1: Overall Devolution Index across States

Ranks	States	Framework D1	Functions	Finances	Functionaries	Capacity Building	Accountability	D
			D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	
1	Maharashtra	48.95	56.31	55.5	75.37	75	76.64	64
2	Karnataka	67.55	57.96	49.97	63.12	79.04	69.73	62.2
3	Kerala	41.34	52.86	48.52	68.55	58.77	64.64	55.4
4	Rajasthan	68.33	52.97	35.61	40.9	79.43	57.25	52.1
5	Tamil Nadu	69.84	52.33	46.26	39.23	63.4	52.97	52.1
6	West Bengal	56.84	50.57	35.41	37.67	81.18	53.96	49.8
7	Madhya Pradesh	60.37	52.61	34.44	39.45	51.41	62.5	47.3
8	Chhattisgarh	53.75	37.53	31.77	33.68	78.52	48.27	44.6
9	Haryana	70.39	31.14	36.91	50.19	42.68	46.09	43.6
10	Gujarat	54.58	38.92	26.55	53.18	46.61	43.76	40.8
11	Odisha	66.5	51.46	35.11	28.55	19.14	53.04	40
12	Uttarakhand	54	53.9	27.23	32.02	43.24	52.85	39.4
13	Uttar Pradesh	60.02	41.04	26.17	28.57	45.88	41.06	37.3
14	Assam	44.69	42.76	23.13	21.66	67.84	37.65	36.9
15	Himachal Pradesh	56.19	22.43	34.92	35.35	36.15	44.32	36.8
16	Goa	50.7	17.78	18.69	48.23	32.87	41.72	31.8
17	Punjab	60.24	24.25	17.37	23.64	38.67	46.74	31.2
18	Bihar	49.78	39.44	19.4	24.29	42.01	21.6	29.9
19	J&K	15.38	15.28	28.01	23.98	51.61	35.15	28.9
20	Jharkhand	55.01	18.97	13.95	23.52	46.11	28.48	27.3
North Eastern States								
1	Tripura	48.1	46.03	28.37	53.34	29.71	46.91	39.7
2	Sikkim	68.56	45.07	31.37	29.25	41.72	36.3	39.1
3	Manipur	29.52	12.22	24	20.41	45.13	27.27	25.9
4	Arunachal Pradesh	30.88	17.22	25.17	10.14	34.67	24.85	23.7
Union Territories								
1	Lakshadweep	48.89	20.79	7.33	39.82	30.95	28.29	25.1
2	Daman & Diu	56.04	3.43	8.03	33.56	0	30.11	18.1
3	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	28.6	1.11	0.78	39.17	20.85	32.22	17.3
4	Chandigarh	24.16	7.22	25.86	18.8	0	8.14	15.3
	National Average	51.4	34.06	29.45	36.99	49.33	43.33	38.5

Source: Strengthening of Panchayats in India: Comparing Devolution across States : Empirical Assessment -2012-13 , April 2013, The Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi

officials of Panchayats etc. Capacity building includes training and institutions involved in the training. Accountability includes accountability and Audit of Panchayats, social audit of Panchayats, functioning of Gram Sabha, etc. It may be seen that except framework and finance other indicators carry the same weight. Framework carries less weightage due to its mandatory nature. Finance is very important because it is the finance which determines the extent of effectiveness of other indicators of the framework. All these indicators with their weightages are given in table 1.

Framework (D1)

This indicator includes the mandatory nature of devolution as given in the 73rd Amendment Act and it was expected from the states/UTs that these must be devolved or performed in toto. But expectations are belied as evident from the progress made in this regard. It may be seen from the Table that national average score is only 51.40. It means leaving aside the enabling provisions of the Act; the mandatory provisions were implemented to the extent of only 50 per cent. If we see across the states, we find that Haryana ranks first with a score of 70.39 and J&K ranks the lowest with 15.38, which is obvious that it was not compulsory on the part of the States to implement the provisions of the Central Act. But even then some of the provisions of the Central Act have been implemented by the State. But what happened in other states is surprising to note. Out of total states only 15 states and 1 UT (Daman & Diu) could score more than national average.

Functions (D2)

In case of devolution of functions, the situation is very gloomy as indicated by the scores of different states and national average. As the national average is merely 34.06, it means about one third of the expected devolution has been achieved. If we see state wise, we find that Karnataka tops the list with a score of 57.90 followed by Maharashtra and Rajasthan. Manipur with 12.22 is at the bottom and

rest of the States and UTs are placed in between. It may be seen from the table that only 15 states including 2 North Eastern states have scored more than national average.

Finance (D3)

As mentioned earlier, this dimension of the devolution index carries the highest weightage in the indices. Its national average is merely 29.45, which is even less than that of function on the index. The reasons are not far to search as higher tiers of governments (i.e. States & central) do not part with financial powers to Panchayats. Among the states and UTs, Maharashtra tops the list with the highest score of 55 followed by Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Punjab scoring the lowest with 17.37 as table indicates. UTs Dadra & Nagar Haveli have not even devolved 1 per cent of expected financial devolution to the Panchayats. Only 12 States including one from North Eastern state - Tripura have scored more than national average on this dimension of Panchayats.

It may be noted that one of the components of this indicator is power given to Panchayats to mobilise their own resources. Here, it may be mentioned that total own revenue of the Panchayats was not even 1 per cent of total state revenue.

Functionaries (D4)

This dimension of the index is also very important because if functions and finance have been devolved to Panchayats but functionaries are not on the disposal of the Panchayats then how Panchayats could get the work done in the field for fulfilling the expectations of the people. Its national average is 36.99, which is higher than two other components of the triple Fs (Functions, Finance and Functionaries). In case of this indicator, Maharashtra tops the list with a score of 75.37 followed by Kerala with 68.55, Karnataka with 63.12. If, we put all the States together, we find that only 13 States including one North Eastern state and two UTs score more than national average as the table indicates.

Central Act has both mandatory and enabling provisions. The state governments were supposed to devolve the functions, finance and functionaries pertaining to 29 subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution to the PRIs to enable these bodies to function as institutions of self government.

Capacity Building (D5)

Capacity building of Panchayats' personnel is also important because capacitated personnel could deliver the services to their clientele. In this case the national average is 49.33 which is more than the earlier three dimensions of the index. But this does not cross 50 percent of expected capacity building of the Panchayats' personnel. Here, West Bengal tops the list by scoring 81.18 followed by Rajasthan with 79.43, Karnataka with 79.04, Chhattisgarh with 78.52 and Maharashtra with 75. It may be seen from the table that only 10 states could achieve score more than the national average. None of the North Eastern states and UTs could cross the national average. It is disheartening to note that Daman & Diu and Chandigarh could not make any efforts in this regard as their score is zero as indicated in the table.

Accountability (D6)

Transparency in the functioning of the Panchayats with the instrument of Gram Sabha and auditing of activities by the same institutions are the important ingredients of effective and efficient functioning of the Panchayati Raj System (PRS). Here also picture is dismal across the states and UTs as depicted in the table. In this case, Maharashtra scored the highest with 76.64 and lowest among the States excluding NE States is Bihar scoring merely 21.60. Other states which did fairly good score are Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh. Merely 6 states including Tripura, scored more than national average.

Overall Rank (D)

D indicates the composite devolution index. It may be seen from it that national average is merely 38.52, which shows that of total expected devolution only 38.52 has been achieved in the

country. Putting all States together excluding NE states and UTs, Maharashtra tops the list by scoring 64.04 and Jharkhand at the lowest of the list by scoring 27.25. In case of NE States Tripura is on the top by scoring 39.72 value and Arunachal Pradesh at the lowest by scoring 23.67 value. In case of UTs, Lakshadweep at the top and Chandigarh at the lowest as the table indicates.

Maharashtra is the only state amongst the other states which has constantly performed better in the sub-indices of finance, functionaries, capacity building and accountability of the composite index. The State of Maharashtra has been historical progressive in the sphere of strengthening Panchayati Raj. Its comprehensive Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti Act and a separate Act for Gram Panchayat gave a firm foundation for strong Panchayati Raj in the state. The state of Karnataka is also very close to the rank of Maharashtra as the table reveals. Here also sound foundation to the PRS was laid down when R K Hedge was the Chief Minister of the state.

Only 12 states excluding NE states have achieved score more than the national average. In case of NE states only 2 States scored more than national average. In case of UTs, none of them have achieved national average.

On the basis of above analysis States and the Centre have not shown much political will and administrative support for strengthening Panchayati Raj in the country. It is obvious the political leaders at central and state levels do not want to create a third level of power central through creating Panchayats as strong institutions. Hence, they are indifferent towards these bodies.

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GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME TO EMPOWER PANCHAYATI RAJ

Dr. Arpita Sharma

Acknowledging the importance of peoples' active participation in planning, decision-making, implementation and delivery system to accelerate rural development process, Government legislated the 73rd Amendment Act, 1992, which became the Panchayati Raj law on April 24, 1993. Since then it became mandatory to involve local people and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to implement Government schemes and make them responsible to achieve the underlying objectives. The Law stipulated reservation for women and disadvantaged sections of the community, which created a space for them to be assertive and demand their rightful share in the decision-making at the local level. The 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution (1992) has made Panchayats the third tier of the Indian political system. Earlier we had only two tiers-the Union Government and the State Governments. Now we have three tiers-the panchayats at the village, block and district levels. The year 2009-10 had been declared as the year of Gram Sabha being the 50th anniversary of launching of Panchayati Raj in our country.

Panchayati Raj System in India:

- [1] **B.R Mehta Committee:** The Panchayats were a subject of study by a number of committees and study teams starting with the B.R Mehta Committee recommending a three-tier Panchayati Raj structure.
- [2] **L.M. Singhvi Committee:** In 1986 the L.M. Singhvi Committee studied Panchayati Raj, and suggested that Gram Sabha be the base of a decentralized democracy and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) viewed as institutions of self-governance which would actually facilitate participation of people in the process of planning and development. It also recommended constitutional recognition of local self-government and inclusion of a new chapter in the Constitution for this purpose. The 73rd Amendment included the Gram Sabha as the basis of the three-tier Panchayati Raj. Constitutional provisions, however, related to the establishment, power, functions and responsibilities of the



Panchayats have been introduced through the 73rd Amendment in 1993 for the country as a whole following the recommendations of L.M. Singhvi Committee.

Statutory Panchayats: The Statutory Panchayats were created by law. These laws are given as follows:

- [1] **Royal Commission on Decentralization (1907):** These owe their origin to the Report of the Royal Commission on Decentralization. The Commission had recommended the creation of village Panchayats for reducing the financial burden of the provincial governments and for extending the concept of local self government to the village level.
- [2] **Mayo's Resolution (1870) and Ripon Resolution (1882):** The Mayo's Resolution (1870) had created the municipalities in the urban areas and the Ripon Resolution (1882) the district board at the district level and the rural board at the taluka/tehsil levels, as the local self government institutions. The Royal Commission not only advocated their strengthening but also suggested creation of these at the village level as the Panchayats.
- [3] **Village Panchayat Act [1912]:** Consequently, the government of various provinces enacted Village Panchayat Act in the second decade of 20th century. Village Panchayat act was made in 1912 for the creation of the Statutory Panchayats. The objective of this Act was to strengthen the Panchayats both as units of Local Self Government and as judicial bodies. However, the enactment of this act failed to have the desired results. This happened because the Panchayats setup under this act had neither a real representative character nor any element of autonomy. Secondly, those who were responsible for executing it, too could not be spared from their due share of blame. The failure may partly be attributed to the lack of sincerity on their part. Thirdly, the blame may also be squarely placed on people who exhibited much apathy for this institution.
- [4] **Government of India Act (1919):** After the introduction of Dyarchy in provinces as a result of the implementation of the Government of India Act (1919), the local

self government was made a transferred subject. Thereafter, the Indian ministers got new Village Panchayat Acts enacted for strengthening the Village Panchayats.

Government Programme for empowerment of Panchayati Raj:

- [1] **Powers of Gram Sabha through Panchayats Act, 1996 (PESA):** The Provision of Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 (PESA) extends Part IX of the Constitution with certain modifications and exceptions, to the Fifth Schedule areas of 9 States viz Andhra Pradesh (AP), Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh (HP), Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh (MP), Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan. The Gram Sabhas under PESA are deemed to be 'competent' to safeguard and preserve the traditions of their people, community resources and customary mode of dispute resolution. The Gram Sabhas further have:
 - [i] Mandatory executive functions to approve plans of the Village Panchayats, identify beneficiaries for schemes, issue certificates of utilization of funds.
 - [ii] Right to mandatory consultation in matter of land acquisition, resettlement and rehabilitation and prospecting licenses/mining leases for minor minerals.
 - [iii] Power to prevent alienation of land and restore alienated land.
 - [iv] Power to regulate and restrict sale/consumption of liquor.
 - [v] Power to manage village markets, control money lending to STs.
 - [vi] Ownership of minor forest produce.
 - [vii] Power to control institutions and functionaries in all social sectors.
 - [viii] Power to control local plans and resources for such plans including TSP, etc.
- [2] **Panchayat Mahila Evam Yuva Shakti Abhiyan (PMEYSA):** Participation of women in the Panchayats was facilitated by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment which mandated one- third reservation of seats at all three

tiers of Panchayats for women. The Panchayat Mahila Evam Yuva Shakti Abhiyan aims to build on the substantial representation of women and youth in Panchayats so that they use their collective strength more effectively. It supports the efforts of the many isolated, strengthen their unity and provide a forum for continued training. PMSA provides women with specific kinds of support which goes beyond the usual training given to PRI representatives.

