



SOUVENIR



**UGC SPONSORED
TWO DAY NATIONAL SEMINAR**



ON

**EMPOWERMENT OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS –
PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ANDHRA PRADESH
15th and 16th March, 2015**



In Collaboration with
FDR FOUNDATION FOR
DEMOCRATIC REFORMS

Organized by
Department of Political Science



S.K.S.D. Mahila Kalasala(UG&PG), Tanuku
(Re-accredited by NAAC at 'B' Level)
Website : www.svke.net



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S.K.S.D. MAHILA KALASALA (UG & PG), TANUKU

Re-accredited by NAAC at 'B' Level

www.svke.net, email: womens_sksd@yahoo.com



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Inaugural Function of the Two Day
UGC Sponsored National Seminar

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ON

**“EMPOWERMENT OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS –
PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
ANDHRA PRADESH”**

On Sunday 15th March, 2015 at 10.30 a.m.

Chief Guest

Dr. P. Krishna Prasad

Former Professor, Department of Politics & Public Administration,
Andhra University, Visakhapatnam
Will deliver the Keynote Address

Special Guest

Prof. Y. Pardhasaradhi

Head, Department of Public Policy and Public Administration,
Central University of Jammu, Jammu

Guests of Honour

Sri Chitturi Subba Rao

Founder, Secretary & Correspondent
S.K.S.D. Group of Colleges

Dr. M.V.V. Prasada Rao

President, S.V.K. Educational Society

Sri Nandigam Sudhakar

Treasurer, S.V.K. Educational Society



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**“EMPOWERMENT OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS –
PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
ANDHRA PRADESH”**

On Monday 16th March, 2015 at 02.30 p.m.

Chief Guest

Prof. E.A. Narayana

Rector, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam

Guests of Honour

Sri Chitturi Subba Rao

Founder, Secretary & Correspondent
S.K.S.D. Group of Colleges

Dr. M.V.V. Prasada Rao

President, S.V.K. Educational Society

Sri Nandigam Sudhakar

Treasurer, S.V.K. Educational Society

Dr. M. Jhansi
Organizing Committee Secretary

Dr. P. Aruna
Principal

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Chief Patron

Sri Chitturi Subba Rao

Founder, Secretary & Correspondent
S.V.K. Educational Society

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Smt. K. Padmaja Rani, Lecturer in Physics

Smt. S. Usha Rani, Lecturer in English

Message



*Sri Chitturi Subba Rao
Founder, Secretary & Correspondent
S.K.S.D. Group of Colleges*

I am immensely pleased to note that the Department of Political Science is organizing a two day UGC sponsored National Seminar focusing the theme "Empowerment of Panchayat Raj Institutions – Problems and Challenges with Special Reference to Andhra Pradesh" on 15th, 16th March 2015. The present seminar is a timely gesture and provides an academic forum for meaningful discussions and spread. I congratulate the convener of the seminar, faculty and the principal for their academic endeavor. I wish the seminar a success with a hope that the deliberations and the seminar will definitely enlighten the stake holders and add to the strength of the policy initiations of the Government.

Chitturi Subba Rao

MESSAGE



Dr. P. Krishna Prasad

Former Prof., Department of Politics & Public Administration, Andhra University

I am delighted when I heard that S.K.S.D Mahila Kalasala is organizing a two day national seminar on empowerment of Panchayat Raj Institutions -problems and challenges with special reference to Andhra Pradesh. Dr.M.Jhansi, convener of the seminar, is perhaps the first scholar who conducted an empirical study on the functioning and performance of elected women representatives in PRIs in Andhra Pradesh consequent upon the 73rd constitutional Amendment Act. Her study on Panchayat Raj institutions stands as a valuable reference to the scholars interested in the study of women participation in Panchayat Raj. This seminar is being organized at a time that a great demand for empowerment of PRIs is heard from diverse stake holders. Further, there is an urgent need for a review of working of self-governments formed after according the constitutional status to them. There is an opinion that PRIs do not really experience the discretion available on paper. The management, administration and the faculty of the college deserve compliments for organizing this seminar bringing several scholars together on a highly relevant prominent contemporary issue. I wish and hope that the seminar will initiate fruitful discussions and dialogues besides eliciting valuable data on empowerment of PRIs.

Dr. P. Krishna Prasad



Prof. E.A. Narayana, Rector

ANDHRA UNIVERSITY

NAAC - CGPA of 3.65 on four point scale at "A" grade
"ISO 9001 - 2008 Certified"

VISAKHAPATNAM, ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA

Prof. E.A. NARAYANA
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MESSAGE

I am glad to know that the Department of Political Science, S.K.S.D. Mahila Kalasala (UG & PG), Tanuku, W.G. Dist., had planned to organize the two day National Seminar under the sponsorship of UGC on "*Empowerment of Panchayati Raj Institutions – Problems and Challenges with Special Reference to Andhra Pradesh*" during March, 15 – 16, 2015. The theme has been aptly chosen in the context of the need for better understanding of Panchayati Raj Institutions and their problems in Andhra Pradesh. The National Seminar gives an opportunity for the teachers, research scholars and students in the concerned field to interact with the experts. I appreciate the efforts of Dr. M. Jhansi and other Faculty Members of S.K.S.D. Mahila Kalasala, for taking up the responsibility of organizing National Seminar. I wish the Seminar a great success.


(E.A. NARAYANA)

Message



Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan

Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or Panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world.

-M. K. Gandhi (in his journal Harijan)

India with a population of 121 crore, has 83.3 crore people i.e. almost 70% of the population living in the rural areas. The 73rd Amendment Act gave the panchayat raj institutions a constitutional status which would empower them to undertake welfare and development activities at the root level. Many states including Andhra Pradesh have enacted their own legislations to institutionalize the PRIs. Have these legislations helped in building a strong 3rd tier democracy? Unfortunately, the answer would be in the negative. The reasons for the failures could be many- The lack of funds, the state governments being reluctant to share powers with the PRI's and many more. But, the major ones, being the lack of awareness in people about the importance of these institutions in building this nation and the lacklustre behaviour in addressing the problems and challenges faced by the PRIs. As believed by the Mahatma that "The soul of India lives in its villages" the growth story should start from the villages. For that we need the Local Self Governments to play a bigger role. The people's participation can only empower the Panchayats and further the aim of building a strong and vibrant democracy.

We need to decentralize power in an innovative, accountable manner to ensure outcomes. Even with the best of intentions and great ability, we cannot improve delivery and outcomes in a centralized, inflexible system. Fusion of authority with accountability at local level should be the guiding principle. There is a priceless opportunity now. Swachh Bharat

Mission has captured the imagination of the people. Central devolution to states is increasing greatly. In the current year, Rs. 778,000 crore is sought to be transferred to states. With the government's acceptance of 14th Finance Commission recommendation enhancing States' share of central taxes upto 42%, and the abolition of plan assistance and many centrally-sponsored schemes, there is now space to transfer a part of the funds to the third tier of government. Even if a sixth (17%) of the transfers go to local governments directly, there will be Rs. 1000/ capita available in every local government. Our villages need better infrastructure and in-situ urbanization. Even rural citizens are increasingly restive at the poor services and amenities. This gives us great opportunity to empower citizens and local governments, transfer Rs. 1000/ capita, and build accountability systems to prevent abuse. It will release great energy and transform delivery and outcomes.

I am sure this seminar on "Empowerment of Panchayati Raj Institutions- Problems and Challenges with special reference to A.P" would gain the attention of the people on a whole and would be a platform in addressing the major problems faced by the local governments today. I appreciate the efforts of the S.K.S.D Mahila Kalasala in conducting such seminars and hope this would encourage many others take part in building stronger and better Local self governments.

Message



*Dr.D.Subba Rao, M.Com.,Ph.D
Administrative Officer,
S.K.S.D. Mahila Kalasala, Tanuku*

I congratulate the Department of Political Science, S.K.S.D.Mahila Kalasala, Tanuku, for organizing a National Seminar on “Empowerment of Panchayat Raj Institutions – Problems and Challenges with Special Reference to Andhra Pradesh” on 15th and 16th March 2015.

My best wishes to the organizers, participants and faculty Members of the institution. I wish the seminar a grand success.

Dr.D.Subba Rao

FROM THE PRINCIPAL & CHAIR PERSON'S DESK



Dr.P.ARUNA

Principal & Seminar Chair Person

I extend a warm and hearty welcome to all the participants and guests to the Two-Day UGC sponsored National Seminar on "Empowerment of Panchayat Raj Institutions - Problems and Challenges with Special Reference to Andhra Pradesh" organized by the Department of Political Science of the SKSD Mahila Kalasala Tanuku.

Smt. Kondepoti Sarojani Devi Mahila Kalasala was established in the year 1982 by Sri Venkata Krishna Educational Society. The college is located in the serene outskirts of the Tanuku town sprawling across 8 acres in complete greenery and pollution free environment. Tanuku town is one of the important educational, industrial and cultural hubs of West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. The college is a landmark in the map of Tanuku. The founder, secretary and correspondent of the college, Sri Chitturi Subba Rao established the college in the memory of his beloved sister with the vision of "Women Empowerment with Value Based Education". The college has successfully completed 32 glorious years in its long voyage from the seeding stage to the banyan stage where there have been many milestones reached. The Re-accreditation by NAAC at 'B' level is a testimony to the best performance of

the college. At SKSD overall development of the student is given utmost importance by the learned faculty as well as by the management. Extracurricular activities like games, sports, yoga, personality development, dance, music etc. are given equal importance along with academic programme. Conducting seminars, workshops, guest lectures for the benefit of the faculty and students has become a regular feature of the college. Today's seminar by the Political Science Department is one of such attempts. I am truly delighted with the fact that the college has grown to such a level of organising a National Seminar with attendance of participants and guests from different States and Universities in the country.

