

The Role of Panchayat Raj Systems in Rural Development

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ABSTRACT

Panchayats have been the backbone of Indian villages since the beginning of recorded history. Panchayat Raj is a system of governance in which Gram Panchayats are the basic units of administration. Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) have been involved in the programme implementation, and they constitute the core of the decentralised development of planning and its implementation. Panchayat Raj Institutions aim at translating the Gandhian dream of village self-governance (Gram Swaraj) and becoming an effective tool of rural development and reconstruction. Since 1959, almost all rural development departments have been executing their programmes through PRIs. With the implementation of state acts under the spirit of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, a clear-cut role of panchayat Raj institutions in rural development has been envisaged. Panchayati Raj Institutions are the third tier of the Indian government's decentralised system, after the central and state governments. Panchayati Raj is one of the most impressive social and political changes since independence as the third stage of the decentralised government. But panchayat bodies confront several difficult problems nowadays. The Panchayati Raj Institutions, in which research focused on rural development, and Panchayat Raj have a lack of real transfer of funding, functions, and officials throughout the States. Panchayati Raj system in India's exemplary tales, PRIs, is changing. Rural growth, evolution and operation of the institutions of Panchayat Raj, rural development, and perspective rural development Before independence, rural development, after independence, rural development efforts, roles in rural development planning for Panchayati Raj Institutions, and Rural Development Strategies The Government of India and the different state governments are now increasingly seeking the assistance of the Panchayat Raj Institutions in the implementation of various schemes as well as poverty alleviation programmes. The paper aims to explore the role of the Panchayat Raj system in rural development.

INTRODUCTION

Panchayats have been the backbone of Indian villages since the beginning of recorded history. Gandhiji's dream of every village being a republic has been translated into reality with the introduction of the three-tier Panchayati Raj system to enlist people's participation in rural reconstruction. Panchayat, which literally means 'institution five', can be found in the Santi parva of the Mahabharata. Panchayat is apparently a Sanskrit word, and it is surprising that in the whole complex of self-government, Panchayat, either in the sense of a village council or of a group of five wise persons belonging to a self-governing body whose advice is sought on matters concerning that body, does not figure in any source related to this period (Panchavanthaiah) except in the sloka of the Mahabharata. A dictionary prepared by Raghuvira refers, against the entry 'Panchayat', to the expression 'Panchamandali' which was found in a Sanchi stone inscription from the period of Chandra Gupta II. Radha Kumud Mookerji cites a number of terms indicating popular local bodies existed during the ancient period, such as Kula, gana, jati, puga, vrata, sreni sangha, Naigama, Samuhava, Sambhuya-Samuttahana parishat, and Carana. He did not include the term panchayat in this list, which is exhaustive enough to include quite a few less known terms. There is a lot of evidence in the literature of the ancient period on local



government in India, which brings out the fact that panchayats played a key role in the affairs of the villages of ancient India.

Objectives of PRIS

1. Assistance to the economically weaker sections of the community
2. Cohesion and cooperative self-help in the community
3. Development of cooperative institutions.
4. Development of local resources, including the utilisation of manpower.
5. Production in agriculture is the highest priority in planning.
6. Progressive dispersal of authority and initiative both vertically and horizontally, with special emphasis on the role of voluntary organisations.
7. Promotion of rural industries.
8. Understanding and harmony between the people's representatives and their servants can be achieved through comprehensive training and education and a clear demarcation of duties and responsibilities.

Main Functions of PRIS

1. Preparation of annual plans for the development of the village Panchayat area.
2. Preparation of the Annual Budget of the Village Panchayat
3. Mobilisation of relief in natural calamities
4. Removal of encroachments on public properties
5. organising voluntary labour and contributions for community works
6. Maintenance of essential statistics in villages
7. Such other development works as may be entrusted
8. Service or developmental function, such as promotion of education, health, agriculture, etc.
9. Representative function, where the main role is to voice and represent the opinion;
10. Regulatory and administrative functions, which consist of regulating the conduct of individuals and institutions and also collecting taxes