[3] Panchayat Empowerment and Accountability Incentive Scheme (PEAIS): The Panchayat Empowerment and Accountability Incentive Scheme (PEAIS) is a Central Sector Plan Scheme implemented by the MoPR since 2005-06. The scheme aims at encouraging states to adequately empower Panchayats and put in place systems for bringing about accountability of the PRIs. Performance of states in these respects is measured through a Devolution Index (DI). Token awards are also given to the states, which rank high on DI, for which the annual provision is currently Rs.31 crore for the year 2011-12.

[4] e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project (MMP): MoPR has been adopting a multi-pronged strategy to implement the provisions of Part IX of the Constitution in the true spirit of co-operative federalism. One major strategy has been to harness the potential of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools for e-Governance in Panchayats. The objective is to make Panchayats more efficient, transparent and symbols of modernity by leveraging ICT at the cutting edge level to ensure transparency and accountability in their functioning through disclosure of information, social audit, efficient delivery of services and improving internal processes and management of Panchayats.

[5] Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Sastikaran Abhiyan: Developing Panchayati Raj system is essential to improve Governance and delivery of

services and involve redistribution of power, institution building and development of processes and improve accountability to people. RGPSA seeks to enhance capacities and effectiveness of Panchayats and Gram Sabha and enable democratic decision making and accountability in Panchayats and promote people's participation.

PRIs and Centrally Sponsored Schemes for Poverty Alleviation:

[1] Accelerated Rural Water Supply Program (ARWSP) and Swajaldhara: The main programme of the Central Government related to drinking water supply is the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Program (ARWSP) and Swajaldhara. ARWSP is aimed at ensuring a minimum availability of 40 Litres of water per capita per day (LPCD) to all rural people. Swajaldhara is a demand driven approach to augmenting water supply, with a high degree of local participation. ARWSP is now part of the Bharat Nirman approach, with a time bound strategy of tackling all habitations that are deficient in water supply. In both schemes, there is a clear thrust on putting Panchayats in the forefront of implementation of drinking water schemes.

[2] Total Sanitation Campaign: The Total Sanitation Campaign aims at providing subsidized individual and community latrines, so as to completely eliminate open-air defecation. The program

has now added solid waste management as another component of the program. Along with water supply, TSC is a program that is clearly part of the core responsibility of every Panchayat, particularly the Gram Panchayat. The guidelines of the TSC give leeway to the States to decide on the extent of involvement of Panchayats in the program.

[3] National Rural Health Mission: The National Rural Health Mission (NRHM 2005-2012) has been launched to improve availability of and access to quality health care and public health services, including women's health,

The 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution (1992) has made Panchayats the third tier of the Indian political system.

child health, water, sanitation and hygiene, immunization, and nutrition by rural people, through making necessary changes in the mechanism of health delivery. The goals of the mission are to reduce Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) and Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) and prevent and control communicable and non-communicable diseases.

[4] Integrated Child Development Programme:

ICDS promotes integrated child development through converging basic services for improved child care, early stimulation and learning, improved enrolment and retention, health and nutrition, and water and environmental sanitation. The Scheme aims at improving the nutritional and health status of pre-school children, pregnant women and nursing mothers.

[5] Indira Awas Yojana: The Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) is the sole program that deals with housing for the poor from the Government of India. This program gives a 100 percent subsidy, capped at Rs. 25,000 per unit for providing houses to families below the poverty line. Beneficiaries are to construct the house and payments are made directly to the beneficiary, on the completion of certain milestones in construction. The guidelines of IAY in its present form are both Panchayat friendly and beneficiary friendly.

[6] Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana:

The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana primarily aims to provide all weather access to unconnected habitations of upto 500 population (with relaxations for hills, deserts and tribal areas) by 2007. The Scheme mandates the development of master plans and a core network at the block and district levels, approved by the Intermediate and District Panchayat respectively. The District Panchayat is also to prepare the annual proposals in consultation with Intermediate Panchayats and Gram Panchayats, in accordance with the district's fund allocation under the Scheme.

[7] Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidhyutikaran Yojana: The Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidhyutikaran Yojana (RGGVY) is the major

rural electrification scheme of the Ministry of Power, which aims at providing electricity in all villages and habitations in four years and provides access to electricity to all rural households. This program is one of the major components of Bharat Nirman. The approach is to strengthen the electricity distribution infrastructure by establishing Rural Electricity Distribution Backbone (REDB) with at least a 33/11KV sub-station, Village Electrification Infrastructure (VEI) with at least a Distribution Transformer in each village or hamlet, and stand-alone grids with generation where grid supply is not feasible.

Suggestions: [1] Strengthening the delivery system for services and development initiatives through Panchayati Raj Institutions

[2] Formulation of District and Sub-District plans at all levels of Panchayats to deliver basic minimum needs to the citizens at the grassroots level.

[3] Strengthening the Planning Machinery at the district and sub-district levels for pursuing Such formulation, including guidelines for the DPC to consolidate such plans [4] Reviewing guidelines of Centrally Sponsored Schemes and Central Sector Programs to ensure the centrality of participation by Panchayati Raj institutions from the drawing board to implementation of schemes including poverty alleviation, elementary education, rural health coverage etc.

[5] Development of model guidelines for conferring original jurisdiction on Gram Sabhas as envisaged in PESA.

[6] It is important that independent evaluation of the impact of economic development and social justice programs implemented by Panchayats is undertaken at regular intervals.

[7] ePanchayat MMP will be implemented in synergy with other e-Governance interventions like e-District, State Data Centre (SDC), State Service Delivery Gateway (SSDG), UID, Central Plan Schemes Monitoring System (CPSMS) etc wherever applicable.

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GRAM SABHA-THE PILLAR OF DEVELOPMENT

Dr Amrit Patel and Mahendra Patel

Field experiences suggest that peoples' active involvement and meaningful participation in planning and implementation of socio-economic development programs meant for them are necessary to yield better results. People in their villages are the best to identify their development needs including infrastructure, programs and beneficiaries under Government sponsored programs. Besides, their collective decision has much significance as to how to plan and implement programs based on local resources and how much money would be required for local projects. The central Government has initiated a number of programs to generate rural employment, alleviate rural poverty and improve standard of living from time to time which, however, could not yield expected outcomes. In this context, the 73rd Amendment and its preceding 64th Constitutional Amendment Bill, acknowledging the ground realities in rural India, seeks to reform the existing structure of Government to improve efficiency,

responsiveness, and accessibility of quality public services as demanded by rural households and empowers the Gram Sabha as the constitutional body and institutional forum to take decision on programs aimed at rural livelihoods, food and nutritional security and poverty alleviation, among others.

Development Potential of Gram Sabha:

"Gram Sabha" means a village assembly consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls. All the people included in the electoral rolls of a village shall be the members of the Gram Sabha of that village. In the context of Mahatma Gandhijee's perception of "*India lives in villages*" Gram Sabha can be the bed rock of country's democracy. It is a structure founded entirely on people's power (Lokshakti) expressing itself in the form of village power (Gramshakti). It provides a base for the three-tier structure of the PRIs in the district, viz. Gram Panchyat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Panchayat.



Empowered Gram Sabha has significant development potential and can play multiple roles to transform subsistence village economy into a vibrant one facilitating village to emerge as an organized unit managing its administration and development affairs. As a powerful institutional mechanism it can keep a close vigilance on the implementation of development programs and virtually eliminate inefficiencies and misuse of development funds. Other roles include:

[i] It is an institutional forum to mobilize each and every member to participate, suggest, debate on their common problems, understand the needs and aspirations of the village community and contribute to decision-making process at village level.

[ii] It can discuss and analyze the likely impact of policy initiatives of elected representatives and administrative actions of bureaucrats on the socio-economic development programs affecting rural households and can voice their concern collectively.

[iii] It can be an effective forum for sharing experiences on different policies and programs, schemes, good practices and matters of common interest.

[iv] It can discuss issues and suggest programs on (a) improving quality of life and achieving Millennium Development Goals, (b) ensuring social security, gender justice, hygiene and nutrition (c) sustainable development, diversification of agriculture, better crop/livestock/fish farming practices, opportunities for improving incomes, drought/flood management, soil and water conservation, (d) infrastructure development, etc.

Gram Panchayat: The Gram Panchayat shall be the Executive Committee of the Gram Sabha. Gram Panchayat shall function under the general superintendence, control and direction of the Gram Sabha. In this context Gram Sabha [i] provides valuable inputs and insight to Gram Panchayat to function efficiently and simultaneously it acts as a supervisory authority in the interest of village communities by monitoring the functioning of the Gram Panchayat to make it transparent and accountable [ii] can monitor and discuss attendance of Government functionaries, functioning of schools, dispensaries, aganwadi centers, ration shops and other local institutions [iii] can establish an active dialogue between the village people and

elected representatives at the Gram Panchayat level regarding future development programs involving village community in the decision-making process and developing a supporting structure for the Gram Panchayat [iii] helps Gram Panchayat ensure that benefits of ever increasing public spending, through plethora of Government schemes, reach intended people in full measure [iv] can participate in planning, implementation and performance review of various schemes viz. BRGF, MGNREGA, NRHM, SSA, ICDS, IWMP, RKVY etc.

Empowerment : Empowerment, by its very definition, implies an increase in the ability to exercise power. In the enthusiasm of globalization, liberalization and privatization rural households' ownership, interest and access to natural resources, viz. land, water, forest, minerals, among others, have been jeopardized. Moreover, as the lives of households in villages and urban centers are embedded in a matrix of unequal geographical relations, a significant decrease in this inequality is necessary for an outcome of '*empowerment*' for village households. In other words, access to information, communication and technology accompanied by improved self-confidence, skills and income may be better facilitators to enhance village household's empowerment. Village households, in order to be empowered to achieve their perceived goal, have now been provided with an institutional forum to voice their concern in the form of village assembly by an Act of Parliament. When village households are empowered economically, socially and politically they can claim their rights and access resources, opportunities and choices. They become agents of change for economic growth, social progress and sustainable rural development and acquire qualities of leadership.

Strategic Actions: 50 years of Panchayati Raj celebration during 2009-10 as the Year of the Gram Sabha to highlight the significance of the Gram Sabha in self-governance provided opportunity for introspection and revisiting Constitution, Laws, Policies, Programs etc. It reemphasized the need to strengthen the Gram Sabha to ensure transparent and accountable functioning of the Gram Panchayat. During the decade, Gram Sabhas in thousands of villages have witnessed significant positive and encouraging developments because of efforts of the Governments, NIRD, SIRDs, NGOs etc. However,

shortcomings and deficiencies revealed by surveys and the World Bank study in the implementation of provisions of the 73rd Amendment need to be remedied successfully by addressing following critical areas to members for empowering Gram Sabha. A Strategic Action Plan needs to be formulated to strengthen institutional infrastructure deploying adequate financial and human resources that can ensure that by end of 2020 all GS and all members are adequately trained to perform their roles and responsibilities effectively.

Awareness: The 73rd Amendment Bill and PESA for the first time in the history of India through legislation confers the right to its adult rural population to be the member of the Gram Sabha, elect and/or get elected in Gram Panchayat, member of any of the committees of Gram Sabha or Gram Panchayat, among others. Thus now the right has been conferred to him/her. It is, however, most significant for him/her to get registered as voter to become member of the Gram Sabha, exercise this right, voice concern and seize opportunity to make his/her life [and of future generations] decent in rural areas. For Government it is not enough to confer right to rural adult citizen but create enabling environment that can inspire, motivate and encourage him/her to exercise the right for the purpose for which it has been conferred. Historically and through socio-economic and political realities adults particularly in rural areas since centuries have not understood the meaning and the concept of the right and latent potential of exercising this right.

Members of GS should be made fully aware of that Gram Sabha is empowered by conferring [i] *mandatory powers* of prior approval of plans and projects for economic development, to identify and select beneficiaries under poverty alleviation and other programs and to issue Certificate of Utilization of program funds by the Panchayat [ii] *powers to be consulted* in land acquisition for 'public purpose' and consequent displacement and rehabilitation of the affected people and [iii] *recommendatory powers* for grant of prospective license, mining lease for minor minerals and grant of concessions for exploration of minor minerals by auction.