The Theme has aptly chosen in the context of the need for better understanding of Panchayat Raj Institutions and their problems in Andhra Pradesh and India. The Seminar is modest attempt in the direction, seminars like this will be platform for the budding, scholars and researchers to explain the known and explore the unknown. I hope the resource persons and participants will throw enough light on various issues relating to the Seminar Theme and will come out with practical and useful suggestions for wider consideration for policy making.

I once again whole heartedly welcome all the participants and guests to the Seminar and wish the Seminar a grand success.

Dr.P. ARUNA

THEME OF THE SEMINAR-A FOCUS



Dr. M. Jhansi

Convener

In our Indian constitution Article 40 clearly mentions that the “States shall take steps to organize village Panchayat and endow them with such power and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government”. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts (CAA) provided constitutional status to the Panchayat – Raj institutions and urban local bodies. As per the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) are the local level institutions comprising elected representatives entrusted with the responsibility of identifying, formulating, implementing and monitoring the local development and welfare programmes. Consequently all the state governments enacted their own Panchayati raj legislations in broad conformity with governing 73rd constitutional Amendment Act of 1992. In Karnataka in 1993, in Andhra Pradesh, in West Bengal and in Tamilanadu in 1994 Panchayati raj Acts came into existence. According to A.P.Panchayatraj Act 1994. a three tier Panchayat-Raj system was introduced in the state of AP i.e. Zilla Parishad at top level ,Mandal Parishad at intermediary level and Gram Panchayat at bottom level .According to 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act(Schedule 11 of the Constitution) 29 functions should be devolved at the local level for Grama Panchayats. These 29 subjects which conferred on Panchayat –Raj institutions are all concerning to their day to day lives which includes Agriculture ,Minor irrigation ,Water Management and development , Animal Husbandry ,Health ,Sanitation , School Education ,Fisheries ,Poultry, Bridges and Culverts ,Land Reforms ,Ecological restoration ,Rural Industries and so on. Another important feature of this Act is Reservation of 33% of Seats to Women in every tire of PRIs. Recently this 33% was increased to 50%. Another feature of 73rd CAA is concept of Grama Sabha .It will be a body consisting of all persons registered as voters in the Panchayat area at the Village level and may exercise powers entrusted to it by the State Legislature .So everybody thought that these PRIs are the instruments for the Grass-Root development of the Country and Political Empowerment of Women. But in practice the spirit of 73 Constitutional Amendment Act i.e ., empowering local bodies was not full filled after completion of 20 years of its existence because of lack of strong political will and resistance from bureaucratic circles have lead the PRIs to a dismal role and all the efforts to devolve 29 functions to PRIs have remaining on paper only. In the year 2008 A.P State Government has taken certain initiatives towards strengthening of PRIs. The Government of A.P devolved certain powers and functions to PRIs conforming to the activity mapping of 10 Core departments i.e., Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, Rural Development

,Drinking water and sanitation ,Primary , Secondary and Adult Education , Health and Family welfare and Women and Child welfare Departments. But this is only on paper not in practice. All the Government orders in this connection remained silent on transfer of these functions to PRIs. Because of lack of powers and finances PRIs are facing so many problems in preparing and implementing their developmental plans. These PRIs not working in the spirit of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992. There seem to be plethora of debates involving the concept, utility and effectiveness of the PRIs. Our Indian Government declared 2009-2010 as year of “Gramasabha” as a mark to fulfill the Gandhian Ideology of Grama Swaraj or decentralization of powers and strengthening the Gramasabha. Every village Panchayat has to conduct Gramasabha meetings four times per year. But the concept of Gramsabha didn't fully succeeded in our state. It became a ritual. With this Back ground a National Seminar is proposed on problems and challenges of PRIs to discuss and disseminate the opinions of academicians, experts and prominent persons of different walks of life on PRIs and to find out solutions in the direction of empowering rural local bodies. It is necessary to analyze and discuss issues relating to “Empowerment of Panchayat Raj Institutions – Problems and Challenges with Special Reference to Andhra Pradesh”. Following sub themes have been chosen to deliberate in the Seminar.

- Empowerment and Devolution of powers to PRIs – Funds, Functions and Functionaries.
- Problems and challenges of PRIs in their functioning - Role of Political parties, interference of Higher Level representatives i.e., MLAs, MPs and influence of media.
- Functioning of PRIs in Andhra Pradesh in comparison with West Bengal, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
- Functioning of Gramasabha – Reality.
- PRIs and Rural Development and the Concept of Smart Village.
- Reservations – Empowerment and performance of women and other reserved category representatives in PRIs.
- PRIs and Corruption.
- Role of local governments in Swachh Bharat Programme.
- Improving the service delivery in Panchayat Raj Institutions – Best Practices.

I am very happy to inform you that the Two - day National Seminar has been generously sponsored by the University Grants Commission. So far 55 papers have been received from the Learned paper writers. Paper presentations followed by discussions will be made in Four Technical Sessions. I sincerely hope that the Seminar would come out with practical and useful solutions to the problems faced by the Panchayat Raj Institutions.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

EMPOWERMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS: AN OUTLOOK

Dr. Krishna Prasad P.

It is important that the civic services which any community of people would need are planned, programmed and integrated in terms of region or area inhabited by them. Local government involves distribution of work on territorial basis. Local government prevents establishment of administrative uniformity which is the aim of the state bureaucracy. Local government provides an extensive range of services to the people and performs functions of great variety and magnitude. The constitution of India nowhere defines local government. The seventh schedule (List II, item 5) says: Local government, that is to say, the constitution and powers of municipal corporations, improvement trusts, district boards, mining settlement authorities and other local authorities for the purpose of local self-government and village administration. This only illustrates the types of local bodies existing during the enactment of the constitution. Secondly, the illustration places both the elective bodies and the nominated ones on the same footing which is plainly unacceptable. The seventy-third constitutional amendment, operative since 1993 removes these lacunas. Article 243 of the constitution defines Gramsabha, constitution of panchayats, reservation of seats, duration of panchayat, constitution of finance commission, audits and accounts of panchayats. The constitution has now a new schedule, namely the eleventh schedule after the tenth schedule. Part IX of the constitution added in 1992, presents structural, organizational, functional and financial aspects of PR bodies.

Local Governments are the only hope to build pathways for sustainable development in the developing countries. The challenging question today is how well these local governments are placed to promote opportunities for green jobs, build rural resilience, reduce poverty and ensure human rights based approach to local planning. It is observed that the current employment trends indicate no role for local governments in ensuring jobs for women and youth. Though the local governments have introduced programmes that create work opportunities, majority of them are governed by NGOs in the name of outsourcing, public private partnership and so on. Further, the role of Panchayat Raj institutions is crucial for preserving the environment, advancing the economy and to promote social equity.

At present, there are about 3 million elected representatives at all levels of the panchayat 1/2th of which are women. These members represent more than 2.4 lakh Gram Panchayats, about 6,000 intermediate level tiers and more than 500 district panchayats. Spread over the length and breadth of the country, the new panchayats cover about 96 per cent of India's more than 5.8 lakh villages and nearly 99.6 per cent of rural population. This is the largest experiment in decentralization of governance in the history of humanity. However, giving due consideration to the federal structure of our polity, most of the financial powers and authorities to be endowed on panchayats have been left at the discretion of concerned state legislatures. **There is strict control over the functioning of panchayati raj institutions. There is no aspect of local administration which is not controlled. Regulation and autonomy constitute the two extremities of what may be called, control continuum, in the sphere of state-local relations.**

Keynote address delivered UGC National Seminar on "Empowerment of Panchayat Raj Institutions-Problems and Challenges with Special References to Andhra Pradesh" organized by Department of Political Science, S.K.S.D. Mahila Kalasala(UG & PG), Tanuku, W.G. Dt.

After the historic 73rd Constitutional amendment Act, local governments have completed 3-4 rounds of elections. Yet the performance of local governments still stands as a matter of debate and speculation. The quality of public participation, the commitment of the employees, the principle of accountability and social auditing have not presented any merit while the blame denial game continues between the local and state level governments. A significant shift towards a state local government partnership is emerging and the same requires to be consolidated transforming the inter governmental relations and mechanisms.

Local government really started life as a practical and operational contrivance lacking any fundamental constitutional conception. It is a defect from which we still suffer (Palmer & palmer 2004 p.247) Somehow I feel a coherent vision is still lacking despite significant constitutional amendment that gave local government new power to promote social, economic, environmental and cultural well being. It may be possible to initiate a remedy to the defect palmer and palmer have referred, through predominance of a pragmatic approach over a principle based approach. The different models of local governments ultimately highlight intergovernmental relations either favoring community planning by central and state governments or allowing greater local autonomy for having their own plans. A review of several case studies indicate that localism in its variants such as local government reform, decentralization, devolution and participatory governments can be instrumental in bringing about different degrees of community empowerment.