Statement of the problem

Panchayat Raj Institutions are involved actively in fulfilling the most cherished goal of development, with social justice bringing the aspirations of the Indian people for their participation in the development process of the country. A clear-cut role for Panchayat Raj institutions in rural development has been envisaged subsequent to the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. The Government of India and the state governments have been increasingly seeking the assistance of Panchayat Raj Institutions in the implementation of various schemes as well as poverty alleviation programmes. Of these, the following development programmes of the Government of India and the state governments have invariably sought the meaningful involvement of the Panchayat Raj Institutions: A specific role has been carved out for them in the context of the eleventh schedule and the five-year plans. Panchayat Raj institutions are involved in rural development through their participation in planning and execution at the village level. Gramme Sabha, which is an integral part of the Panchayat system, is being empowered to involve all the people in decentralised planning. Even though funds and sanctioning power may still be at different levels, when the question comes to the execution of programmes, there is no alternative but to involve The Panchayat Raj Institutions are at the village level. There is no substitute for local governance for meeting the needs of the local population. The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments recognised that necessity. The lowest tier of the local government, namely the Grammeme Panchayat, is directly in contact with the citizen and can be taken to task in the Grammeme Sabha and by other means. It is responsible for a number of functions, ranging from simple civil functions to rural development.

Objectives of the study

1. To describe the role of Panchayat Raj Systems in Rural Development
2. To analyse the components, objectives, and functions of Panchayat Raj Systems
3. To assess rural development through Panchayat Raj Institutions



METHODOLOGY

The research is based on secondary data. It's exploratory and descriptive in nature, and given the nature of the present study, it was required to collect information from secondary sources. Secondary information was collected from research studies, books, journals, newspapers, ongoing academic working papers, and websites.

Constitutional Provisions in the Enactment of PRIS:

After our independence from British rule, the importance of panchayats was laid by our constitution makers. Article 40 of the Directive Principle of State Policy in the Constitution of India states: "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." After years, several committees were formed to reform the existing state of affairs of the village society; the recommendations made were regarded as a vehicle for fulfilling the demands of the people.

The committees are:

- Balwant Rai Mehta Committee, 1957
- Ashok Mehta Committee, 1977
- GVK Rao Committee, 1985
- LM Singhvi Committee, 1986

Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh were the first to adopt panchayati raj institutions in 1959. Two amendments were passed by the parliament to make the panchayati raj system local self-government institutions. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 added Part 9 to the constitution, which contains Articles 243–243, and also added the eleventh scheduled. This amendment gave shape to Article 40, which directs states to give power to the local government to organise village panchayats and the power of decision-making. The act provided direct elections at the village level to choose their local leader and mandated all the states to adopt the system. This act has transformed the whole democracy of India.

The Panchayati Raj System in India

After the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, all nations in India began the trend of extreme democratic decentralization. Some states are ahead of others while implementing the Panchayati Raj Institutes. The traditional power structure of the local bureaucratic elite network was crucially modified in certain nations. The system has strengthened previously disadvantaged sections of society, including women, SCs, STs, and other governing groups in some nations.

Kerala, for instance, has a decentralised planning system with the participation of people and an innovative method to provide money to Raj Panchayati's institutions. Higher-level municipalities have no effect on lower ones. Panchayati's presidents in Kerala are explicit in their role in the delivery, execution, and development of panchayat plans. They participate actively in the efficient administration of childcare, primary, and medical centers. The Panchayati Raj Institutions in Kerala have begun participatory management of natural resources, management of water shields, and adult literacy programmes. The development process was largely supported by women and underprivileged groups throughout society.

But Kerala is not exempt from the takeover of political power by the grassroots elite. The polarisation and participation of the local leaders of the political parties sometimes affected and reduced Panchayati Raj institutions to an impartial and partisan level.

Madhya Pradesh is another activist state with Panchayati Raj institutions. The District Planning provisions of the 73rd Amendment Act were adopted in order to devolve decision-making power to the districts of Madhya Pradesh. Grammememe Sabha was also able, via many Grammememe Swaraj committees, to accomplish Grammememe Panchayati's tasks. The Madhya Pradesh Panchayati Raj model features the form of a local committee controlled by the members of Gramme Sabah.



The development of rural areas in India was mostly supported by the government rather than individuals. A suitable institutional framework is needed to design and execute rural development initiatives. The Panchayat Raj Institution (PRIs) was set up in India to satisfy this requirement. Moreover, the PRIs also provide the chance to participate in the creation and execution of rural development programmes as local self-governing organizations. Thus, in India, the PRIs encourage rural development. Since independence, we have been focused more on developing enough rural, economic, and social infrastructure and on supporting general development in our national social, economic, and planning policies. Agriculture and rural development have been given the utmost priority in our county planning policies. The suggested initiatives had a significant impact on rural economic development in the first five-year plan. The first five-year plan states that "the growth of agriculture is based on rural labour and the full utilisation of local resources."