Exposure Visits: Each district/state should have a list of successful GSs which have been making significant progress and can become role-model for weak GSs. While efforts for capacity building of

members and GSs can continue, members of weak GSs should be exposed through study tours to the working of successful GSs where members can share their experiences and learn best practices. Demonstrate the actual operations of GS and GP in the village followed by documentary film or puppet show before rural populations to make them understand better the key role of GS and GP and member's rights and responsibilities.

Training for capacity building: A large number of elected representatives need training to perform their functions since most of them are illiterate and know little about their roles and responsibilities, programs, procedures and systems. In fact, elected representatives need to be trained within three months of the election in their functional domain.

Capacity building training is critical to empower Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat to enable them to function efficiently as institutions of local self-government. As the PRIs have both developmental and regulatory responsibilities their capacity to perform these functions has to be developed. Capacity building training is a *sine qua non* for [i] elected representatives to upgrade their knowledge and skills to better perform their responsibilities [ii] reorienting officials to become more effective technical advisors and facilitating program implementers to conceptualize new ideas emerging from elected representatives and [iii] improving the functioning of Gram Sabha as an important institution of local decision-making.

Monitoring and Review: Monitoring system must be strengthened at Block level to monitor Gram Sabha-wise progress in respect of number of members enrolled, meetings held, number of members attending meetings, committees formed, among others. By year-end while number of members enrolled and attending meeting should favorably achieve the targets, other aspects of GS must show significant progress.

Evaluation: Evaluation studies of selected GS must focus on effectiveness of functioning of GS, member's empowerment measured in terms of his/her participation in discussion, decision-making process.

Information System: Web-based comprehensive information system must be in place to reflect the current status of GS vis-à-vis targeted.

Government Programs: Creating awareness among members of GSs to [i] demand and put pressure for satisfactory working of public institutions and responding to peoples' needs and aspirations, viz. schools, hospitals/dispensaries, post-offices, financial institutions, public distribution system etc. particularly absence of staff and unavailability of medicines and timely attending patients/customers [ii] commit that children of 6-14 years of age exercise their right to education and they are not engaged in manual labor [iii] demand mandated and quality services from the staff under all Government programs [iv] demand adequate budget provision for creating and maintenance of basic necessities viz. drinking water, sanitation, road connectivity etc.

ICT: Although all the District and Intermediate Panchayats are connected with computers, only around 20% Gram Panchayats have computing facility and expertise. In some States, Village Panchayats do not have computing facility and expertise at all.

Role of States: The Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj organized seven Round Table conferences with State Minister of Panchayati Raj during 2004 around the country for evolving a national consensus on pressing issues that State Governments need to resolve expeditiously in order to empower Gram Sabha viz. [i] State Acts should spell out the powers of Gram Sabhas and procedures for efficient functioning of these bodies

- [ii] Excessive control by bureaucracy has to be done away with
- [iii] State should clearly articulate the role of Gram Sabha in their Policy/Program/Scheme
- [iv] Roles and responsibilities of Sarpanch, Panch and Secretary should be clearly defined
- [v] Sarpanch and Panch should represent the voice of people and not be rendered as mere functionaries of the administration
- [vi] Secretary, while being accountable to the Gram Sabha through Gram Panchayat, should be duly protected from local pressures
- [vii] PRIs should be provided with adequate manpower, mentoring and guidance. The States should, therefore, strengthen the administrative and enforcement capacity of

Panchayats through proper staffing including; outsourcing, frequent training programs comprising well-structured modules (possibly with the help of ICAI) simple guidelines, etc.

- [viii] State Government may itself devolve powers in various issues like ownership of Minor Forest Produce, control of money lending and prevention of alienation of tribal lands. It should be made absolutely clear that mandatory powers of the Gram Sabha are absolutely binding and that Government shall never overrule decisions of GS.

Road map: A road map, showing commitment to fulfilling the provisions of the 73rd Amendment by the end of 2020, needs to be drawn incorporating components, among others, viz. [i] Block-wise and year-wise commitment of enrolling all rural adults as voters to become members of GS [ii] instilling in all of them the faith and confidence about their membership in GS to make their lives decent [iii] formation of committees of GS and GP [iv] making GSs functioning through appointment of the Secretary, ensuring at least 50% members' attendance, conducting mandated meetings of GSs, GP and committees including Standing Committee, recording proceedings of meetings, among others.

Conclusion: Effective coordination among departments and between the Union and State Governments should create facilitating environment that can sustain members' faith and confidence in the GS and that GS presents immense opportunities to its members to elect and/or get elected in the responsible committee to participate actively, voice views and take decision, transform the village economy. GS and members can collectively make functioning of GP transparent and accountable to villagers. There is need to sensitize media, political parties, legislatures, civil society institutions and citizens to accept and promote the Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat as an essential grassroots level of local government and for inclusive and participatory development.

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HAS THE PANCHAYTI RAJ WORKED?

Dr. M. Venkat Reddy

The Community Development experiment initiated in the early 60s did not yield substantial results because government's participation was far more than people's participation. The Balwantray Mehta Committee pointed out poignantly that absence of people's initiatives, interests and participation in the community development programmes contributed to widening the gap between people and the government. In order to alleviate this gap and increase people's participation the Committee recommended setting up of self-government institutions. Based on the recommendations, Panchayati Raj came into existence. Panchayats were designed to provide institutional base for the people's participation. Rajasthan was the first state to adopt the Panchayati Raj system in 1959, other states soon followed suit. This move was soon throttled due to various micro and macro factors ranging from non-elections, suspension of local governments, misuse of authority and power, lack of adequate representation of minorities. Women were regarded only as recipients of welfare rather than contributors to development and so on. This manifested nonfunctional and ineffective

PRIs which were directly under the control of the State. This resulted in defeating the very essence of Panchayati Raj.

Issues and Challenges

One need not be unduly overwhelmed with the provision of the 73rd Amendment because it is easier said than done. In order to translate the map date of the 73rd Amendment there is a major impediment in the system which needs to be looked into. It is anticipated that discords are likely to arise amongst four important subsystems of the Panchayati Raj, namely the local level politician, the senior level politician, the vested interest groups and the bureaucrats. The common basis for this discord is redistribution of powers.

Power Sharing or Shredding

For the first time, power is going to be shared between the State and Panchayati Raj institutions. A large number of MLAs, ministers, and bureaucrats have felt threatened because of losing power in the process of delegation of powers to the Panchayati Raj bodies. This' is natural because sharing of power



is a frightful experience. Only time will tell what sort of frictions, ambiguities, and confrontation will be generated in implementing the provisions of the Panchayati Raj Act. It has been seen that the higher political elite has become vindictive towards the lower political figures in view of their inexperience, lack of understanding and other failings. They would immediately jump to conclusion and would be only too happy to malign the functioning of the Panchayati Raj. Further, the local level politicians will now no longer be at local levels, but are likely to move high up in their political careers which will be a direct threat to the MLAs and MPs. Hence the confrontation between the local politicians and the decentralization process.

Local Politician Vs Bureaucrats

The issues arising out of the interface between the politicians and bureaucrats also need to be anticipated. The 73rd Amendment has resulted in reduction of power and authority enjoyed by the bureaucracy in the past. There is a wide difference in the background vision, understanding, sensitivity, approach, between the local leaders and bureaucrats. Similarly, the non-officials with their newly found power might tend to become despotic to fulfill their personal greed and ambitions. Women, hitherto who were powerless are now empowered. There is a possibility that the empowered women will take some time to get accustomed to their new status and vital role, during which time men and other bureaucrats are likely to ignore or misuse their power.

Governmental Indifference

It is important to note that PRIs have become part of our Constitution and all the states covered by the new Act have enacted the necessary legislation. It's been almost two years since the Act has come into force. Most of the states and union territories have not held elections to the PRIs. In some states and union territories PRIs have been constituted only partly. This callous attitude towards the entire restructuring shows that the exercise has become a farce. Even wherever it is implemented one finds that the scene has not changed much and most of it is attributed to the human factor involved. A lot of communication gaps, lack of clarity regarding responsibilities, expectations have contributed to its slow pace. The dependency attitude nurtured so far

by the government has created inertia amongst the people which hampers proper participation.

Interest Groups Vs Local Leadership

There is also a possibility of confrontation between vested interest groups and local level institutions. These interest groups, viz; the business community, contractors, self-appointed social workers, religious organisations, etc are likely to work at cross purposes. At times elected representatives will be scapegoats in these vicious circles. Inner rings will be formed for personal wheeling-dealings, ignoring the interests of the community at large.

A Second Look

The system of Panchayati Raj, as established in the country failed to realize the dream of its architects. In particular, since the mid-sixties, it came to have a low profile. As a form of local government, it looked like falling out of favour everywhere. The Committee of the Government of India on PRIs (Ashok Mehta Committee), in its report (1978) regretted that the activities of PRIs were meagre, their resource base was weak, and the overall attention given to them was scanty. Therefore, the need for having a second look was strongly felt.

The Committee in its report submitted in August 1978 mainly recommended a two-tier system with Mandal Panchayats at the base and Zilla Parishads at the top. Seats for SCs and STs were to be reserved on the basis of their population. The Committee had made an attempt to revitalise the Panchayati Raj system. A remarkable feature of the report should be seen in the recommendations for having an open participation of political parties in Panchayati Raj affairs. The State governments should not be having absolute powers to supersede PRIs on political grounds. Moreover, it had also been desired that in case an institution was superseded, elections must take place within six months.

New Initiatives in the States

In the late 70s and early 80s, Panchayat being the basic institution for rural development, was left to the will of the State governments. But it is heartening to note that since then a number of states have made sincere efforts touring Panchayats back into focus.

Integration of Decentralisation Process and Development Needs

It was expected that with this legislative support, the process of decentralisation would gather momentum. Regular elections should make those elected to the local bodies more sensitive to local opinion. Protection against arbitrary action by the state governments should help the local bodies take a more independent view of the requirements of the constituents. Moreover, an improvement in: the financial position of these bodies should enable them to directly meet local requirements. However, the experience of decentralization in several states suggests that the effective transfer of power to PRIs has thrown up problems of its own. Somehow, a preoccupation with short-term considerations became a major impediment to the effective functioning of PRIs. The task before the Panchayat institutions got further complicated by having to function in an atmosphere of liberalization. With agricultural growth no longer merely a matter of investing public funds, the Panchayats need to explore alternative means of financing investment in rural infrastructure. As such, the process of decentralization with long-term strategies for development needs to be integrated much more effectively. Such integration requires, among other things, a greater awareness among Panchayat members of the policy options before them.

Non-functioning of Gram Sabha and Non-availability of Reserved Categories

While Gram Sabhas have been revived, reports indicate that they have not been functioning and the status quo of their moribund state persists. This is perhaps because it is difficult to have all villagers gathered at a meeting at any particular point of time though it is not very difficult provided prior planning is done. Reservation of seats for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and women has been a welcome step but not many of these categories of persons are available in most of the Panchayat institutions. Many institutions do not have women members according to the quota due to their having remained in splendid isolation for decades together.

The recent enactment of the 73rd amendment to the Constitution of India, with its focus on promoting village-level democracy, is an important landmark in the development of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The provision of holding elections every five years to the panchayats governing India's half a million villages, and with the reservation of one-third of the seats for women and for the scheduled castes and tribes in proportion to their population in each panchayat, is a significant step taken for the empowerment of the underprivileged in Indian society.

Some Highlights of the Amendment Act 1993

The new Amendment Act has set in motion a new phase of democratic decentralization of administrative powers to the local self-bodies. It is meant to delegate the authority to the elected members at the grass root levels. The basic thrust of the

It is anticipated that discords are likely to arise amongst four important subsystems of the Panchayati Raj, namely the local level politician, the senior level politician, the vested interest groups and the bureaucrats.

measure is that the elected local governments will hitherto be allowed to function in respect to their allotted areas of task. The Act contains a number of features, such as an adequate representation through direct or indirect election of the chairman of the village panchayats, maximum period of their suppression, mandatory

appointment of the state level Election Commission and Finance Commission, women representation and reservation for SCs/STs and backward classes etc. The functions allotted to these bodies cover 29, while those for municipal bodies are 16. There is a provision of the involvement of the Planning Commission and the Comptroller Auditor-General in order to strengthen these institutions in dealing with the subjects like primary education, adult education, basic health facilities, drinking water, etc. Under the Representation of People Act, local government is now accountable to the elective local body than the state government. The role of the bureaucracy and the control of the state seems to have been marginalized.

Conclusion

The task before the country to put back Panchayat Raj on the track is a Herculean one. The 73rd Amendment has brought about a structural

change. To make this functional there is a need to strengthen various aspects of PRIs. To a large extent this will depend upon whether we are able to provide the human resources for the purpose. More rules, regulations, procedures would not facilitate empowerment of the people. A healthy respect for the process of decentralization amongst the political leaders and bureaucrats is essential.

The present scenario is highly complex. The future does not hold any great promise. Various social, cultural and political impediments are in the way. These have a bearing on the performance of the Panchayat Raj. Only the depth of commitment and conviction will determine whether or not Panchayat Raj can become an effective instrument of governance in future.