Any dominant model for local government empowerment is essentially based upon increasing citizen participation in the practices of local government. It is noted that different tiers of local government pursue policy priorities compatible to centrally driven and controlled policy, indicating local empowerment as mere tokenistic in nature. Further, noticed that there is a continuous move away from active devolution of power to different scales of local government. It is also observed that civil society and grassroots movements are yet to evolve for ensuring local government empowerment. . The growth of urban population has now outpaced the growth of rural population. Local governments in urban context face the challenge of responding to such population changes through policies and mechanism that create employment opportunities, for their rising urban population. It is equally important that they emphasis upon the maximizing the positive benefits of urbanization to develop green economics. Greening of cities promoting urban and pre-urban agriculture, public transportation, renewable energy, waste management and recycling required being part of urban planning, necessary for ascertaining the autonomy of urban local government.

Partnerships are crucial for maximizing synergies and for ensuring cost effectiveness. Perhaps the present move to encourage adoption of villages by NGOs may lead to addressing the nexus between the sustainable economic growth and ecological presentation and restoration. The partnership strategies are based on the premise that local governments have little power and funding to promote change. The new technologies and the consequent digitization of the government programmes place both local authorities and non state partners in pursuing a win –win solution to address local service delivery and social challenges. Any eGovernance project has four pillars of cycle in entire processes they are People, Process, Technology and Resources (PPTR). Also, the state was giving Rs.26,000 crore subsidies to various sections of people every year and the use of ICT would ensure that the subsidies reach the targeted group. The state is now planning to link all the welfare schemes to Aadhar to check the leakages. A single entry portal for the entire range of services and a Seamless & Paperless administration to the extent possible stand the major objectives of the Digitization.

People will look for their comfort when interacting with governments. They also look for outcomes whether it is e-Governance or m-Governance (here ‘m’ refers to mobile) or in any manner. The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), takes a holistic view of e-Governance initiatives across the country, integrating them into a collective vision, a shared cause. Around this idea, a massive countrywide infrastructure reaching down to the remotest of villages is evolving, and large-scale

digitization of records is taking place to enable easy, reliable access over the internet. The ultimate objective is to bring public services closer home to citizens, as articulated under vision statement of NeGP. E-government is not a solution to improved government, but one of the important elements. E-government represents the free flow of information and develops opportunities, new relationships, and enhances the government-citizen relationships.

Finally, Local government empowerment involves creation of a network of research centers, collaborating and jointing the private sector besides the individuals from the local communities. A close co-ordination among the different tiers of the government may foster an enabling environment for technology and knowledge innovation and transfer. Training and Development should precede capacity building initiatives that empower PR institutions. There appears a conflict between the goals like welfare and neo-liberalism. This conflict is manifesting in the form of NGOs, Contractors (private partners) versus Citizen Participation. PR institutions empowerment cannot be realized without state and central level functionaries, both political and administrative, refrain voluntarily from interference and involvement. Technology empowers PRIs while their poverty and dependence demand their surrender to sponsors. There is also a need for structural reforms at community level for enabling PRIs empowerment.

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

Problems and Challenges of Panchayati Raj Institutions

Prof. E.A. NARAYANA

Panchayati Raj is not a new concept. The Panchayats have been a part of rural cultural heritage of India. From time immemorial the panchayats have enjoyed the confidence of the people. The system survived in spite of turmoil and changes, because the village folk were fully confident of their capabilities of sound thinking and right approach to problems. 'Panchayat' literally means an assembly (yat) of five (Pancha) wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the village community. They were considered as the incarnation of God (Panch Parmeshwar).

Historically, every village in the country had a panchat which was responsible for finding solutions to local problems within the village itself. The 'Panchayat' of the institution of village council is as old as India's history and is a part of her tradition. The ancient panchayat, serving as units of local government, discharged most of the functions that affected the life of the village community. In "Discovery of India" Pandit Nehru had provided a fairly exhaustive idea about the working of village panchayats in ancient India. In the ancient India, the village panchayat or elected council had large powers, both executive and judicial and its members were treated with great respect by the kings' officers. Land was distributed by the panchayats. The panchayats collected taxes out of the produce and paid the government's share on behalf of the village. Under the panchayat, village was heaven of peace where the national culture developed. Thus, the Panchayats had a wide spectrum of activities covering executive, administrative, developmental and judiciary in ancient India. They breathed health into the rural society.

With the advent of British rule, however, drastic changes were made in the old pattern of village life. With the state dealing directly with the individuals in the villages panchayats languished; they were no longer effective units of local government. The British rulers opted for a highly centralized system where there was little scope for decentralized administration.

After independence, the PRIs were established throughout the country. But the major thrust to the PRI system was given after the Balwanthrai Mehta Committee three-tier system. During the last five decades several steps have been taken by the central as well as state governments to strengthen PRIs. Keeping all the past attempts in views, the Union Government found the solution in the form of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 to remove the weaknesses of PRIs.

The 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 in the country. This Act seeks to enshrine democracy at the grassroots, and it intends to give power to the people, and it will end corruption and fight and remove powerbrokers and

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middleman in Indian development administration. With the provision of holding elections every five years to the panchayats governing India's half a million village, and with the reservation of the seats for women and for the scheduled castes and tribes in proportion to their population in each panchayat, a significant step has been taken for the empowerment of the underprivileged in Indian society. A congenial environment has been created with the implementation of the various provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act by the states. However the performance of PRIs is not on expected lines due to a number of factors. An attempt is made in this paper to examine the key aspects that affect functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions. The major challenges for PRIs are: Transfer of Powers and Functions, Financial Allocation and Party Politics

Transfer of Powers and Functions:

The Article 243(G) of the Constitution visualizes PRIs as institutions of self government but simultaneously it leaves the extent of devolution of powers and functions to the will of the State Legislatures. It, therefore, becomes apparent that unless this crucial will of the State Government concerned is exercised, these bodies cannot assume their new role as institutions of self governance, mainly for social and economic development of their respective areas. In fact, due to these lacunae left in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, only a few States have given partial functional and financial autonomy to these institutions.

The experiences show that the most glaring omissions in the State Acts as stated above is one relating to the devolution of functions to the Panchayats. Even though most state Acts have reproduced in a parrot-like manner the 11th Schedule, few have earmarked any of the functions/activities of the Schedule as exclusive jurisdiction of a particular tier of the Panchayat. It is noticed that powers and functions have been assigned to PRIs without keeping any cardinal principle in mind. There is overlapping of areas, functions and responsibilities among the different lines of PRIs. There is no clear-cut mapping of the functions or activities at different tiers of panchayats.

Financial Allocation:

The inadequacy of funds has also stood in the way of successful working of the Panchayati Raj. The Panchayati Raj bodies have limited powers in respect of imposing cesses and taxes. Further, they are generally reluctant to raise necessary funds due to the fear of losing popularity with the masses. As we are very much aware, almost all the states have made the PRIs a powerful and effective instrument of economic and social progress. Despite the competence given to them by law, few PRIs have shown a readiness to levy tax to the extent that will result in the availability of funds adequate for the proper discharge of the functions they are expected to perform. The reluctance to levy tax is mainly a reflection of local pressures which the PRIs have been unable to resist. They have very little funds doled out to them by the State Government. The share of land revenue made available to the PRIs by the state government has not proved substantial. The grants sanctioned to them have also not adequate. Thus, the resources provided to the PRIs are not enough to perform the functions entrusted to them.

Party Politics:

It is being increasingly noticed that the Panchayati Raj Institutions are viewed only as organization arms of political parties, especially of the ruling party in the state. As a result of the trends, some observers of Panchayati Raj have pointed out that the sphere in which the influence of PRIs has been most marked is political rather than economic. "It had been expected that Panchayati Raj would primarily be a development mechanism and it will make up for the shortfalls of the community development programme. In practice it has emerged primarily as a power mechanism. The local leader has strong links with the state leaders, particularly ministers who patronize him because they know he is more or less to serve as a vote bank for his area. The Panchayati Raj has brought about a political framework for the development of pattern of closer contact between the local and state leadership. The major reason for decline of Panchayati Raj has been seen by the political leadership at the state level as a rival centre of power.

All state governments have shown lukewarm attitude towards their PRIs' development. There has been widespread arbitrariness in superseding PRIs and elections were not held for years in many states. Till 1992 when 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act was passed by the Parliament, power hungry state politicians had been using the absence of a constitutional guarantee to cripple Panchayati Raj. By providing constitutional guarantee to the PRIs a major hurdle is over. Even then the elections have been postponed on one pretext or the other.

Conclusions:

The above problems and many other problems which the PRIs are facing today can be solved with the following measures:

1. Implementation of central and state legislations in true spirit.
2. Conducting periodic and regular elections to PRIs.
3. Sanction and release of funds as recommended by the State Finance Commission and National Finance Commission
4. Political Commitment to strengthen the PRIs.