As stated in the Committee on Projects Report 1957, until the creation or construction of a representative and democratic organisation providing local interest, monitoring, and assistance to guarantee that local objects are spent in ways that satisfy local requirements and wishes, For a long period, Panchayati was around. In terms of authority, purpose, and financial resources, the current organisation is substantially different from the past.

There are four major components to the current regime:

- (I) The ubiquitous creation of democracy and panchayats
- (ii) the transfer of these bodies to new state authorities
- (iii) the development, transfer to the panchayat,
- and (iv) the enhancement of resources of the bodies concerned, and furthermore, agriculture and assigned responsibilities, health, welfare, and education.

Rural development mostly involves the construction or upgrading of overhead social infrastructure or facilities such as schools, clinics, roads, communications, water services, and markets. Rural development is well known for its multi-sectoral operations. Rural development is primarily aimed at improving the quality of the rural population, particularly in weaker and poorer areas. The Panchayat Raj institutions (PRIs) offered a chance for local initiative and involvement in development operations in order to foster democratic decentralisation.

Rural Development through Panchayat Raj Institutions

Panchayat Raj Institutions are involved actively in fulfilling the most cherished goal of development with social justice, bringing the aspirations of the Indian people for their participation in the development process of the country. A clear-cut role for Panchayat Raj institutions in rural development has been envisaged subsequent to the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. The Government of India and the state governments have been increasingly seeking the assistance of Panchayat Raj Institutions in the implementation of various schemes as well as poverty alleviation programmes. Of these, the following development programmes of the Government of India and the state governments have invariably sought the meaningful involvement of the Panchayat Raj Institutions: A specific role has been carved out for them in the context of the eleventh schedule and the five-year plans.

Implementation of Programmes of Rural Development Through Panchayat Raj Institutions

Swarna Jayanthi Gramme Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY 1999): This single-self-employment programme of the Swarna Jayanthi Gramme Swarozgar Yojana was launched on April 1, 1999. This programme has been conceived to overcome the weaknesses of earlier schemes of the Integrated Rural Development Programme and allied programmes TRYSEM, DWCRA, SITRA, and Ganga Kalyan Yojana. Subsidy is given to the enterprises under this scheme. SGSY is financed on a 75:25 cost-sharing basis between the centre and the states. SGSY is implemented by the District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs) through Panchayat Samitis. The implementation of SGSY calls for the integration of various agencies like DRDA banks, Panchayat Raj Institutions, NGO, etc.

Sampoorna Grameena Rozgar Yojana (SGRY 2001): This programme was launched by merging the ongoing schemes, Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) and Jawahar Gramme Samridhi Yojana (JGSY), on September 25, 2001. The objective of the programme is to provide additional wage employment in rural areas as well as food security, along with the creation of durable community, social, and economic infrastructure in the rural areas.



Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) (1985–86) The programme was started in 1985–86 during the Ninth Plan. It aims at providing “housing for all” and facilitates the construction of 20 lakh additional dwelling units, of which 13 lakh dwelling units are to be constructed in rural areas. Panchayati Raj Institutions have an important role in the identification of beneficiaries under IAY. Beneficiaries will be selected from the Permanent IAY Waitlists prepared on the basis of BPL lists in order of seniority on the list. The Gramme Panahcyats may draw out the shelterless families from the BPL list. Selection by the Gramme Sabha is final.

Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY-2000): The Yojana was launched in 2000 to cover one crore poor families. The schemes envisaged providing food grains to BPL families at a highly subsidised rate of Rs. 2 per kg for wheat and Rs. 3 per kg for rice. The AAY scheme was expanded in 2003–04 by adding another 50 lakh households from among BPL families and further expanding to cover 2.5 crore households.

Pradhan Mantri Gramme Sadak Yojana (PMGSY-2000): This is a 100 percent centrally sponsored scheme launched on December 25, 2000. The primary objective of PMGSY was to provide connectivity to all unconnected habitations in rural areas with a population of more than 500 people. Under Bharat Nirman, the goal has been set to provide connectivity to all habitats with a population of more than 1000 in the plain area.

Nirmal Grama Yojana (1999): The Government of Karnataka launched a massive campaign in the name of „Nirmal Grama Yojana on October 2 1995, for the improvement of sanitary conditions as a part of the socio-economic development of rural areas. The government has been implementing the scheme in cooperation with Panchayat Raj institutions and nongovernment organisations.

National Social Assistance Programme (MSAP-1995): This programme initiated by the Central Government aims at providing social assistance benefits to poor households in the cases of old age, death of the primary breadwinner, and maternity. The main features of the three components of NSAP are: 1) the National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS); 2) the National Family Benefit Scheme (BFBS); and 3) the National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS).