In short, the PR system has hitherto failed to realize the dreams of its architects. After 1970, its impact on record was a low profile. The Ashok Mehta Committee has rightly expressed its grave regret that “the activities of these bodies were meagre, their resource-base weak and the overall attention given to them niggardly”. Truly, the panchayati raj stood at the crossroad till the passage of the 73rd Amendment Act in 1993. The system which was heralded in 1959 with great enthusiasm and fanfare appears to have become a ‘neglected child’ of the state government with the passage of time. Therefore, the panchayati raj administration is generally characterized by delay, excess formalism, paper work and concentration of authority, for which the role of local coalition politics and its nexus with the bureaucracy should be blamed. In this context, therefore, needed for administrating rural development is, in addition to professional competence, a firm commitment to achieve the objectives of the new Act at the grass roots level is needed. Paradoxically, in a country with a large mass of educated unemployed, professional competence has to be well acknowledged, because it has been recorded that within the official structure, tire incompetent or those unable to manipulate the levels of power tend to get relegated to manning panchayats. Attempt to foster right attitude, along with administrative competence and political exercise, should be the answer to the difficulties faced by the panchayats.

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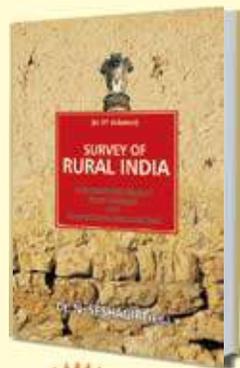
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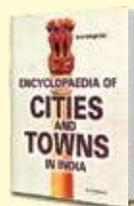
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TWO DECADES OF PANCHAYATI RAJ-GAPS AND CHALLENGES

Dr. G. R. Jayanandam and Prof. Panjala Narasaiah

Panchayati Raj Institutions have come into being to give power to the powerless, voice to the voiceless by bringing the hitherto neglected sections of the society into the arena of political, social and administrative development to achieve inclusive growth. The present PRIs owe their existence to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao. While Rajiv Gandhi conceived the idea of institutionalizing and constitutionalising PRIs, P.V. Narasimha Rao carried forward the gigantic task and enacted 73rd Amendment to the Constitution which is hailed as the Magnacarta.

objectives

1. Though the Panchayati Raj Institutions have been in existence for a long time, it has been observed that these institutions have not been able to acquire the status and dignity of viable and responsive people's bodies due to a number of reasons including absence of regular elections, prolonged supersessions,

insufficient representation of weaker sections like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women, inadequate devolution of power and lack of financial resources.

2. Article 40 of the Constitution lays down that the State shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.
3. Accordingly, it was proposed to add a new Part relating to Panchayats in the Constitution to provide for among other things, Gram Sabha in a village or group of villages; constitution of Panchayats at village and other level or levels; direct elections to all seats in Panchayats at the village and intermediate level.

Rightly called as third tier of government, PRIs have traveled and completed two decades of inspiring existence strengthening the grass roots democracy.



The highlights of the Act:

(1) Constitutional status to PRIs, (2) Gram Sabha, (3) Direct Elections to all seats in Panchayats and the offices of Chairpersons of Panchayats, (4) Reservation of seats for the SCs and STs and office of chairperson in Panchayat at each level, reservation of seats for women, (5) Fixed tenure of five years, (6) Constitution of Election Commission and (6) Finance Commission.

The working of the 73rd Amendment of Constitution relating to PRIs has been scanned by research scholars, civil society, elected Panchayat Raj representatives, NGOs, media and institutions established by private and government. It is no exaggeration to say that PRIs are much researched area and fertile soil and food for thinkers, scholars etc. This shows that PRIs are treated as the reality of Mahatma Gandhi's dream.

This Act in a sense translates the dream of Mahatma Gandhi, but not fully. According to his dream, the village swaraj has to achieve the following objectives:

My idea of Village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. As far as possible every activity will be conducted on the co-operative basis. There will be no castes such as we have today with their graded untouchability. There will be a compulsory service of village guards who will be selected by rotation from the register maintained by the village. The government of the village will be conducted by the Panchayat of five persons, annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office.

Grama Sabha:

Grama Sabha is regarded as the fourth tier of the Constitution the other tiers being Central

Government, State Governments and PRIs. Gram Sabha, a body of the voters of the village is regarded as a mini Assembly or Parliament at that level. It has a main role of suggesting plan for the development of village. According to the Act, in the Panchayati Raj set up, the Gram Sabha, the general assembly of villagers, has a key role for effective functioning of Panchayats. In the Gram Sabha meeting, the rural poor, the women and the marginalised people would now get an opportunity to join in decision making on matters affecting their lives. Active functioning of the Gram Sabha would ensure a participatory democracy with transparency, accountability and achievement.

The Grama Sabha should meet at least in each quarter, decide developmental work to be undertaken by Panchayat based on needs assessment, suggest remedial measures for economy and efficiency in the functioning of the panchayats and question, scrutinise the decisions of panchayats in meeting of Gram Sabha and discuss the annual financial statement of Gram Panchayats.

Gram Panchayat:

Studies have revealed that nearly 40% of Gram Panchayats are economically unviable. They are created because required number of voters are available to constitute a village Gram Panchayat. Major and other Gram Panchayats do not have powers to levy new taxes. Where there is taxing power the minimum and maximum tax limit is not prescribed. The other strong reason is that local bodies are shying away to impose and collect taxes due to fear of losing votes.

As such local bodies are dependent upon state governments for their mercy to give grants for the development of Gram Panchayats. This financial dependency implies that local bodies are not self governments but agents of State Government. 73rd Amendment stated that henceforth PRIs improve the quality of democracy. But the working of local government with inadequate financial resources

The working of the 73rd Amendment of Constitution relating to PRIs is scanned by research scholars, civil society, elected Panchayat Raj representatives, NGOs, media and institutions established by private and government

and dependency for the same on the state government reveals that the PRIs cannot work for the improvement of quality of democracy at the gross roots level.

Finance Commission:

State governments are required to appoint local Finance Commissions under this 73rd Amendment Act. The principles which should govern are:

- i. The distribution between the State and the Panchayats of the net proceeds of the taxes, duties, tolls and fees leviable by the State, which may be divided between them under this Part and the allocation between the Panchayats at all levels of their respective shares of such proceeds;
- ii. the determination of the taxes, duties, tolls and fees which may be assigned to, or appropriated by, the Panchayat;
- iii. the grants-in-aid to the Panchayats from the Consolidated Fund of the State;

The recommendations of the Finance Commission are not binding on the state governments like the recommendations of National Finance Commission on Government of India.

Planning from below:

Article 243 ZD made planning from below constitutional obligation on PRIs. Bottom up planning improves the delivery of the programmes and services at the grassroots level. It is needed because large bureaucracies “lack the time and place knowledge” and do not know real needs and preferences of the local people. In most states district planning committees are yet to function.

Empowerment of Women:

Women constitute almost half of the population of the country. Yet, women were not a part of the decision making process at the gross roots level before the enactment of 73rd Amendment Act. This Amendment provided seats and offices (ex: Sarpanch) to women thus giving them, for the first time an opportunity to share political power and exercise administrative power

in the development of the PRIs. This historical decision is fraught with practical problems. Research studies have revealed that the men folk have not appreciated this move of the government empowering the women. Women’s names were removed from the voter list, they were kidnapped, not allowed to contest and forced to resign after the election. Elected women candidates were prevented from discharging their functions as Sarpanches etc. They were made to sit on the floor but not in the chair due to them. Local bureaucracy refused to co-operate with women office bearers. The landed gentry and traditional leaders created problem to the women office bearers. They were accompanied to the office either by husband, son or a male member of the family or a male relative. In some cases husbands acted as proxy Sarpanch leaving the wife as the name sake Sarpanch. Thus, Women have not been allowed to discharge their functions independently. The side effect of

reservation is that the roles of the male and female members of the family have been reversed in the sense that wife performed the traditional function of the husband and vice versa. In some cases husbands of the female sarpanches are nick named as ‘her husband’ or Mr. Sarpanch. Age old traditions die hard. This is clear in this case. Illiteracy, ignorance and unawareness of

her role may be the reason for the subordination of woman sarpanch to her husband and to her male relatives.

Reservations for SCs:

Like women, SCs are also subjected to harassment, humiliation and denial of their constitutional right to contest, to hold offices and exercise functions that belong to them as the elected members of PRIs. Lack of qualified and willing SC candidates is a real problem in fielding candidates for the reserved seats. Opposition to the reservation by the people with vested interests stems from the fear that the haves lose power and have nots gain power. To overcome this problem the upper castes and other mechanism is to field their domestic servants, farm labourers, money

Grama Sabha is regarded as the fourth tier of the Constitution the other tiers being Central Government, State Governments, PRIs.

borrowers from the reserved wards and exercise real power thus making the weaker sections dummy office holders and reservations in PRIs a mockery.

Conclusion:

Since states have been given option to formulate conformity Acts under the main Act, state governments led by regional parties have done better than the other states. This Act has thrown challenge to age old caste system, power structure and domination of 'haves over the 'havenots'. As expected empowered women and oppressed classes have been humiliated, harassed and prevented from enjoying their rights conferred on them by the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution Act. However, opposition from the upper castes, feudal lords is not in a large scale. Slowly and steadily the mind set of opponents of the Act is compromising with the changing political transformation of India. The two decades of inspiring journey into a bright future to rural development and hither to neglected sections of the society is a promise that the future

The two decades of inspiring journey into a bright future to rural development and hither to neglected sections of the society is a promise that the future of PRIs will be brighter

of PRIs will be brighter than what it is today provided the village youths, NGOs enlightened citizen and visitors (residents of a village who settled in places other than their places.

Political will and wisdom of the politicians are required to take necessary measures to protect the interest of the weaker sections who are prevented from enjoying their constitutional rights. It is learnt that Atrocities on SCs & STs prevention

Act is going to be amended to include prevention of filing a nomination, holding office etc by the reserved candidates as an offence under this Act. Like Food Security Act, better it is, that the 73rd Amendment Act implementation is taken by the Government of India as its responsibility. States autonomy, federal spirit etc. should not defeat the purpose of the Act in the interest of inclusive growth of the country.

[Dr. G.R.Jayanandam is retired Asst. Director and Prof. Panjala Narasaiah is retired Professor of Public Administration, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University Hyderabad]

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ROLE OF PANCHAYAT SAMITI IN PANCHAYATI RAJ

Dr. Amiya Kumar Mohapatra

“Human development, as an approach, is concerned with what I take to be the basic development idea: namely, advancing the richness of human life, rather than the richness of the economy in which human beings live, which is only a part of it.”

Prof. Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate in Economics

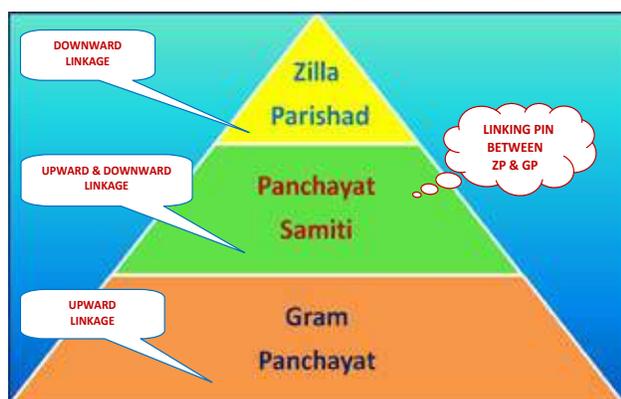
Inclusive growth is multifaceted and can be addressed through growth with justice. Here justice indicates economical, social and political equality among all the people of a country. Growth with equity in itself does not have automatic mechanism to reach the deprived and excluded section of society; rather it should be directed purposefully to benefit the masses or the target demography. Democracy will lose its shine if the deprived masses will not be sharing the benefit of the progress of the country. Thus, human development concerns much about people and their capabilities and choices as people constitute the real assets of a nation. Development empowers people qualitatively for a better life and a better society and that can be achieved by public participation in the planning process. “Power to the people” can be given a useful meaning only

when communities will participate in their own development process. That is why enlargement of people’s choices and their involvement in various schemes of development process is very much inevitable for the triumph of true democracy. The historical milestone of provision of constitutional status and government support to Panchayati Raj System transferred our democratic set up of our country into a direct democracy and enable the voiceless people to have ‘voice’ and choiceless people to have ‘choice’ in their own developmental process. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act-1992, vested necessary and entailed power to the Panchayati Raj Institution (PRIs) which are the generic body of local self governance in India and empowered them to plan and implement various schemes to achieve social justice and economic development in our country.