List of Paper Presentars & Articles

Sl. No	Name of the Paper Presenter	Title of the Paper
1	Dr Jayaprakash Narayan	Empowering the PRIs – Need of the Hour
2	Siddharth Sekhar Barpanda (FDR Researcher) Foundation for Democratic Reforms	AN INCREASED ROLE OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION
3	Durga Rao Ganta, Assistant Professor, Department of Public Policy and Public Administration, Central University of Jammu, Jammu, J&K, E-Mail: durgaraoganta1@gmail.com	Role of Common Service Centres in Rural Development in India: A Critical Appraisal
4	1. Dr. M RAVI SEKHAR. 2. 2 Dr.P. YEDUKONDALU 1. Associate Professor, Head, Department of Political Science & Public Administration, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur. 2. Faculty Department of Political Science & Public Administration, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur.	WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS: A STUDY
5	Dr. V.Govindu Teaching Associate, Dept. of Political Science & Public-Administration., Andhra University Campus, Kakinada	Devolution of Funds, Functions and Functionaries to Panchayati Raj Institutions-A perspective
6	Dr. N.Sundara Rao, H.O.D, Reader in Politics & Public Admin., K.G.R.L.College (Autonomous), Bhimavaram-1	Empowerment and Devolution of Powers to PRIs : Funds , Functions and Functionaries
7	Dr. B.V.L.A Manga Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Maharajah's (Autonomous) College, Vizianagaram - 535002	Empowering People Through Gramsabha
8	Vijaya Kumar. B. Assistant Professor, Department of Political science, Vijayanagara Sri Krishnadevaraya University , Ballari- 583105, Karnataka state, India, Mobile no. 09972501830 email. vijaypollect@gmail.com.	GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PANCHAYAT RAJ FRAME WORK IN KARNATAKA
9	Dr. Mohan Das K., Department of Political Science, VSKU, Bellary, Email: mitmohan@gmail.com., Ph:9019615484	POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH PANCHAYATRAJ INSTITUTIONS IN KARNATAKA

10	Sri Satyanarayana Kanakala Asst. Professor, Dept of MBA, Pydah College(PG Center), Ghambhram, Vishakapatnam	Inclusive Democracy to Achieve Holistic Panchayati Raj
11	Dr.D.Venkateswara Rao Professor & Head, Dept. of Public Administration, PG Courses, Sri Y.N.College, Narsapur	GANDHIAN PERSPECTIVE OF THE PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM
12	Dr.B.V.V.Balakrishna Associate Professor, P.G.Dept.of Political Science, Sir C R R College,Eluru	CONCEPT OF SMART VILLAGE-A BRIEF REVIEW
13	Sri V.Venkateswara Rao Smt. G. Indira Kumari Lecturer in Statistics, S.K.S.D. Mahila Kalasala (UG & PG), Tanuku Lecturer in Commerce, S.K.S.D. Mahila Kalasala (UG & PG), Tanuku	Gram Sabha & Ward Sabha
14	* P.Venkata Subba Rao ** K.U.B.N.V. Prasad * P.Venkata Subba Rao, Asst. Professor, Dr.C.S.Rao P.G. Centre, Sri Y.N.College (NAAC “A” with CGPA 3.40), NARSAPUR, W.G.Dt., 534 275 ; email : rao.pulaparathi@gmail.com ; mobile : 9963591727. ** K.U.B.N.V. Prasad, HOD, Department of Politics, Sri Y.N.College (NAAC “A” with CGPA 3.40), NARSAPUR, W.G.Dt., 534 275 ;	FUNCTIONING OF GRAMA SABHA – REALITY
15	K.ANANDAKUMAR Assistant Professor, GIRRAJ GOVT.COLLEGE (A) NIZAMABAD, Telangana State, Mobile: 9441554653, Email: anandkolli.dl@gmail.com	Role of Gram panchayats to implement Poverty alleviation programs in rural India.
16	Dr. M. Jhansi Smt. G. Kusuma Kumari Reader in Political Science, S.K.S.D. Mahila Kalasala (UG & PG), Tanuku, W.G. Dt	WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN PANCHAYATI RAJ – A CASE STUDY OF FOUR MANDALS IN EAST & WEST GODAVARI DISTRICTS, A.P.
17	Dr. B.N. Naga Padmavathi Smt. K. Vani S.G. Lecturer in History, S.K.S.D. Mahila Kalasala(UG & PG),Tanuku,W.G. Dt	TOWARDS HOLISTIC PANCHAYATS-DEVOLUTION OF POWERS TO PANCHAYATS- FUNDS, FUNCTIONS AND FUNCTIONARIE

18	Dr K. Radha Pushpavathi* Smt. G. Aruna Kumari** Smt. G. Kusuma Kumari*** *Reader in Economics, S.K.S.D. Mahila Kalasala (UG & PG), Tanuku – 534211, W.G. Dt. **Lecturer in Economics, S.K.S.D. Mahila Kalasala (UG & PG), Tanuku – 534211, W.G. Dt. ***Lecturer in Physical Education, S.K.S.D. Mahila Kalasala (UG & PG), Tanuku – 534211, W.G. Dt.	GRAM SABHA
19	Dr. D.M. Neeraja Reader in Commerce, S.K.S.D. Mahila Kalasala(UG & PG),Tanuku,W.G. Dt	Role of Dalit Women in Panchayati Raj in India
20	Lt.U.Lakshmi Sundari Bai Lecturer in Mathematics, S.K.S.D. Mahila Kalasala (UG & PG), Tanuku, W.G. Dt.	EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN PANCHAYAT
21	J.Madan Mohan Assistant Professor, Post Graduate Department of Commerce, Sir C R Reddy College, Eluru	Women Empowerment in Panchayat Raj Institutions
22	G.MARY KRUPA BAI, LECTURER IN POLITICAL SCIENCE, CELL:9989347374, MAIL:mary.gunturu@gmail.com	GRAMA SWARAJ
23	D.JYOTHI LECTURER IN BOTANY, SCIM GDC,TANUKU,W.G	Empowerment of Women through Panchayati Raj System
24	P V V Satyanarayana. Lecturer in Commerce, SCIM Govt., Degree College. Tanuku - 534211. cell: 9441133025. Email:vvsnarayana.pachimala@gmail.com	Functioning of Gram Sabha-Reality
25	K.PARVATHI DEVI LECTURER IN POLITICAL SCIENCE, SCIM GDC –TANUKU. W.G.Dt.	EMPOWERMENT OF PANCHAYATI RAJ AND 73 rd AMENDMENT
26	V.K.J.PRASUNA M.Com,M.Phil,(P.hd) LECTURER IN COMMERCE, SCIM GDC- TANUKU,W,G,Dt	RECOMMENDATIONS OF PANCHAYATI RAJ
27	M.RAMBABU Lecturer in Economics, S.A.S.J.govt.degree College, NARAYANAPURAM, West Godavari (Dist), Andhra Pradesh, Mobile: 9492207703, Email: murududdi.rambabu@gmail.com	Transfer of Responsibilities, Functions and Resources of Panchayats

28	Dr.K.S.V.Ranga Rao Lecturer in Political Science, Sri Y.N.College, Narsapur	GANDHIAN PERSEPCTIVE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT
29	Mr.D.D.N.Prasad Lecturer in Public Administration, Dr.CSR PG Centre, Sri Y.N.College, Narsapur	GANDHIJI'S VIEWS ON ENVIRONMENT
30	Jagadevi D. Ganamukhi , Research Scholar (Ph. D), Department of Studies and Research in Political Science, Gulbarga University, Gulbarga – 585106 (Karnataka). E-mail : jagadevi.dgt@gmail.com. Ph. no. 9945835390, 9482150830.	PANCHAYATI RAJ IN ANDHRA PRADESH, KARNATAKA AND WEST BENGAL: A COMPARISON
31	Sri I.C.N. Raju Research Scholar, Department of Public Administration, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam	Information and Comunication Technology {ICT} for Rural Local Government in India
32	O. Jaya Kumari Research Scholar, Department of Public Administration, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam	Indirama Housing Scheme in Panchayats
33	Shivaputrappa G. Kambli Research Scholar, Department of studies and research in Political Science, Rani Channamma University, Belagavi. Email id:sgkambali86@gmail.com Cell No: 9482054317	CONTRIBUTION OF PANCHATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT
34	G. Priyanka Research Scholar, Department of politicalscience &Public Administration, Andhra University , Visakhapatna. E- mail.Priyaphd321@gamil.com8374537181	WOMEN FACING PROBLEMS IN PANCHAYAT RAJ INISTUTION
35	DARISY RANGANADH ROY (Research Scholar), Department of Political Science & Public Administration, Andhra University-Visakhapatnam	Act 73rd Amendment of Panchayati Raj
36	M.Sri Devi M.A.Previous, PG Dept.of Political Science, Sir C R Reddy College, Eluru.	PANCHAYAT RAJ IN KOLLERU VILLAGES- A CASE STUDY OF MANDAVALLI MANADAL
37	Dr. M.Lakshmi Pathi (Mob. No : 9440990824), Reader in Political Science, Sri D.N.R.Govt Degree College For Women,Palakol.	A Paper on Panchayati Raj And Rural Development in India