The National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) advocates the creation of formal mechanisms for mutually beneficial working relationships, consultations, and the sharing of resources between panchayats and institutions of the poor. Ex: SHGs

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA-2009): The programme was launched on February 2, 2006. It envisages securing the livelihood of people in rural areas by guaranteeing 100 days of employment in a financial year to rural households. MGNREGA marks a paradigm shift from all earlier and existing wage employment programmes because it is an act and not just a scheme. It provides a legal guarantee of work. MGNREGA provides a powerful legal entitlement and opportunity to realise the objectives of the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution. The Act formally declares the panchayats at the three levels as principal authorities for planning and implementing the schemes made under this Act, and this provision is backed up by substantial guaranteed resources.

India's economic progress, especially in the rural sector, depends heavily on rural development. It contributes to the growth of agriculture by lowering hidden unemployment, underemployment, unemployment, poverty, migration, and economic inequity. It also helps to provide employment possibilities in rural regions with modest capital requirements. The government has come to the realisation that, in order to support a strategic shift occurring in the economic environment, they must mobilise their resources. The development of the economy is a comprehensive strategy that allows for the smooth integration of all facets of rural society. Using the internet's revolutionary power, economic growth impacts people's lives and merges people, processes, and technology. In today's fiercely competitive economy, the government is up against enormous obstacles as it works to achieve the greatest level of growth. If government operations are planned and carried out in accordance with environmental changes, economic development will be successful. The economic development of the rural environment can be done by the government through the establishment, development, maintenance, and optimisation of long-term mutually valuable relationships between business and macroeconomic environmental variables.



Panchayats are India's ancient autonomous democratic institutions. A description of panchayats is found in the ancient Indian text "Rigveda in the form of "Sabhas and "Samities. Panchayat literally means an assembly (yat) of five wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the village community. The philosophy of Panchayat Raj is deeply steeped in the tradition and culture of rural India. It is by no means a new concept. Panchayat Raj provided a system of self-governance at the village level. Panchayat Raj Institutions is the grass-roots unit of self-government. It has been declared the vehicle of socio-economic transformation in rural India. Effective and meaningful functioning of these bodies would depend on the active involvement, contribution, and participation of their citizens, both male and female. The role of such institutions is vital to rural development.

CONCLUSION

Rural development in India was supported mainly not by the people but by the government. A suitable institutional framework is required to design and execute rural development initiatives. The Panchayat Raj Institution (PRIs), a comprehensive notion of development that covers all aspects of human existence, has fulfilled this requirement. It is basically a governmental activity that involves the development and implementation of government policies for the benefit of society. On the other side, social, economic, political, and cultural rural development implies complete rural growth to make people happy. It means full rural development. Rural design is a relative term that improves the quality of life in a nation or area consistently and favorably. The positive shift involves economic and social considerations; it may be traced back many decades to the origins of the modernising drive for rural development in India. The concept of agricultural growth was established in the 14th century, according to an experienced British agriculture official. It is shown that ancient and mediaeval kings invested in irrigation to improve production in India. By the 14th century, it was active in creating marketplaces and industries, with all rural development plans based on a number of methods centred on the construction of transportation structures. A study of a number of programmes and strategies for rural development after independence in India shows various forms of development. The Panchayati Raj Institutions in order to involve the rural people not only in their own development but also in the development of the nation as a whole. Gandhiji was of the opinion that, for the actual development of the country, every village has to be self-reliant and capable of managing its affairs. According to him, Gramme Panchayats should be entrusted even with the dispensation of justice. The poor villagers need not go into the courts, spend hard-earned money, and waste weeks and months in towns for litigation. Although this was not practicable in 1947, the Constituent Assembly saw merit in Gandhiji's argument of democratic decentralised governance and included Panchayati Raj under the Directive Principles of State Policy. According to Article 40 of the Directive Principles of State Policy of our Constitution, "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 local self-government." To give effect to this Directive Principle, the Parliament passed the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992, which established a panchayat-raj system in rural areas, and the Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992, to establish municipal systems in urban areas. Panchayati Raj Institutions, the grass-roots units of self-government, have been proclaimed as the vehicles of socio-economic transformation in rural India. Effective and meaningful functioning of these bodies would depend on the active involvement, contribution, and participation of their citizens, both male and female. Gandhiji's dream of every village being a republic and Panchayats having powers has been translated into reality with the introduction of the three-tier Panchayati Raj system to enlist people's participation in rural reconstruction.

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