Panchayat Samiti: The Linking Pin

As according to the notification of state government, each and every District is divided into various Blocks for achieving better and effective administrative efficiency. And further, each Block divided into number of Gram Panchayats so that micro level planning and compressive development work can be streamlined. For every Block, the state government shall constitute a Panchayat Samiti to co-ordinate and integrate the development plans and schemes prepared by Gram Panchayat at the Block level. Panchayat Samiti will prepare the agenda of development for Gram Panchayat and process the same to the respective Zilla Parishad for financial grant and for perusal. Thus, Panchayat Samiti played vital link between Zilla Parishad and Gram Panchayat In the hierarchy of Panchayati Raj System, Panchayat Samiti act as the main executive and implementing organ of the Zilla Parishad and similarly Gram Panchayat act as the main executive and implementing organ of the Panchayat Samiti.



Panchayati Raj System follows three tier system that is 'Gram Panchayat', 'Panchayat Samiti' and 'Zilla Parishad', where Zilla Parishad works at the apex and Gram Panchayat works at the bottom in the three tier structure where as Panchayat Samiti works as an intermediary between the two. As far as its power and function are concerned, each institution has their definite function for development of "Shelf of Project". As an intermediate institution of local self governance, Panchayat Samiti should not be only accountable to Zilla Parishad but also the facilitator of funds, facility to the Gram Panchayat. Generally each Gram Panchayat tries to focus on its own area development but Panchayat Samiti helps them to prioritize their needs and demands and

communicate the same to Zilla Parishad through its prospective plan.

Panchayat Samiti: Role and Function

1. It is evident from Panchayat Samiti that most of the Gram Panchayats send their schemes and plans to respective Panchayat Samitis for grant and implementation without evaluating the cost-benefit analysis of the schemes. When all the proposed schemes are placed by Gram Panchayat to Panchayat Samiti, then, Panchayat Samiti evaluates each and every scheme in the light of social welfare and economic development of the area concerned considering the financial and implementation aspects of the scheme. All the schemes get scrutinized in the project finalization process on the basis of financial needs and constraints and set social priorities. Each Panchayat Samiti tries to allocate its funds for various schemes considering the socio-economic needs at the grass root level.
2. All the development work at Gram Panchayat level is undertaken and supported by Panchayat Samiti and that is why supervision and monitoring of the developmental schemes is one of the essential functions of Panchayat Samiti.
3. As a broader prospective, Panchayat Samiti has to identify and prioritize various issues to be addressed at block level and enable to cover the needs and aspirations at the village level. Panchayat Samiti exclusively designs various schemes at block level like education, health, livelihood opportunities, agriculture, social welfare, water-supply, development of cottage and small industries, irrigation, establishment of schools and libraries etc.
4. Panchayat Samiti tries to address the needs of deprived and weaker sections of the society at the block level which is generally not covered in Gram Panchayat. These segments include the development schemes for women, children, old, widow and special schemes for schedule caste and schedule tribe.
5. The prospective plan of Panchayat Samiti is generally made for a 5-year term and the annual plans are prepared at Panchayat Samiti level to fine tune with the prospective plan so

as to implement it to get immediate outcome. These plans get prepared and implemented under the effective leadership of Block Chairman/Panchayat Samiti Chairman and Block Developmental Officer.

6. Each Panchayat Samiti requests and informs to all the Gram Panchayats which are within its jurisdiction to prepare and prioritize various schemes meant for development in their respective areas. It collects all the prospective plans from Gram Panchayat and processes them for sanction and implementation at the Panchayat Samiti level after considering all the financial needs and constraints at Panchayat Samiti level.
7. The Panchayat Samiti circulate the prospective plans among respective Gram Panchayat to get their feedback and suggestion so that it can be included if necessary and finally circulate the same among the Gram Panchayat located within its jurisdiction. Thus, accomplishment of the structure is very much depending upon how things get communicated effectively and efficiently between the tiers. It requires understandable and continuous vertical, forward and backward communication among the tiers so as to link the grass root level developmental process with mainstream developmental process.
8. Decentralized planning structure could become effective only when there is proper cooperation and coordination among the three tiers and that is why, Panchayat Samiti plays a very vital role and works as a linking pin in bringing congeniality and coordination between Zilla Parishad and Gram Panchayat. Besides, decentralized planning would get success only when people get participated at each level of planning process and evolution of strategies.
9. The success of addressing the needs of masses particularly the weaker and deprived sections should be processed at the grass root level mainly at Gram Panchayat but it could be translated into real success only when Panchayat Samiti processes and prioritizes these demands at its own level, and further

processes them at Zilla Parishad level to get the desired financial and planning support to execute and implement various schemes that are meant for socio-economic development for the target demography.

10. Panchayat Samiti meets its expenses incurred on various development schemes primarily manage from revenue that is generated from various tax receipts, license fee from the respective Blocks and grants-in-aid and loans received from the respective Zilla Parishads and State Governments and can spend the same subject to approval of competent authority (Zilla Parishad).
11. Panchayat Samiti is entrusted for the overall responsibility for the socio-economic development at the Block level and should promote good governance by ensuring effective delivery of services, adhering to transparency and accountability in the process of planning and implementation of various schemes.

Concluding Remarks

Just creation of system, structure and institutions for better local self governance by providing autonomy through decentralization and participatory management at different levels is not enough rather to create a sustainable people centered and people powered environment in which all the communities can exercise their voices and choices and thereby can get involved in the decision making process for better inclusiveness. The three 'Fs', funds, functions, and functionaries are needed to optimally operate to enhance the desired benefits that can percolate among the masses. Decentralization of power can be rejuvenated through creating and spreading awareness and knowledge among the people at the grass root level. Howsoever, Panchayati Raj System will definitely become effective and efficient through good governance, timely implementation and close monitoring of various schemes and adhering to transparency and accountability in the process.

(Dr. Amiya Kumar Mohapatra is Assistant Professor of Apeejay School of Management, Dwarka, New Delhi. E-mail id:amiyacademics@gmail.com)

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INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY IN INDIA - STILL A LONG JOURNEY AHEAD

Dr. T. Sadashivam

The dream of achieving Inclusive Democracy in our society is still a distant one. Although, we call ourselves as largest democracy in the world in the contest of population, but there exists a question mark over the population itself. Nevertheless, the participation of voters in majority of state assembly elections and particularly the Lok Sabha elections is around 50% plus average, except the first and second Lok Sabha elections of 1952 and 1957. Every time, the elections come (either Lok Sabha or State Assemblies) there is a buzz around the country or state, particularly among the political parties and the media. As Abraham Lincoln has said 'democracy is the government of the people, by the people, for the people'. But in present time democracy can be rightly described in Joseph Stiglitz's words as 'of the 1%, by the 1%, for the 1%'. Just only by giving the people right to vote in the constitution, it does not make us inclusive democracy, as long as the development which is

directed towards transforming the entire society in the field of economic, social and political are not changed towards benefiting the last man living in the rural and remote areas of the country. Below are discussed three important challenges which come in the way of inclusive democracy:

Economic challenges

In the last one and half decades, we have been very much proud about the fact that our economy is one of the emerged as fastest growing economies in the world. Slowly, moving from being a predominantly agrarian economy to industries and service sector, which playing an important role in our economy. The Hindu rate of growth(2 to 3%) for more than four decades has been story now, and today it is all about shining India, with its growing middle class which has seen as huge market by domestic and international companies. But there is also a fact that the economic growth have not trickled to the most



disadvantaged people, who are living in both rural and urban areas. According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) data based on the 66th consumption expenditure survey shows that the pace of reduction in poverty has been the slowest in the bottom (15%) of the population. Also, in rural areas the ratio of per capita income between the top (15%) and bottom (15%) of the population has risen from 3.9 in 2004-05 to 5.8 in 2009-10. Same way in urban areas, ratio has gone up from 6.4 to 7.8.

But on contrary, the percentage of population below poverty line (BPL) in the country has declined from (45.3%) in 1993-94 to (37.2%) in 2004-05 and (29.8%) in 2009-10. In rural areas, the decline in poverty ratio is from (50.1%) in 1993-94 to (41.8%) in 2004-05 and (33.8%) in 2009-10, that is decline of 16.3 percentage points from 1993-94 to 2009-10. For urban areas, the decline in poverty ratio is from (31.8%) in 1993-94 to (25.7%) in 2004-05 and (20.9%) in 2009-10, that is decline of 10.9 percentage points only from 1993-94 to 2009-10. Thus, the decline in poverty ratio is more in rural areas than in urban areas, which is also a cause of concern. As the urban population is increasing and today it is near about 31.16% of our population according to 2011 census, and it projected that by 2050, two third of India's population will be called urban population and the poverty issue will be the main issue as more people will be migrating to urban areas for various reasons. However, overall we should not be very happy by seeing this data related to decline in poverty line, as many people are stall caught in poverty trap.

One thing has to be remembered that the poverty data which has been discussed for 2009-10 is based on Tendulkar Committee Methodology which came under criticism for lowering the poverty line too low at Rupees 28 a day for urban areas and Rupees 22 a day for rural areas. In simple words, it says a person who got Rupees 28 in urban areas and 22 in rural areas to spend daily is not poor, and is above poverty line. Also per capita income per month for urban areas is Rupees 860 and in rural areas it is Rupees 673 fixed. By following Tendulkars methodology, many poor people living in different states will be automatically out of BPL category, that is

the reason why many people have voiced their opposition against it and a panel formed under the Chairmanship of C. Rangarajan which has been asked to review the poverty line, still its recommendation is pending. Also, so far socio-economic and caste census are not completed.

Social Challenges

One segment of the society, which is suffering the most and for the past more than one decade many of them laid down their lives is Indian farmers. The issue of farmer's suicide is a disturbing phenomenon in our society, because still majority of our population especially in rural areas depends upon agriculture for their livelihood. The main reason for farmer's suicide is their indebtedness because of rising input cost and is not getting remunerative prices for their produce. Table No 1 has clearly shows that the total of 2,54,669 farmers have committed suicide during the period 1995-2010 in the country. Out of which 2, 14,689 are male and 39,980 are female farmers.

Table No.-1: Farmers Suicide State-Wise from 1995-2010

States	Male	Female	Total
Andhra Pradesh	25462	5658	31120
Arunachal Pradesh	158	30	188
Assam	3302	264	3566
Bihar	1058	177	1235
Chhattisgarh	11686	2654	14340
Goa	163	7	170
Gujarat	7340	1443	8783
Haryana	2639	181	2820
Himachal Pradesh	560	71	631
Jammu & Kashmir	159	28	187
Jharkhand	791	47	838
Karnataka	28739	6314	35053
Kerala	17617	1290	18907
Madhya Pradesh	21038	5684	26722
Maharashtra	44837	5644	50481
Manipur	15	5	20
Meghalaya	115	19	134
Mizoram	52	5	57
Nagaland	20	3	23
Odisha	3856	604	4460
Punjab	1248	15	1263
Rajasthan	8063	1202	9265
Sikkim	289	88	377
Tamil Nadu	11252	2623	13875
Tripura	731	404	1135

Uttar Pradesh	7777	1593	9370
Uttarakhand	252	66	318
West Bengal	15470	3861	19331
Total (States)	214689	39980	254669

Source from-Indian Agrarian Crisis-agrarian crisis. in/2012/02/29/farmers-suicides-data-from-1995-2010-state-wise-gender-desegregated, accessed on 15th January 2013.

The farmer's suicide under the male category, the top five states are Maharashtra with 44,837 farmer's suicide; Karnataka 28,739; Andhra Pradesh 25,462; Madhya Pradesh 21,038; and West Bengal 15,470. Interestingly, the four southern states

Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu accounts for 83,070 farmer's suicide in the country. In female category, Karnataka state leads the table with 6314 farmer's suicide, the state of Madhya Pradesh comes second with 5684; Andhra Pradesh third with 5658; Maharashtra fourth with 5644 and West Bengal fifth with 3861 farmer's suicide. If we combine together both male and female farmer's suicide in the country, the state of Maharashtra will be at the top with 50,481 farmer's suicide; followed by Karnataka 35,053; Andhra Pradesh 31,120; Madhya Pradesh 26,722 and West Bengal 19,331.