38	1. V. Raj Laxmi Babu 1.Lecturer,Sir C R R College of Education,Eluru 2.Lecturer,MBA Dept.,Sir C R Reddy College, Eluru	2. GVS Ravindra	RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND SMART VILLAGE IN INDIA
39	Dr.G.J.Sujnana Raju, Lecturer in Economics. Sri D.N.R.Govt. Degree College for Women, Palakole		WOMEN IN PANCHAYATS
40	K.Vijaya Kumari Research Scholar (Part-Time), P.G. Department of Political Science, Sir C R R College,Eluru		WOMEN-PANCHAYAT-ELECTIVES AT THE INTERFACE OF STATE AND VILLAGE POLITICS
41	D.Lavanya Lecturer in Economics, S.C.I.M. GDC, Tanuku, W.G.Dist. Email ID: d.lavanya28@gmail.com, ph no.9642539240		Functioning of Gramasabha -Reality
42	V. Rama Krishna* R.Shashidhar** Mrs. D. Smitha*** *Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Tumkur University, Tumkur, Mob: +91 8792212045; E-mail: rahul_rk2004@yahoo.co.in **Assistant Professor, P. G. Department of Studies and Research in Business Administration, Tumkur University, Tumkur – 572 103. E mail: shashi.hbl@gmail.com Mob: +91 9008666889 ***Lecturer in Political Science, Sri Basaveswara P U College, Sondekoppa Road, Nelamangala, Bangalore Rural District. E mail: dsmitha10@gmail.com		Panchayati Raj Institutions role in the success of the National Rural Health Mission: An Evaluation
43	R.MADHURAMEENAKSHI LECT IN MATHEMATICS, S.K.S.D MAHILAKALASALA, TANUKU		About Swachh Bharat Mission
44	P.Ratnakumari Department of Political Science D.R.G.Womens Degree college Tadepalligudem.		NATIONAL SEMINAR IS PROPOSED ON PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF PRIS
45	Y.SWATHI II B.COM(VOC),S.K.S.D MAHILA KALASALA(UG&PG),TANUKU		THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN SWACHH BHARAT PROGRAMME
46	P.Ratnakumari Department of Political Science D.R.G.Womens Degree college Tadepalligudem.		PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF PRIS

Day - 1		
Technical Session - I		
Date: 15-03-2015, Time: 12.00 P.M to 1.30 P.M		
Theme : Need for Empowering PRIs and Devolution of Powers		
Sl. No	Name of the Paper Presenter	Title of the Paper
1	Dr Jayaprakash Narayan	Empowering the PRIs – Need of the Hour
2	Dr. N.Sundara Rao, H.O.D, Reader in Politics & Public Admin., K.G.R.L.College (Autonomous), Bhimavaram	Empowerment and Devolution of Powers to PRIs : Funds , Functions and Functionaries
3	Dr. V.Govindu Teaching Associate, Dept. of Political Science & Public-Administration., Andhra University Campus, Kakinada	Devolution of Funds, Functions and Functionaries to Panchayati Raj Institutions-A perspective
4	Sri Satyanarayana Kanakala Asst. Professor, Vishakapatnam	Inclusive Democracy to Achieve Holistic Panchayati Raj
5	Sri M.Rambabu Lecturer in Economics, Narayanapuram	Transfer of Responsibilities, Functions and Resources of Panchayats
6	Sri K.Ananda Kumar Assistant Professor, Nizamabad	Role of Gram panchayats to implement Poverty alleviation programs in rural India.
7	Smt. V.K.J.Prasuna, Lecturer in Commerce, Tanuku	Recommendations of Panchayati Raj
8	K.Parvathi Devi Lecturer in Political Science, Tanuku	Empowerment of Panchayat Raj and 73rd Amendment
9	Jagadevi D. Ganamukhi , Research Scholar (Ph. D), Gulbarga	Panchayati Raj in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and West Bengal: a comparison
10	Siddharth Sekhar Barpanda (FDR Researcher) Foundation for Democratic Reforms	An Increased Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Elementary Education
11	DARISY RANGANADH ROY (Research Scholar), Visakhapatnam	Act 73rd Amendment of Panchayati Raj
12	Dr. B.N. Naga Padmavathi S.G. Lecturer in History, Tanuku	Towards Holistic Panchayats- Devolution of powers to Panchayats- Funds, Functions and Functionarie
13	Dr. M.Lakshmi Pathi, Reader in Political Science, Palakol.	Panchayati Raj And Rural Development in India
14	Sri Durga Rao Ganta Assistant Professor, Jammu	Role of Common Service Centres in Rural Development in India: A Critical Appraisal
15	Smt. P.Ratnakumari Department of Political Science Tadepalligudem.	Problems and Challenges of PRIs

Day - 1		
Technical Session - II		
Date: 15-03-2015, Time: 2.30 P.M to 3.45 P.M		
Theme : Empowerment of Rural Women and Panchayati Raj		
Sl. No	Name of the Paper Presenter	Title of the Paper
1	D. Jyothi, Lecturer in Botany, Tanuku	Empowerment of Women through Panchayati Raj System
2	Smt. K.Vijaya Kumari Research Scholar (Part-Time), Eluru	Women-Panchayat-Electives at the Interface of State and Village Politics
3	Sri J.Madan Mohan, Assistant Professor, Eluru	Women Empowerment in Panchayat Raj Institutions
4	Smt. G. Priyanka, Scholar, Visakhapatnam,	Women Facing Problems in Panchayat Raj Institution
5	Dr. M Ravi Sekhar, Associate Professor Dr.P. Yedudondalu. Faculty, Guntur.	Women Empowerment through Panchayat Raj Institutions: a study
6	Dr. Mohan Das K., Department of Political Science, VSKU, Bellary	Political Empowerment of Women through Panchayatraj Institutions in Karnataka
7	Dr. M. Jhansi Reader in Political Science, Tanuku	Women leadership in Panchayati raj – a case study of four Mandals in east & west godavari districts, a.p.
8	Dr. D.M. Neeraja Reader in Commerce, Tanuku	Role of Dalit Women in Panchayati Raj in India
9	Lt.U.Lakshmi Sundari Bai Lecturer in Mathematics Tanuku	Empowerment of Women in Panchayat
10	Dr.G.J.Sujnana Raju, Lecturer in Economics. Palakole	Women in Panchayats

Day - 1		
Technical Session - III		
Date: 15-03-2015, Time: 4.00 P.M to 5.30 P.M		
Theme : Problems and Functioning of GRAM SABHA		
Sl. No	Name of the Paper Presenter	Title of the Paper
1	Dr. B.V.L.A Manga Associate Professor, Vizianagaram	Empowering People Through Gramsabha
2	Dr K. Radha Pushpavathi, Reader in Economics Smt. G. Aruna Kumari, Lecturer in Economics Smt. G. Kusuma Kumarim Lecturer in Physical Educationm Tanuku	Gram Sabha
3	Sri P V V Satyanarayana. Lecturer in Commerce, Tanuku	Functioning of Gram Sabha-Reality
4	Smt. G.Maru Krupa Bai, Lecturer in Political Science	Gram Sabha
5	Sri V.Venkateswara Rao, Lecturer in Statistics Smt. G. Indira Kumari, Lecturer in Commerce Tanuku	Gram Sabha & Ward Sabha
6	Smt. V. Raj Laxmi, Lecturer GVS Ravindra Babu, Lecturer, Eluru	Rural Development and Smart Village in India
7	Smt. D.Lavanya Lecturer in Economics, Tanuku	Functioning of Gramasabha -Reality
8	Sri P.Venkata Subba Rao, Asst. Professor, Sri K.U.B.N.V. Prasad , Sri P.Venkata Subba Rao	Functioning of Grama Sabha – Reality

Day - 2
Technical Session - IV
Date: 16-03-2015, Time: 10.00 A.M to 1.00 P.M

Topic : Rural Development and Gandhian Concept of Gram Swaraj & Interface with PRI Representatives

Sl. No	Name of the Paper Presenter	Title of the Paper
1	Dr.K.S.V.Ranga Rao Lecturer in Political Science, Narsapur	Gandhian Persepctive of Rural Development
2	Dr.D.Venkateswara Rao Professor Narsapur	Gandhian Perspective of the Panchayati Raj System
3	Dr. B.V.V.Balakrishna Associate Professor, Eluru	Concept of Smart Village-a Brief Review
4	Sri I.C.N. Raju Research Scholar, Visakhapatnam	Information and Comunication Technology {ICT} for Rural Local Government in India
5	Smt. O. Jaya Kumari Research Scholar, Visakhapatnam	Indirama Housing Scheme in Panchayats
6	Sri V. Rama Krishna, Assistant Professor R.Shashidhar, Assistant Professor Mrs. D. Smitha, Lecturer in Political Science	Panchayati Raj Institutions role in the success of the National Rural Health Mission: An Evaluation
7	R. Madhura Meenakshi, Lecturer in Mathematics, Tanuku	About Swachh Bharat Mission
8	Y.Swathi, II B.COM(VOC), TANUKU	The Role of Local Governments in Swachh Bharat Programme
9	Smt. Shivaputrappa G. Kambli Research Scholar, , Belagavi	Contribution of Panchati Raj Institutions in Rural Development
10	Smt. M.Sri Devi M.A.Previous, Eluru.	Panchayat Raj in Kolleru Villages- A Case Study of Mandavalli Manadal
11	Sri Vijaya Kumar. B. Assistant Professor, Ballari	Growth and Development of the Panchayat Raj Frame Work in Karnataka
12	Sri D.D.N.Prasad Lecturer in Public Administration, Narsapur	Gandhiji's Views on Environment

Empowering the PRIs – Need of the Hour

Dr Jayaprakash Narayan

A. Empowerment of Local Governments

The 73rd and 74th amendments of the Constitution were enacted in 1993 with great hope and anticipation. However, while panchayats, nagarapalikas and municipalities have come into existence and elections are being held, this has not translated into effective decentralization of power. The Constitution left the issue of degree of empowerment and devolution to the state legislature. In most states, local governments continue to be weak.