Table No.-2: Women and Men Participation in Lok Sabha Elections (from 1st to 15th)

Lok Sabha Election Periods	Total Number of Seats Filled	Total Electorate (Millions)	Women Electors (Millions)	Total Voter Turnout (Percentage)	Percentage of Women Participation to the total Electors	Percentage of Men Participation to the total Electors	Total Number of Men and Women Contested	Total Number of Women Contested	Total Number of Women Elected	Percentage of Women Elected among Total Women	Percentage of Men Elected among Total men
First 1952-57	489	173.21	77.9	45.7	38.1	80.0	1874	43	22	32.5	25.9
Second 1957-62	494	193.65	91.4	45.74	38.7	86.1	1519	45	27	60	31.7
Third 1962-67	494	217.68	102.4	55.42	46.63	63.3	1985	70	34	50	24.0
Fourth 1967-71	494	274.60	119.4	61.33	55.48	66.7	2369	67	31	44.8	21.3
Fifth 1971-77	520	274.09	130.6	55.29	49.11	60.9	2784	86	22	24.4	18.5
Sixth 1977-80	520	321.17	154.2	60.49	54.91	65.6	2439	70	19	27.1	22.1
Seventh 1980-84	542	363.94	170.3	56.92	51.22	62.2	4620	142	28	19.7	11.5
Eighth 1984-89	542	400.10	192.3	64.1	58.6	68.5	5495	164	44	25.6	9.2
Ninth 1989-91	542	499.00	236.9	62.0	57.3	66.1	6160	198	27	13.6	8.4
Tenth 1991-96	529	514.00	234.5	61.0	52.3	61.8	7579	325	39	11.1	5.8
Eleventh 1996-97	521	592.57	282.8	57.94	53.4	62.0	13962	599	40	6.37	3.8
Twelfth 1997-99	543	605.58	289.2	61.97	57.9	65.7	4750	274	43	15.7	11.2
Thirteenth 1999-2004	543	605.88	295.7	59.99	55.6	64.0	4448	284	49	17.3	10.2
Fourteenth 2004-09	543	671.00	322.0	57.86	53.6	62.0	5435	355	45	12.7	9.8
Fifteenth 2009-14	543	713.77	342	58.4	55.9	60.0	8070	556	59	10.6	6.4

Source from-Maraju Rama Chary, 'Women and Political Participation in India-A Historical Perspective', The Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol. LXXIII, No.1, January-March, 2012, pp.124-125.

Recently, some new data has been published related to Indian farmers by applying the new farm population totals of census 2011 to farm suicide numbers of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). According to it, in the country, the Farmer's Suicide Rate (FSR) is 16.3 per 100,000 farmers in 2011, which is slightly higher than that of FSR of 15.8 per 100,000 farmers in 2001. For rest of the population, it is 10.2 per 100,000 members in 2001, which increase to 11.1 in 2011. The suicide rates among Indian farmers in general are 47% higher than they are for the rest of the population in the year 2011 and also in 16 major states of the country the farmer's suicide rate is higher than the suicide rate among the rest of the population.

Political Challenges

The women in India who constitute nearly half of our population are still deprived of economic, social, political rights in many spheres. Especially, in the field of political sphere they are inadequately represented, because of gender-based structural inequalities. In the constitution of India, Article 325 and 326 guarantee political equality-equal right to participation in political activities and right to vote respectively. While the right to vote has been exercised by them very well and it can be seen in the increase in percentage of voting by women but it is not the case with participation and representation in law making (equal political participation), especially in Parliament and State Legislatures which is still a distant dream.

Although, women participation at the grassroots level (Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Government) is quite satisfactory with participation increasing in decision making. The credit for this should go to 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment act. Also, till now 15 states have brought in law (50%) reservation for women in all three tiers of the PRIs, because of which more than 3 million women are representing the PRIs. But the question of bringing (33%) reservation for women in the Parliament is still hanging. Here, the question of reservation or representation of women in politics should be closely looked at, as

some people supporting the reservation say, if reservation for women is made it law then women can be represented very effectively and no political parties can ignore it. While other people against the reservation says that instead of reservation for women, rather increase their representation by the political parties through giving them seats in the election and also important position in the party voluntarily. However, nothing has happened on both the fronts and ultimately women are the sufferers.

The women participation in different Lok Sabha elections especially since 10th (1991-96) Lok Sabha election has seen some rise in numbers. The total number of women contested elections except the 11th lok sabha election, where a record number of 599 women candidate contested so far in the Indian history) has seen the rise in number, same way the number of women elected has just increase from 39 in 10th Lok Sabha election to 59 in 15th lok sabha election. Interestingly, the important point to note here is that the percentage of women elected among total women population is very good, compared to with that of percentage of men elected among total men population, throughout the lok sabha elections from 1st to 15th.

Conclusion

To conclude, the vision of inclusive democracy in our country should be not only, just participation in elections through voting by the people. But it should be inclusiveness in economic, social and political spheres for all the sections of the society, with particular focus on the disadvantaged and marginalized groups. The basic needs of the people like food, shelter, healthcare, education facilities should be provided to the people, as still many are deprived it. Thus, without inclusion taking place in above mentioned three spheres, inclusive democracy will not be possible in true sense.

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TRAINING INITIATIVE FOR PRIs

A CASE STUDY IN HARYANA

Dr. Preet Pal Singh

The need for capacity building and systematic training of the elected representatives of the PRIs has added importance after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment on account of reservation of one-third seats for women and seats in proportion to their population for the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes. The first time elected representatives, especially from reserved categories have no experience of performing the functions of the PRIs. Moreover, they also feel handicapped in exercising their powers and performing their duties due to lack of education and poor social & economic status on the one hand and the presence of the hostile cultural context and continuing caste and gender discrimination on the other hand. Therefore, an innovative training initiative was undertaken in Mahendergarh district of Haryana which is one of the two BRGF districts of the state.

The Objectives of the Initiative

The objectives of the Initiative were as follows:

1. To assess the training needs of elected representatives (ERs) and official functionaries of PRIs;
2. To identify the problems and challenges in imparting training to the different functionaries of PRIs;
3. To describe the good practices/success stories of HIRD in order to improve the outreach and quality of Capacity Building and Training (CB&T);
4. To find out the successful outcomes of the Initiative;
5. To learn lesson from the present Initiative and;
6. To explore the possibility of the replicability of the Initiative in other states.

Problems and Challenges of Training

It is pertinent to mention here that the elected representatives of PRIs as well as the officials were not very familiar with the benefits of training in bringing changes in the functioning of Panchayati Raj System. Hence, some of them were rather reluctant to participate in these programmes before the launch of BRGF scheme in the district in 2006-07. The officers had the apprehension that the trained leadership would create problems for them. They thought that trained and aware leaders would demand their rights and make efforts to assert their position with respect to official functionaries. So much so some of the Gram Sachivs also misguided the Sarpanches that a team of trained Panches would



make their task difficult. They warned them that the educated and trained Panches would be able to know the various loopholes in their functioning and they might turn hostile any time. Therefore, a nexus developed among the Sarpanches, Gram Sachivs and rural bureaucracy in creating hurdles in the way of training programmes.

Moreover, the non-availability of training facilities at the district, block and village levels proved to be great stumbling blocks in the way of preparing an informed class of rural leadership. The training facilities were only available at Haryana Institute of Rural Development located at Nilokheri and at Rajiv Gandhi State Institute of Panchayati Raj and Community Development (ETC), Nilokheri.

Since, the sex ratio in Mahendergarh district is among the lowest in Haryana, gender bias is still perpetuating in socio-cultural traditions. As a result, women elected representatives even hesitate in visiting the Panchayat Ghar and other public places in order to attend the meetings of Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha.

Strategy Adopted in the Initiative

Since the inception of BRGF, special efforts were made by the Institute in the District and particularly, in Ateli Nangal, Kanina and Narnaul blocks. In order to clear the misconception of Sarpanches about the negative impacts of training, HIRD empanelled some district and block level resource persons particularly the Ex-Sarpanches and Panches. Before starting the training, they (Ex-Sarpanches/Panches) organized a meeting of Sarpanches and Gram Sachivs and explained to them about the benefits of training. They convinced them that training is helpful in bringing effectiveness in their functioning.

A similar exercise was made by empanelled Resource Persons (Ex-Members of Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads) of the Institute to create an interest in the members of Zila Parishads and Panchayat Samitis about the importance of training. Moreover, some outspoken serving Presidents of Zila Parishads and Chairpersons of Panchayat Samitis were also being invited by the Institute from time to time to share their experiences and good practices with their counterparts.

HIRD had also constituted a team of retired officers (empanelled Resource Persons) who had a long experience in the field of rural development. These officers included District Development and Panchayat Officers (DDPOs), Block Development Officers (BDOs), Agriculture Development Officers (ADOs), Principal of ETC, Bankers and Gram Sachives, etc. Moreover, in order to establish a good rapport between rural bureaucracy and HIRD, a serving BDO was also appointed on deputation. This functionary has been assigned the task of sharing practical field experiences with the newly elected representatives. This whole team of retired and serving officers organized many meetings with the district and block level elected representatives and officers in order to motivate them psychologically for taking part in ensuing training programmes. After this, special programmes of different durations were organized for them at district and block levels. They were convinced that the informed and trained leadership would not create problems for them; instead they would be helpful in the systematic and lawful implementation of various programmes and schemes of the Government.

In order to impart training to the elected women representatives, the Institute had enrolled some female resource persons. In the beginning, these women resource persons organized separate sensitization programmes for the elected women representatives. The Institute also appointed special faculty members (Assistant Professor) with specialization in "Communication and Leadership Development" in order to develop the communication skills and leadership quality among the elected representatives and official functionaries.

The Media, particularly, local newspapers played an important role in raising the issues like "Importance of Training for Elected Women Representatives", "Training-Harbinger of Change" etc. The local newspapers publicized the training programmes with photographs in a very impressive manner. All these attempts brought a positive change in favour of training.

After organizing special programmes for different categories of elected representatives and officers, some joint programmes were also organized by the Institute with the help of its empanelled

Resource Persons and Faculty Members. These programmes were meant to understand the relationship between the elected representatives and rural bureaucracy and interlinkages among the three tiers of Panchayati Raj i.e. Zila Parishad, Panchayat Samiti and Gram Panchayat.

HIRD also organized special Gram Sabha campaigns to generate awareness among elected representatives (ERs) of Gram Panchayat and the members of Gram Sabha. These Campaigns raised the issues such as, conduct of meetings of Gram Sabha; roles and responsibilities of members of Gram Sabha; social audit; and other social, political and environmental issues. These training programmes outlined the role of Gram Sabha in planning, implementation and monitoring of village development programmes/schemes of the Government and appealed to the members of Gram Sabha to make efforts for bringing transparency and accountability in the functioning of Gram Panchayat.

So far as training of Panches is concerned, it was organized at cluster level, so that the ward members do not have to travel long distances. The timings and duration of training were also taken into consideration from a user friendly perspective while planning for training. Adequate arrangements for boarding, lodging, reading material, training kits were also made for the participants.

Outcome

Our monitoring clearly shows that the level of awareness of members of Gram Sabha as well as of elected representatives has increased to a considerable extent. The participation of elected women and elected representatives of SCs/STs in the functioning of PRIs has increased as compared to the earlier level; but still there is a large scope of continuing positive efforts in this field. Gradually, the elected women have started taking interest in development programmes. Now, some women are even ready to attend a training programme at far off places- block and district, without being accompanied by their husbands/sons/relatives. The most remarkable impact is being noticed in the behaviour of members of Gram Sabha towards

improved focus on sanitation and hygiene. More than 50 Gram Panchayats of the District have been awarded the 'Nirmal Gram Puraskar'. In the beginning a negative impact of awareness was noticed among the members of Gram Sabha as they started complaining about Sarpanches and unnecessarily started harassing the Sarpanches on one pretext or the other. The number of applications under RTI increased to a large extent but after some time the issue came down to normal because training helped the Sarpanches in proper maintenance of accounts and records of Gram Panchayats.

The Institute is very successful in organizing Gram Sabha Campaigns in all the Gram Panchayats of the district. Besides, Gram Sabha Campaigns, various other training programmes such as Sectorally Focused training, Development of ICT Skills, Foundation Courses, Decentralized Planning, etc. have also been organized. Now, many a times, the initiative for organizing a training programme on a new scheme comes from the district and block level officers.

Lessons Learnt and Replicability of the Successful Practices in other states

It is concluded from this Initiative that each region and each category of officials and elected representatives (ERs) have their own special needs of training and also have special problems and challenges for organizing customized training programmes for them. In order to clear the misconception of training among different stakeholders, same category of resource persons need to be appointed as these resource persons understand the problems of trainees more accurately and deeply. Moreover, the trainees have also shown more faith and comfort in learning from those trainers who belong to their own category. Thus, our experience of deploying experienced elected representatives and officials as empanelled resource persons for training of PRIs validates the methodology of peer educators and trainers.

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HOW IMPORTANT IS GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT?

Dr Jayanta Kumar Dab

Recently terms 'governance' and 'good governance' have been increasingly used in development literature. Bad governance is being increasingly regarded as one of the root causes of all evils within our societies. Major donors and international financial institutions are increasingly basing their aid and loans on the condition that reforms that ensure good governance are undertaken. People might be talking about the good governance in the southern Indian states leading to better performance in various areas of development, as compared to some other states whereas in few northern and north-eastern states bad governance is evident. Former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan once said, "good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development." Therefore, knowing about the meaning of governance has become important in studying development.

Governance is necessary in each sector of nation for smooth and efficient working. In the last decade of the 20th century, the need for good governance has been an impact of recurring theme in the literature dealing with human development - both research and popular. There is now a growing body of evidence which shows that the quality of governance is related to differentials in growth and development. This is because government can efficiently deliver the resources to the public so as to improve the well-being of the people. However, the quality of governance plays a vital role in the economic development of countries as everybody knows that without good governance there can be no sustainable development in a country.