Given this backdrop, we need to examine the possibilities of Union intervention – through constitutional, fiscal and procedural steps – to empower local governments. This issue needs to be linked to the need for improvement of service delivery. The poor and disadvantaged sections of society must have real opportunities for vertical mobility through local empowerment. Such empowerment must conform to four critical principles.

- **Principle of subsidiarity:** Functions shall be carried out closest to citizens at the smallest unit of governance possible, delegated upwards only when the local unit cannot perform the task. The citizen delegates those functions she cannot perform to the community, functions that the community cannot discharge are passed on to the local governments in the smallest tiers, and so on, from smaller tiers to larger tiers, from local government to the State governments, and from the States to the Union. In this scheme, the citizen and the community are the center of governance. In place of traditional hierarchies, we will have ever-enlarging concentric circles of government, and delegation is outward depending on necessity.
- Greater linkage between citizen's vote and public good
- Effective tracking of resource deployment and of their utilization with productive outcomes

Fusion of authority with accountability

Apart from possibilities of action at the Union level, we need to identify specific and practical steps required at the state level for effective empowerment and accountability of local governments.

The following are some of the measures listed for discussion.

Founder & President, Loksatta

1. Revisiting the Basic Constitutional Scheme

The 73rd and 74th Amendments aim at a fundamental shift in the nature of governance. However, the past experience of over a decade shows that creating structures of elected local governments and ensuring regular elections does not guarantee effective local empowerment. In modern India, the first elected units of self-governance were the municipalities which came into existence in 1890s, and then District Boards, which were created in 1930s. The elected provincial governments came into being in 1937 under the Government of India Act, 1935. Local governments enjoyed considerable power and prestige for five decades before Independence and became cradles of democracy and leadership development. It is a paradox that municipalities under colonial government nurtured the finest leadership, and were far more powerful and effective than those in Independent India.

The tradition of autonomous local governments of course predates colonial rule. From the village republics of the pre-Mauryan era to the breath-taking Uttiramerur inscription of the Chola era, there is substantial and incontrovertible evidence of strong, autonomous, empowered, participative, effective local governments all over India. However, not all of it conforms to modern notions of liberal democracy. Vote was restricted to males and largely upper castes. Often the panchayats were institutional mechanisms to perpetuate caste rigidities and protect the 'purity' of the caste system. But this must be judged against the fact that in the US, despite the adoption of the noble, democratic, republican Constitution in 1789, slavery was legally permissible until the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation of President Lincoln gave concrete shape to the inalienable rights of man. In most modern democracies, women won the right to franchise only in 1920s and later. Therefore, the traditional local governments must be judged by contemporary standards. Modern constitutional values, independent institutions of state which protect equality and liberty, democratic evolution mandated by universal adult franchise, restructuring of village panchayats forcing realignment of political forces breaking caste orthodoxy, and better models of representation enhancing the legitimacy of the democratic process are some of the means by which the traditional inequities should be confronted, and democracy and self-governance made real and meaningful. Centralization, as the past 58 years amply demonstrate, is not a guarantor of citizens' 'liberty or good governance', it in fact delegitimizes democracy, alienates the citizen, perpetuates hierarchies, and breeds corruption and inefficiency.

A large-sized district in India is larger than about 80 nation-states in the world in terms of population. Most of our larger states would be among the large nations of the world. Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Bihar – each would be the largest nation in Europe. Even a truncated Uttar Pradesh would be the world's sixth largest nation. Centralization in the face of such vast numbers, not to speak of the enormous diversity, has led to poor functioning of public services and marginalization of citizens.

In this backdrop, the 73rd and 74th amendments were intended to be a breath of fresh air, empowering the citizens through local governments, redefining the state, invigorating our democracy, and injecting efficiency and accountability in our public services. But the past 12 years have seen erratic and ineffective empowerment of local governments. Democratic institutions need patience, nurturing and long evolution, and cannot be expected to yield instant results. However, for democracy to work, there should be consistency, predictability,

and effective empowerment of institutions combined with accountability. Our experience shows the following:

- Despite the mandatory constitutional injunctions, it took years, and in some cases a decade, to even constitute local governments and hold elections.
- Even when local governments are constituted and elections are held, the states often postponed the subsequent elections on some pretext or other. Each time it is an uphill battle to ensure compliance with the mandatory provisions of the Constitution.
- There has been no linear development or evolution in respect of democratic decentralization. Often, it is one step forward, and two steps backward.
- State governments, legislators and civil servants are in general extremely inimical to effective empowerment of local governments. Only the bare minimum required to implement the strict letter of the Constitution is allowed in many states. What is implied by the spirit of the Constitution and principles of democracy is often ignored.
- Even the mandatory provisions like constitution of District Planning Boards have been ignored in many states.
- Where the panchayats have been constituted and elections held regularly, they are still left to the mercy of state legislatures. Although local governments have a long tradition of autonomy, the fact that Union and State governments have an established tradition for nearly four decades, means that strong vested interests have developed over time disallowing devolution of power.
- Power in states has been largely reduced to a patronage system mediated through legislators acting as disguised executives. Transfers and postings, contracts and tenders, crime investigation and prosecution – all are often at the mercy of the local legislator. Given the compulsions of survival, the government which depends on the goodwill and support of legislators, is powerless to defy their will except where the Constitution specifically and unambiguously directs it.

The 73rd and 74th Amendments created over-structured and underpowered local governments. The provisions relating to local governments in German Basic Law run to fewer than 50 words, and yet effectively empowered local governments have been mandated. In its original form the US constitution was 4427 words long, and 215 years later, with all amendments, it has 7554 words. In contrast, the 73rd and 74th Amendments have about 7700 words. Excessively rigid structures have been prescribed, and powers and functions under Articles 243-G and 243-W are vague and at the mercy of state legislatures. There is a strong case to revise the constitutional provisions on the following lines.

- Tighten the provisions relating to empowerment of local governments, and make local control of subjects listed in XI and XII Schedules mandatory, giving them the same status as VII Schedule defining the Union-State division of powers. Leave the structure of panchayats and municipalities, and the method of composition and election to state legislatures, subject to the over-riding provisions constituting democratic governance. For instance:
- State legislatures could decide the tiers of local governments – two or three. The method of election of each tier could be left to States, subject to two provisions, viz: either the council of the head in each tier should be directly elected by the people, and there shall be mandatory reservation for women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, and where the legislature desires, for OBCs.

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2. Legislative Councils as Councils of Local Governments

Article 171 of the Constitution provides for the formation of Legislative Councils in the states. Such a Council has one-third members elected by local governments, one-third by Legislative Assembly, one-twelfth by graduates, and one-twelfth by teachers and the rest are nominated by the Governor. This was clearly a transitional and anachronistic provision, in keeping with the tradition of constituting quasi-democratic legislatures in colonial era.

With the emergence of local governments as the constitutionally mandated third tier of governance, we need to emulate Rajya Sabha in the composition of Legislative Councils. Just as Rajya Sabha is the Council of States, it is appropriate that Legislative Council becomes Council of Local Governments. The Council can be given veto powers in matters pertaining to rights of local governments. Happily, the composition of the Legislative Council can be changed by a mere law of Parliament, as Art 171 (2) of the Constitution states: “Until Parliament by law or otherwise provides, the composition of the Legislative Council of a State shall be as provided in clause(3).” Clearly, the Constitution-makers envisaged the Council composition being made more democratic in a free India. A provision can be made for any citizen above 30 years of age to be elected to the Council, by the elected members of local governments.

Changing the composition of the Legislative Council, and making it the Council of Local governments on par with the Council of States at the Union level is a simple, politically feasible innovation. The Constitution makers deliberately gave that power to Parliament, and a simple law under Article 171(2) would be sufficient. Now that local governments are constitutionally mandated third tiers of government, the change proposed is both logical and proper. Once such a Council is elected by local government representatives, it will forever protect the interests of local governments, and will keep up the struggle to expand their powers and functions. As a second chamber, it will have leverage on a continuing basis. Such a reform of the Legislative Council is eminently feasible and long overdue.

Proposal

Article 171 (3) may be amended by a simple law [as provided in Article 171(2)] as follows:

Article 171 (3) reads as:

Article 171. Composition of the Legislative Councils

- (3) Of the total number of members of the Legislative Council of a State -
- (a) as nearly as may be, one-third shall be elected by electorates consisting of members of municipalities, district boards and such other local authorities in the State as Parliament may by law specify;
 - (b) as nearly as may be, one-twelfth shall be elected by electorates consisting of persons residing in the State who have been for at least three years graduates of any university in the territory of India or have been for at least three years in possession of qualifications prescribed by or under any law made by Parliament as equivalent to that of a graduate of any such university;
 - (c) as nearly as may be, one-twelfth shall be elected by electorates consisting of persons who have been for at least three years engaged in teaching in such educational institutions within the State, not lower in standard than that of a secondary school, as may be prescribed by or under any law made by Parliament;
 - (d) as nearly as may be, one-third shall be elected by the members of the Legislative Assembly of the State from amongst persons who are not members of the Assembly;
 - (e) the remainder shall be nominated by the Governor in accordance with the provisions of clause (5).

Article 171 (3) may be amended as

Article 171. Composition of the Legislative Councils

“(3) Of the total number of members of the Legislative Council of a State – **As nearly as may be five-sixths shall be elected by electorates consisting of elected members of panchayats and municipalities**

a) The remainder shall be nominated by the Governor in accordance with provisions of clause (5)”

Article 171(4) may be amended as follows:

Article 171 (4) reads as:

Article 171. Composition of the Legislative Councils.-

(4) The members to be elected under sub-clauses (a), (b) and (c) of clause (3) shall be chosen in such territorial constituencies as may be prescribed by or under any law made by Parliament, and the elections under the said sub-clauses and under sub-clause (d) of the said clause shall be held in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote.

Article 171 (4) may be amended as

“(4) The members to be elected under clause (a) of clause (3) shall be chosen in such territorial constituencies as may be prescribed by or under any law made by Parliament; and the elections shall be held in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote.”

3. District Government

Partly owing to our colonial legacy, there continues to be an artificial divide between urban and rural local governments. As a result, there is no single, undivided government representing all sections at the district level. The people continue to view Zilla Parishad and Municipality as just another body and treat the District Collector as the real symbol of government in the district. The current structure of District Planning Committees is too weak, and in any case they are non-starters in many States. Therefore, there is a need to amend Art 243-C to provide for a single elected district council that will function as a true government for the entire district. Once this is implemented, the District Planning Committee becomes redundant.

If such a constitutional provision comes into effect, there will be one District Council, which represents all people in the district – rural or urban. As people perceive an elected government representing all, the idea of the third tier of the government will become real and meaningful. There will also be much better urban-rural coordination. This however will not affect the village panchayats and intermediate panchayats, or the municipalities. Only the character of the federating body at the district level becomes universal, representing all areas and people in the district.

Proposal

Definition under Article 243 (d) will be amended as:

Article 243(d) reads as:

Article 243. Definitions.- In this Part, unless the context otherwise requires,-
(d) "Panchayat" means an institution (by whatever name called) of self-government constituted under article 243B, for the rural areas;

Definition under Article 243 (d) will be amended as:

(d) ‘Panchayat’ means an institution (by whatever name called) of self-government constituted under Article 243-B.

Article 243 – ZD relating to committee for district planning will be repealed.

4. Union Finance Commission and State Finance Commission – Impediments in the Constitutional Amendments

Article 280, which relates to the Union Finance Commission, states: “The President shall, within two years from the commencement of this Constitution, and thereafter at the expiration of every fifth year, or at such earlier time as the President considers necessary, by order, constitute a Finance Commission.” Article 243 - I states: “The Governor of the State, shall, as soon as, may be within one year from the commencement of the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992, and thereafter at the expiration of every fifth year,

constitute a Finance Commission of panchayats and to make recommendations to the Governor....”

The above article requires the Governors of States to appoint a State Finance Commission within one year from 1993, and thereafter “at the expiry of every fifth year”. This commencement date and the stipulation regarding the period has resulted in the State Finance Commission reports not being relevant to the periods covered by the Union Finance Commission. When a similar situation has arisen with regard to the Five Year Plan periods and the periods covered by the Union Finance Commissions, a synchronization was brought by Union Finance Commission being appointed earlier than five years. This was possible because of the words “or at such earlier time as the President considers necessary” in Article 280. This phrase is missing in Article 243-I. As a result, the Union Finance Commission is not in a position to draw upon the observations, suggestions and the data provided by the State Finance Commissions in devolving funds to local governments in various States. Therefore, it is necessary to amend Article 243-I to introduce the words “or at such earlier times as the Governor considers necessary.”

Proposal

Article 243 (I) may be amended as follows:

“ or at such earlier times as the Governor considers necessary,” will be inserted after “at the expiration of every fifth year.”

5. Ensuring Regular Elections by Removing Causes of Delay at State Government Level

While the Constitution, under Article 243 K, created an independent State Election Commission (SEC), many state governments retained the powers of delimitation of constituencies in local governments, and reservation of constituencies as provided under the Constitution and States Laws. Often, this power is used to effectively postpone elections by the simple expedient of ordering delimitation after elections are due, or not reserving constituencies in time. The SEC is helpless, and is forced to either repeatedly remind the state government to complete these tasks to facilitate elections, or resort to prolonged litigation before courts to force the government to go in for elections. In either case, the state government would have achieved its objective of delaying elections.

These delays in holding elections, and constituting elected local governments can be prevented by amending Article 243 K by inserting a provision as follows:

- The powers of delimitation of constituencies, and reservation of offices as per the provisions of the Constitution or State Law, shall rest in the State Election Commission, and these powers shall be exercised in consultation with the State Government.

6. Removal of Anomalies in Voter Registration

A citizen over the age of 18 years is eligible to be a voter in elections for Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assembly, and local governments. The qualifications and disqualifications for exercising voting rights are identical. However, there is an anomaly in the Constitution, by which the State Election Commission is separately entrusted the task of preparing electoral rolls for local government elections. This practice is anomalous for the following reasons.

- In all democratic nations, elections to local, provincial and federal governments are seen as a continuum, and in general the same rules and electoral rolls apply for elections at all levels.
- There is a single, common electoral roll for Lok Sabha and State Assembly. In fact, the Lok Sabha constituency is always a combination of contiguous State Assembly constituencies. Therefore, to have separate electoral rolls for local governments defies logic.
- Two different electoral rolls lead to confusion, more errors, and make the process less transparent and difficult to involve citizens to improve voter registration.

Therefore, Article 243 K of the Constitution needs to be amended to provide for common electoral rolls. However, keeping in view the requirements of local government constituency boundaries, the power of reorganization of the Assembly electoral rolls to suit local government requirements should be vested in the State Election Commission. But revision of electoral rolls, and addition and deletion of names and other corrections shall be only at the level of State Legislative Assembly. In other words, the voter needs to be registered in an electoral roll only once, to be eligible to vote in all elections – local, state, and national.

7. Making Financial Devolution to Local Governments Mandatory

The Union Finance Commission recommendations are not mandatory. And yet, the governments of Independent India established a healthy and far-sighted tradition of honouring the devolution packages as proposed by the successive Finance Commissions without any deviation. In effect, the Finance Commission recommendations, in so far as sharing of Union Revenues with states is concerned, are now deemed as mandatory. There is no single instance of deviating from this tradition.

However, the states have not established such a tradition, despite the fact that the provisions of Article 243-I relating to State Finance Commission are identical to those in Article 280 relating to Union Finance Commission. For a variety of reasons discussed earlier, it is unlikely that states will follow the healthy tradition established by Union without a constitutional directive. Such a constitutional directive is particularly necessary because the Union has now included the devolution of resources to local governments from Union Revenues as an integral part of the Finance Commission recommendations, effective from the Eleventh Finance Commission.

Therefore, Article 243-I should be suitably amended to make the implementation of the recommendations of the State Finance Commission in respect of devolution of resources to local governments and sharing of state revenues with them mandatory. This will ensure effective and progressive devolution to, and empowerment of local governments.

8. Effective and Larger Devolution from Union to Local Governments

One of the success stories of our democracy is the maturing of our federalism, in which successive Finance Commissions have played an important role. A lot more remains to be done to strengthen fiscal federalism and to ensure that the right kind of fiscal incentives are created to achieve the constitutional goals.

- The present devolution formula is based on population (25% weightage); Area (10%); Fiscal capacity (47.5%) and Fiscal discipline (17.5%). This formula is arbitrary and rewards states whose fiscal performance is poor. The concept of fiscal capacity distance (based on tax, GSDP ratio and per capita GSDP) and higher devolution for states whose tax: GSDP ratio is low create perverse incentives to States, States which raise revenues are penalized, and states which fail to raise resources are rewarded.
- This needs to be comprehensively reexamined. A more balanced formula creating better incentives is needed. For instance, area could be given 15% weightage, fiscal discipline 25% weightages; and population 60% weightage. Lack of political will to raise own resources cannot be rewarded by perverse incentives.
- The Thirteenth Finance Commission made earnest efforts to recognize that there is now a third tier of federalism in the form of local governments. We need to go far in the direction of strengthening local governments by devolution of adequate resources.
- The Fourteenth Finance Commission report has just been made. While Finance Commission's report recognizes the need for flexibility in designing programs it has erred in proposing only Rs 488 per capita to local governments.
- If Rs 1000 per capita (based on 1971 population) is made available to local governments and if it is distributed in a state proportionate to present population in each local government, a good beginning would have been made in treating local governments as third tier of federalism. The population of India in 1971 was 54.81cr, and consequently Rs 54810cr would be required to devolve directly to local governments as part of Finance Commission devolution this scheme of things. This would only amount to 0.5% of the current GDP, and forms part of the annual Finance Commission devolution under Art 275. This would not be additional allocation as far as GOI is concerned. For states there is no loss of resources, if local governments are correspondingly entrusted with specific responsibilities, and are held to account in discharge of these functions through appropriate mechanisms like Local Ombudsmen. Once these resources are transferred at the community level, people will be energized, and service delivery will improve significantly. Over time, this can be enhanced to Rs 1000 per capita on current population.