Conceptual analysis of good governance:

Good governance is a key development concept today. In ancient times, the legendary administrator Kautilya emphasized that it is the duty of a government to act in a manner that realizes the material, mental, moral, and cultural well-being of the people. Now-a-days the term good governance is very much in vogue. Very often it is described in terms of certain illustrative parameters which are considered as indices of government's performance and people's satisfaction. A very renowned civil

servant and Padma Bhushan Award winner Shri N. Vittal has given an acronym to good governance as FAT i.e. Fast, Accountable and Transparent.

Good governance should be conceptualized as a goal and as a process that accelerates growth, equity, and human development potential for the people and the society. The conceptual framework of good governance is characterized by features such as participatory, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, accountability etc. which are represented in the following figure :

The term good governance was used for the first time by World Bank in 1992. According to World Bank's concept, good governance is an essential component for overall economic development. In other words, it is a manner in which power is exercised in the management of the countries economic and social resources for development.

Focusing on the concept of good governance, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) emphasized on high quality of processes by which decisions affecting public affairs are reached at and implemented. It further highlights, good governance needs to ensure that all, including the poor and other disadvantaged groups, are included and have the means : i) to influence the direction of development ; ii) to make contributions to development and have these recognized ; iii) to share the benefits of development to improve their lives and livelihoods.

Linkage between development and governance:

The term development is closely related to the process of governance. Every state in the world



Source : Lakshminarayanan and Sharma (2006)

initiates a series of development activities in order to bring about a positive change in the economy, society and the lives of the citizens. In the entire process of development, the state has played a dominant role. However, it has been observed that the benefits from development initiatives have not had the desired effects, and that the initiatives have failed to bring about a positive change in the lives of the intended people. So, basic questions regarding the role of the state and its efficiency have been raised.

It is widely recognized that good governance is a *sine non qua* for economic development of developing countries. Good governance helps create an environment in which sustained economic growth becomes achievable. It assures that corruption is minimized, views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision making. When good governance is guaranteed, residents of all over the world go about their personal business and pursuits with enhanced expectations whereas bad governance not only restricts opportunities of success but it can also degenerate into sectarian conflicts and civil wars.

Side by side, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), while emphasizing the role of governance in development mentioned that poor governance holds back and distorts the process of development, and has a disproportionate impact on the poorer and weaker sections of society. Therefore, assisting developing countries in improving governance is a strategic priority of ADB in eliminating poverty in Asia and the Pacific. The four key areas of interrelationship between governance and development identified by the ADB are Accountability, Participation, Predictability and Transparency.

Good governance does not occur by chance. It can not be introduced overnight. The process is often a gradual one, involving changes to long-standing practices, entrenched interests, cultural habits and social and even religious norms. Recently President of USA, Mr. Barack Obama has said that what Africa required for development are not strong men but strong institutions and good governance. The prosperity of an economy depends upon the social, economic and sustainable development. It is nevertheless admitted that good governance is one that encompasses a whole range of social, political and economic activities and can not be confined to economic aspects alone.

In this connection, it may be mentioned here that the much publicized National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) reflects the requirements of

citizens and is an excellent example of the importance of critical linkage between governance and development. It validates the view that development and good governance are mutually complimentary. Good governance facilitates development, and in turn development ensures the furtherance of good governance. The success of NREGA in bringing a development turnaround in rural areas in different parts of India is also crucially linked to the practice of transparency in both development and governance practices. The display of budget allocations, and how that amount has been utilized are regularly and transparently publicized in the public places, and on the agendas of *panchayat* meetings popularly known as 'social audit'. As citizens get a concrete idea about the progress of development initiatives at their local level, it brings in transparency, and there is a sense of increased accountability among government officials. The social audit has become an integral part of the development process at the grassroots. The awareness among the people has brought a positive impact on the implementation of the development initiatives.

Need of good governance in the Indian context:

A nation where according to an estimation by an NGO based in Hyderabad, the expenditure on governance by 790 politicians at the centre, 4120 in 35 States and Union Territories and 18.7 million employees of the Central and State Governments use about Rs. 2200 crore per day or Rs. 760000 crore per year, both on capital and revenue account. Instead of such a huge expenditure, the gulf of per capita availability of resources between rich and poor has been widely increased.

Everyday it is published and shown by media about various scams, tax evasions, delay in legal proceedings, wasteful expenditure of government funds by corrupt politicians and bureaucrats and rapidly increasing the graph of corruption, terrorism and other evil practices in society indicate the complex and non-transparent system of command and control, monopoly of the government as a service provider, underdeveloped legal framework, lack of information and weak notion of citizen's rights. These days the level of corruption, bribery and other evil practices against social and economic development are being rapidly increased due to

poor governance. There have been many instances where large sums of money have been spent on needed development ventures but their costs are much higher owing to the contracts being given to those who have paid bribes. Ultimately, a tendency has been developed for their construction to be sub-standard or even defective. For instance, 2G spectrum scam, Indian Premier League scam, Commonwealth Games scam, Adarsh Co-operative Housing Society scam and many other scams in recent times are the result of poor governance.

Impact of good governance on human development in India:

The issue of good governance and its impact on development is the heart of all policy debates among the policy makers and researchers. It is now widely held view that good city administration can only operate effectively with increased transparency in its decision making process and with greater involvement of each and every section of society. It promotes security of life and property, access to justice and rule of law. Good governance will be a key requisite for the next generation reforms. The upward movement in the GDP growth rate of 10% to 14% can be seen with good governance and effective administration. In the last 65 years, after independence, it would seem that most of our development has been directed towards the top 300 million of the Indian population. This scenario can be changed with the help of good governance since until the balance 900 million people of India benefit, the country will not move ahead as a developed nation. This fact is especially true in case of India which is rich with all kinds of resources but lags behind many developed nations in progress.

Poverty and unemployment are the two major barriers in the path of progress which can be eradicated by proper implementation of policies formed by the Government.

Good governance- a potential tool for development:

Good governance is a tool of development which helps a nation to become a developed one where everybody can get equal opportunities to prosper in his life. There will be no scams and frauds and tax evasions will also be minimized. The monster of corruption will be vanished from every sphere of life and legal proceedings under judiciary system will be timely solved and proper decisions will be made. No government official will demand bribe for performing the duties assigned to him. The vulnerable conditions of working of

many government institutions due to irregularities, unaccountability and non-transparent system will also be eradicated. All the benefits of policies framed for education, health and eradication of poverty and unemployment will be directly availed by common person. The law and order system will also be improved such that the 'Jehadi' terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, the insurgency in the North –East and rapidly expanding base of Naxalite movement in mainland India will be vanished.

In order to make it a reality, a corruption free nation with sustainable development and progressive economic development without any criminalization of politics, steps must be taken towards good governance and effective administration. The system of governance should be transparent and opportunity to scrutinize our leaders and the political structure must be provided to common man.

Conclusion:

It is pretty much clear by now that the ideal of good governance is difficult to achieve in its totality. Only a few nations have come close to achieving good governance in its totality. Therefore, we Indians will have to change our mindset and take a much larger interest for our country by participating in the governance of India. However, to ensure sustainable human development, actions must be taken to work towards this ideal with the aim of making it a reality.

Good governance is the potential factor through which human development can be improved in the Indian economy. That means good governance can be considered as the policy variable through which we can obtain high economic growth and human development in the country.

With better institutional mechanism and good governance the country can put its development process in the higher ladder of growth and human development. The lack of same may affect the development process, particularly to achieve sustainable economic growth and human development. Hence governments should have aim to increase the status of good governance and can maintain the same with greater caution. This is not a daunting task, if there is adequate political will in the economy.

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PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTION- JAMMU AND KASHMIR PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Parveen Kumar

The creation of institution of Panchayati Raj was a landmark in the Indian history and for democracy to percolate deep down to the gross root level. It is largely being seen as a mechanism through which the voice of the unheard could be heard to find a place in the planning and implementation process. The ultimate objective is to build society in such a way where every village could manage its own affair and become self sustained. The concept of local self governance is not new in India. The gradual evolution of the institutions can be traced as following:

The Traditional Panchayats

Since, the beginning of the recorded history Panchayats have been an inseparable part of Indian villages. After the pastoral society was converted into agrarian one following the emergence of agriculture as the major mode of production, every village community formed a council for the system maintenance and conflict resolution. It paved the way for traditional Panchayats to come into existence. The main function of these

Panchayats was the distribution of Justice. These were also called as Bhaichara Panchayats. These Panchayats though had come into existence in the ancient period, survived the Afghan and Mughal era and were very much present when the Britishers occupied the territory in 1804. This was even recognized by Charles Metcalfe, the then Provincial Governor General of India (1835-1836) who described them as 'little republics'. Sir Charles Trevellyn also puts it that the Village republics flourished during the Hindu, Muslim and Peshwa governments. Despite many political changes in cities and towns during the medieval period, the system of local government or the Panchayats in the villages continued undisrupted Aslam, 1996.

The statutory Panchayats

The Royal Commission on Decentralization submitted its report in 1907 and recommended the creation of village Panchayats for reducing the financial burden of the provincial governments and for extending the concept of local self government at the village level.



While the traditional Panchayats were based on tradition, the statutory Panchayats had a legal basis. As a result of this the government of the various provinces enacted village Panchayat acts in the second decade of 20th century. In Punjab (including Haryana) Punjab villages Panchayat Act was made in 1912 for creation of statutory Panchayats. It was the first attempt by the provincial government to provide legal basis to this traditional institution.

The 73rd amendment and the Constitutionalised Panchayats

The present day Panchayati Raj institutions were based on the report of Balwant Rai Mehta committee set up to study the extent of popular participation and to recommend the institutions through which such participation can be achieved (Hazra, 2010). The committee headed by B. R. Mehta recommended the setting up of necessary local bodies with the necessary resources, power and authority devolved to them and a decentralized administrative system working under their control. Acknowledging the importance of popular participation in the planning, decision making, delivery and implementation and delivery of various rural development programmes, the Government of India brought the constitutional 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 which became the Panchayati Raj law on April 24, 1993. Panchayats were thus given constitutional status. Consequent to the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, almost all the states/UTs except Arunachal Pradesh enacted appropriate legislations for setting up of strong, viable and responsible Panchayats at different levels in their respective states. However, some states as well as Schedule VI areas in states are exempted from the purview of this enactment. Part IX of the Constitution pertaining to formation of Panchayats is not applicable to the states of Jammu & Kashmir, hill areas of Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland.

The state of Meghalaya is not within the

purview of part IX of the constitution (Kharlyngdoh, 2010). The State of Jammu & Kashmir is accorded a special status under Article 370 of the Constitution, while the States of Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland are covered by the Scheduled VI of the Constitution and the traditional system of local self-government exists in these states. In the NCT of Delhi, the Panchayati raj was suspended by the State Government and no effective steps have been taken to revive the PRIs till date. Each of the states/UTs has constituted the State Election Commission (SEC) to ensure elections to the PRIs once in five years.

Salient features of the Constitutional 73rd amendment:

Panchayats will be institutions of self-government comprising of a Gram Sabha for every village or group of villages comprising all the adult members registered as voters in the Panchayat area.

The committee headed by B. R. Mehta recommended the setting up of necessary local bodies with the necessary resources, power and authority devolved to them and a decentralized administrative system working under their control.

There shall be a three-tier system of Panchayats at village, intermediate block and district levels. Seats in Panchayats at all the three levels shall be filled by direct election. In addition, chairpersons of village Panchayats can be made members of the Panchayats at intermediate levels, and chairpersons of Panchayats at the intermediate level can be members of Panchayats at the district level. Members of Parliament, Members of Legislative Assembly and Members of Legislative Council should also be members of Panchayats at the intermediate or the district level.

In all the Panchayats seats should be reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population. Offices of the Chairpersons of the Panchayats at all levels shall be reserved in favour of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population in the state.

One-third of the total seats and of offices of chairpersons of Panchayats at all levels will be reserved for women. State legislatures can

provide reservations for other backward classes. Every Panchayat shall have a uniform 5 year term and elections shall be held before the term of the elected members ends. If the Panchayat is disbanded, elections will be compulsorily held within 6 months. It will not be possible to dissolve the existing Panchayats by amending any act before the duration is over.

The Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act 1989

The Jammu & Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act, 1989 was introduced in the J&K assembly in April 1988 and passed in March 1989. The Governor gave his assent to the bill in July 1989 (Ag. and Rural Development Department, Government of Jammu and Kashmir). The act provides for a Halqa Panchayat:

Each Halqa Panchayat shall comprise of such number of panches not less than seven and not more than eleven including the Sarpanch as the prescribed authority may fix from time to time. The panches shall be elected from the constituencies delimited by the prescribed authority. While the Naib-Sarpanch shall be elected by the panches of the Halqa Panchayat from among themselves, the Sarpanch shall be elected directly by the electorate of the Halqa Panchayat. The Halqa Panchayat shall continue to function for a period of five years from the date of its constitution. If it is dissolved for any reason before this period, elections will be held within six months. A Sarpanch or Naib-Sarpanch can be removed by a vote of no-confidence passed by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the total number of panches of the Halqa Panchayat.

Block Development Council

The Act provides for the constitution of Block Development Councils consisting of:

- (i) A Chairperson,
- (ii) All Sarpanches of Halqa Panchayats falling within the block, and
- (iii) Chairpersons of Marketing Societies within the jurisdiction of the block.

However, if the prescribed authority is satisfied that women or scheduled castes or any other class are not represented in the Council, it may nominate not more than two persons to be the members of the Block Development Council. The Block Development Officer shall be the Secretary of the Block Development Council. The main functions of the Block Development Council include construction, maintenance and supervision of an inter-Halqa Panchayat communication system.

One of the important features of the Block Development Council under the Act is that the Chairperson shall be elected by the Electoral College comprising elected panches and sarpanches. No member of the State Legislature or Parliament can hold any office in the Block Development Council.

District Planning and Development Board

Further, the Act provides for the constitution of a District Planning and Development Board (DPDB) comprising:

- (i) Chairpersons of the Block Councils of the District;
- (ii) Members of Parliament representing the area;
- (iii) Members of the State Legislature representing the area;
- (iv) Chairperson of the Town area Committee at the District; and
- (v) President of the Municipal Council (if any)

The chairperson of the DPDB shall be nominated by the Government from amongst the members of the DPDB. The vice-chairperson shall be elected by the members from amongst themselves. The District Development Commissioner shall be the Chief Executive of the Board to be assisted by district level Heads. The main functions of the Board shall be to:

- (i) Consider and guide formulation of development plans for the district and indicate priorities;
- (ii) Review progress and achievements periodically;

The Jammu & Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act, 1989 was introduced in the J&K assembly in April 1988 and passed in March 1989.

- (iii) Formulate and finalize the plan and non-plan budget for the district;
- (iv) Lay down policy guidelines and approve budgets of the Block Development Councils; and
- (v) Undertake special measures for alleviating poverty and employment generation and extending assistance to Halqa Panchayats in this behalf.

Panchayati Adalat

As per the provisions of the Act, the Adalat shall comprise five members to be nominated by the government out of the panel prepared and recommended by the Halqa Panchayat out of its electorate. The person so recommended for a term of five years shall be literate, shall have attained the age of 30 years, not be a Sarpanch or a Panch and not be in the employment of the government or local body or corporation. The members of a Panchayat Adalat shall elect any member from amongst themselves as the chairperson. The Secretary of the Halqa Panchayat shall serve as the judicial clerk to the Panchayat Adalat. Every member of the Adalat including chairperson shall be deemed to be a public servant within the meaning of Section 21 of the Ranbir Penal Codes. The Panchayati Adalat shall not be competent to impose on any person convicted of an offence tried by it, any sentence other than a sentence of fine not exceeding one thousand rupees. The chairperson and members of the Panchayati Adalat will be entitled to a sitting fee as may be decided by the government from time to time. The government may remove the chairman or any member of a Panchayati Adalat after giving him the opportunity of being heard, or after such enquiry as the government may deem necessary if such chairman or member in the opinion of the government has been guilty of misconduct or neglect or refusal to perform or is incapable of performing the functions of the Panchayati Adalat.

Jurisdiction of Panchayati Adalat

The Panchayati Adalat enjoys both criminal and civil jurisdictions. The criminal jurisdiction is extensive and covers a substantial range of offences under the Ranbir Penal Code, as well as the special statutes. Civil jurisdiction is confined to claims of the value of Rs. 3,000 involving suits for ascertained sums, for damages for breach of contract not effecting immovable property, and compensation for wrongly taking or injuring immovable property. A Panchayati Adalat shall not be competent to impose on any person convicted of an offence tried by it, any sentence other than a sentence of fine not exceeding one thousand rupees. The government is empowered to enhance the jurisdiction in civil cases up to Rs. 2,000.

Devolution of powers to Panchayati Raj Institutions in Jammu and Kashmir:

As per the Cabinet Decision No.40/3/2011 dated 09-02-2011 and Cabinet Decision No. 170/21/2011 dated 21.09.2011 vide Government Order No: 1126-GAD of 2011 dated 22-09-2011, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir ordered the devolution of functions and activities to these Institutions as specified in Annexures I to XIV in the following order. This devolution of functions to three-tiers will cover 14 departments of the state government including planning at the grass-root level, supervision of activities and carrying out work programme as per the recommendation of Gram Sabha. The 14 departments include Agriculture Production, Animal and Sheep Husbandry, Consumer affair and Public Distribution, Education (School), Fisheries, Forest, Health and Family welfare, Horticulture, Industries and Commerce, Public Health Engineering, Public Works Department, Revenue, Rural Development and Social welfare.

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We pay tributes to Smt Ratna Juneja, one of our former Editors, who passed away in September 2013. She was 82. Smt. Ratna Juneja worked with Kurukshetra (English) from 1981 to 1989.

FUNCTIONAL FOODS JUST A THERAPY

Monika Choudhary and Kiran Grover

Functional foods are similar to conventional foods in appearance, but they have benefits that extend beyond their basic nutritional properties. For example, functional foods have been studied for the prevention of osteoporosis, cancer, and cardiovascular diseases. Examples of these foods include fruits and vegetables, whole grains, fortified foods and beverages and some dietary supplements. Functional foods are an important part of an overall healthy lifestyle that includes a balanced diet and physical activities. By knowing which foods can provide specific health benefits, we can make food and beverage choices that allow us to take greater control of our health.

Functional foods of animal origin

The most important components derived from animal products are the (n-3) fatty acids, predominantly found in fatty fish such as salmon, tuna, mackerel, sardines and herring. The two primary (n-3) fatty acids are eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). DHA

is an essential component of the phospholipids in the brain and retina of the eye, and is necessary for their proper functioning. DHA is particularly important for the development of these two organs in infants and also helps in the prevention of chronic diseases as cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, crohn's disease, cognitive dysfunction and cardiovascular diseases, with the best-documented health benefit being their role in heart health. Consumption of two or three serves (150 g serve) of fish per week is recommended to lower the risk of heart diseases.

Another class of animal-derived components that has received increasing attention in recent years is probiotics. Probiotics are viable microorganisms that have beneficial health effects. Various studies have reported the therapeutic and/or preventive use of these functional ingredients for various health concerns including cancer, intestinal tract function, immune function, allergy, stomach health, urogenital health, cholesterol lowering and hypertension. Sources of probiotics include curd, yoghurt,



butter milk, fermented products like *idli*, *dosa*, *dhokla* and *uttapam* and pickled vegetables like sauerkraut (cabbage pickle).

Functional foods of plant origin

Numerous plant foods have been investigated for their role in disease prevention and health. Those plant foods include oat soluble fibre (β -glucan), soluble fibre from psyllium (*Isabgol*) seed husk, soy protein, sterol- and stanol-ester-fortified margarine, blueberries, garlic, nuts, grapes and chocolate etc.

Substitution of animal protein with soy protein appears to be associated with a lower risk of coronary heart disease. Soy nuts (25 g soy protein) lead to 9.9 and 6.8 percent reduction in systolic and diastolic blood pressure in hypertensive patients. The findings of the study recommended 30-50 g soy per day to reduce the cholesterol levels in heart patients. Garlic has been used for thousands of years for a wide variety of medicinal purposes. Garlic has shown to have a modest blood pressure-lowering effect. The best-documented clinical effect of garlic, however, concerns its ability to reduce blood cholesterol. Garlic powder (600-900 mg) can reduce total cholesterol by 4–6%. Although foods high in fat have traditionally not been regarded as “heart-healthy” (except for fatty fish), evidence is accumulating on the cardiovascular benefits of a variety of nuts like almonds and walnuts, when they are part of a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol. Consumption of 28 g of unsalted nuts daily is recommended to decrease heart disease risk.

Blueberries are a rich source of plant compounds (phytonutrients). As with cranberries, phytonutrients in blueberries may help prevent urinary tract infections. Blueberries may also improve short-term memory and promote healthy aging. Blueberries are also a low-calorie source of fibre and vitamin C — 1 cup of fresh blueberries has 84 calories, 3.6 grams of fibre and 14 mg of vitamin C. Grapes may also exert beneficial effects similar to those of red wine because both are rich in phenolic antioxidant compounds. Consumption of grape juice has been shown to reduce platelet aggregation. Chocolate contains flavonoids (procyanidins), which may reduce oxidative stress on low density lipoprotein (LDL)

cholesterol. Studies have also reported health benefits of several additional functional foods or food components of plant origin, including tea (catechins), lycopene from tomatoes, particularly cooked and/or processed tomato products, and the carotenoids lutein and zeaxanthin from green leafy vegetables. Consumption of green tea reduces the risk of various types of cancers. Green tea is particularly abundant in specific polyphenolic components known as catechins. One cup (240 mL) of brewed green tea contains up to 200 mg epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG), the major polyphenolic constituent of green tea.

Tomatoes are also being investigated for their role in cancer chemoprevention and are unique because they are the most significant dietary source of lycopene that is also a potent antioxidant. Another carotenoid that has received recent attention for its role in disease risk reduction is lutein, the main pigment in the macula of the eye (an area of the retina responsible for the sharpest vision). More specifically, research is focusing on the role of lutein in eye health due to its ability to neutralize free radicals that can damage the eye and by preventing photooxidation. Thus, individuals who have a diet high in lutein may be less likely to develop age-related macular degeneration (AMD) or cataracts, the two most common causes of vision loss in adults. Good sources of lutein include green leafy vegetables such as spinach (7.4 mg/100 g) and cooked cabbage (14.4 mg/100 g).

Flaxseed, citrus fruit and various cruciferous vegetables have also been studied for their cancer and cardio preventive effects. Flaxseeds are good source of fibre and also have anti-inflammatory effects. Fibre rich diets are associated with reduced risk of heart diseases. The dose required for these effects ranges from 14 to 40 g of flaxseeds per day. Citrus fruits are protective against a variety of human cancers. Although oranges, lemons, limes, and grapefruits are a principal source of such important nutrients as vitamin C, folate, and fiber. Citrus fruits are particularly high in a class of phytochemicals known as the limonoids. Phytochemicals present in citrus fruits are responsible for anticancer activity. Citrus fruits neutralize free radicals which may damage cells

and thus, improve our immune system. With respect to the cruciferous vegetables, broccoli is one such magic vegetable *gaining importance* these days and more and more people are getting used to including it in their daily diet. Broccoli contains tons of fibre to help prevent constipation, hemorrhoids, high cholesterol, heart disease, obesity and colon cancer.

Thus, functional foods containing physiologically-active components, either from plant or animal sources, may enhance health. It should be stressed, however, that functional foods are not a magic bullet for poor health habits. There are no “good” or “bad” foods, but there are good or bad diets. Emphasis must be placed on over-all dietary pattern. It should be plant-based, high in fibre, low in animal fat, and containing 5-9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day. Health-conscious consumers are

increasingly seeking functional foods in an effort to control their own health and well-being. Functional foods may provide a means to reduce the increasing burden on the health care system by a continuous preventive mechanism. Moreover, Diet is only one aspect of a comprehensive lifestyle approach to good health, which should include regular exercise, tobacco avoidance, stress reduction, maintenance of healthy body weight and other positive health practices. The best advice is to include a variety of foods which would provide many potentially beneficial components. Only when all of these issues are addressed, can functional foods become part of an effective strategy to maximize health and reduce disease risk.

Brighten your plate with functional foods to brighten your life

Examples of functional components

Functional food	Bioactive component	Potential health benefits
Cruciferous vegetables	Isothiocyanates	May enhance detoxification of undesirable compounds; bolsters cellular antioxidant defences; reduce risk of certain types of cancer
Fatty fish	(n-3) Fatty acids	Reduces triglycerides, reduce heart disease, cardiac deaths and fatal and non-fatal myocardial infarction
Fermented dairy products	Probiotics	Support gastro-intestinal health, boost immunity
Fortified margarines	Plant sterol and stanol esters	Reduce total and LDL cholesterol
Garlic	Allicin	May enhance detoxification of undesirable compounds; supports maintenance of heart, immune and digestive health; reduce total and LDL cholesterol
Green tea	Catechins	Reduce risk of certain types of cancer; supports maintenance of heart health
Psyllium	Soluble fiber	May reduce risk of coronary heart disease (CHD) and some types of cancer
Soy	Protein, Isoflavones	Supports maintenance of bone and immune health, and healthy brain function; supports menopausal health; reduce total and LDL cholesterol
Spinach	Lutein/zeaxanthin	Reduces risk of age related macular degeneration ; supports maintenance of eye health
Tomatoes	Lycopene	Reduces risk prostate cancer
Whole oat products	β-Glucan	Reduces total and LDL cholesterol; may reduce risk of CHD

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