In addition, Finance Commission should consider providing incentives and resources to village Panchayats or clusters of Panchayats to promote consolidation (one panchayat or cluster for every 10,000 population), build infrastructure (buildings, computerization, equipment, and personnel), and enhance capacity for service delivery. Such funding can also be linked to citizens' charters and service delivery. This will make a panchayat or cluster a viable unit for service delivery and devolution.

9. District Budgets and Financial Devolution

The efficiency and autonomy of the local governments is contingent on the availability of adequate financial resources at their disposal. Article 243 H of the Constitution provides for financial decentralization in the form of tax assignments, revenue sharing, and grants-in-aid. Article 243 H states, the State legislature may, by law:

- Authorize panchayats to levy, collect and appropriate such taxes, duties, tolls and fees in accordance with such procedures and subject to such limits.
- Assign panchayats such taxes, duties, tolls and fees levied and collected by the State government for such purposes and subject to such conditions and limits.
- Provide for making such grants-in-aid to the panchayats from the consolidated fund of the State.

- Provide for constitution of such funds for crediting all money received respectively, by or on behalf of the Panchayats and also withdrawal of such moneys therefrom.

Article 243-I provides for a finance commission at the State level to review the finance of local governments and determine principles that govern the sharing of resources mobilized by the State, between State and panchayats. In spite of the various constitutional provisions, many State governments continue to neglect the financial requirements of the local governments. The Eleventh Finance Commission, recognizing the growing marginalisation of local governments, suggested that State governments owe greater responsibility to develop local governments, as they are the third tier of the government.

The survey of NIRD in 96 villages, spread over 12 states shows that local governments have significant resource mobilization capability, if adequate powers are given to do so. Paucity of funds that local governments face is a consequence of inadequate devolution, absence of flexibility in managing local finances and schemes, inadequate tax assignments, absence of support staff to collect local taxes, and unviable size of village panchayats.

In order to overcome these impediments, the following measures should be adopted by a Constitutional amendment (Art 243 H).

The State budget under each head should be divided into:

1) State wide allocation

2) District-wise allocation

(i) Here allocations for each district should be shown separately.

(ii) By bringing together a district allocations under various heads, a district budget will evolve. This district budget can have amounts under

- a. control of department at state level, for valid reasons based on established principles
- b. schemes transferred to Zilla Parishad for execution
- c. Devolved funds at the disposal of panchayats

In regard to (b), Zilla Parishad will have the powers of the head of the department. The amounts for (c) will be given as lump sum grants-in-aid. Experience in States would show that b+c would be about 40% of total government budget. The State budget shall disclose details of wage and non-wage components in respect of all schemes/items of expenditure included in the State budget under State plan, centrally sponsored schemes and non-plan expenditure

- The State government should release grants-in-aid to the district planning bodies to enable them to utilize the funds even after the close of the financial year. Preparation of link document sector-wise, for each district, in respect of the schemes transferred to the district planning body, showing the provisions for the year and accounts of the year preceding it, besides scheme-wise budget estimates for State plan, centrally sponsored

schemes and non-plan estimates, will help in better utilization of funds. No savings of one district will be diverted to another district.

- All amounts devolved by the State and Union Finance Commission to local governments should be passed on to them subject to only such conditions as the commission may have prescribed.
- The Zilla Parishad should have the powers for re-appropriating amounts from one item to another within the budgetary allocations for the district, subject to the conditions that savings under non-recurring or capital items shall not be diverted by local governments for recurring expenditure
- Savings on recurring expenditure can be diverted to non-recurring expenditure
- Strong auditing norms should be prescribed for all local governments. Local fund audit should be strengthened and the audit function should be independent of the local government.
- Local governments should be given powers to raise loans. Santhanam Committee, in 1963, suggested that PRI's should be given power to borrow or raise loans. The committee suggested that Local Governments Finance Corporation should be established for this purpose. Finance Corporation is usually meant to provide finances for remunerative schemes. In case local government institutions have some projects that are of remunerative nature, it should be possible for them to approach financing agencies directly for funds. In the changed financial scene in the country today, nothing prevents local bodies from going to the market or financing agencies for loans for viable schemes. However, the weaker local governments have to be guaranteed or subsidized by government. The Local Governments Finance Corporation can perform such a function. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had suggested a body for borrowing by State governments.
- There is no system of monitoring how much was collected of the taxes in the GP, and whether the complete share of such collections has been given to GP, as for example, entertainment tax. The District Panchayat Officer is expected to monitor the total quantum of collections from GP and to ensure that the total share due is received and is also again duly redistributed to the GP. Similarly, the surcharge on stamp duty and the land revenue cess have to be monitored and distributed similarly. It is, therefore, recommended that there should be monitoring cells, attached to the DPO and the DDO which will be charged with the responsibility of monitoring and properly distributing the collections to the GP and Intermediate Panchayats and ZPs.
- Proper infrastructure for maintenance of accounts/database at all levels of local governments should be provided. Eleventh Finance Commission made the following observations in this regard:
 1. Articles 243J and 243Z of the Constitution expect the States to make provisions by way of legislation for maintenance of accounts by the panchayats and the municipalities and for the audit of such accounts.
 2. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) should be entrusted with the responsibility of exercising control and supervision over the proper maintenance of accounts and their audit for all the tiers/levels of panchayats and urban local bodies.

3. The report of the CAG relating to audit of accounts of the panchayats and the municipalities should be placed before a committee of the State Legislature, constituted on the same lines as the Public Accounts Committee.
- Local governments should have discretion to use their general funds

10. Reorganization of Village Panchayats

Unviable size of village panchayats is one of the causes of financial crisis in local governments and poor managerial capacity in providing amenities and services. Kerala state has only 977 village panchayats with an average population about 18,000. In Karnataka and West Bengal also village panchayats have been restructured to ensure a viable size of population. The sizes of village panchayats in some of the major states are as follows.

Gram Panchayats and Rural Population across various states

Name of State	Population of State	No. of Gram Panchayats	No. of Villages	Avg. Pop of Gram Panchayats
Rajasthan	43,292,813	9193	44672	5616
Bihar	74,316,709	8474	44874	10,907
Assam	23,216,288	2206	26395	12,162
West Bengal	57,748,946	3239	40203	18,566
Orissa	31,287,422	6,235	51313	5,605
Andhra Pradesh	55,401,067	21,649	27800	2,582
Karnataka	34,889,033	5631	29340	6,674
Kerala	23,574,449	977	1018	17,848

(source : Census of India and Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India website)

Small village panchayats increase administrative costs, and make it difficult to find resources to meet the infrastructure and services needs of the community. Therefore, the Union government should provide a special incentive to states to restructure panchayats at village level. A one-time per capita grant of Rs. 50 to 100 could be provided to panchayats conditional upon restructuring of panchayats to ensure an average population of at least 5000 per village panchayats. Scheduled areas may have smaller, but viable, population norms.

Such restructuring and creating unions of small, traditional villages into larger village panchayats serves three other purposes.

- As village units are more equitable in size, it will facilitate better allocation and management of resources.
- Integration of regulatory and other functions with the panchayats will be feasible with adequate staff and managerial capacity which comes with optimal size.

- As the traditional village with its caste hierarchies ceases to be the political unit for representation and local governance, the pace of democratization and modernization will accelerate, giving greater say to the dalits, adivasis, women, and weaker sections of society.

11. Accountability Measures in Local Governments

Democratic theory and Constitutional principles mandate effective empowerment of local governments. While democracy, including local democracy, is by no means a perfect tool to improve governance, the only antidote to imperfections in democracy is more and better democracy. However, the improvement of conditions through local empowerment is necessarily a slow and evolutionary process. The experience over the last decade shows that in many cases local governments are beset by the same evils of corruption, arbitrary exercise of power, and inefficiency which have become the hallmarks of centralized governance.

This local failure is part of a larger process of democratic evolution, and needs to be addressed with patience, perseverance and innovation. In a pervasive culture of corruption which is institutionalized over decades in a centralized democracy, local governments cannot be islands of probity and competence overnight. The process of power has been distorted, and politics has become a business involving large, unaccounted investments with multiple returns anticipated in a patronage-based, unaccountable, centralized governance structure. Not surprisingly, power at the local level is exercised in a similar manner. The difference is that local corruption and arbitrariness are far more glaring and visible, and touch people's lives more directly as they affect basic amenities and services. In time, as people understand the link between their vote and quality of public goods and services better, things will improve. That is the logic of democracy and universal franchise.

However, all power is prone to corruption and abuse. We need effective instruments of accountability to be able to check abuse of power, and give citizens voice in improving the quality of services.

Therefore a union legislation to enforce accountability in local governments is a desirable initiative. Such a legislation will not be at the cost of state legislation, but will be concurrent, and in addition to it. It will provide a framework of accountability. Such a legislation will also address the legitimate concern of many that decentralization of power should not lead to decentralized corruption. Such a legislation, among other things, could provide for the following mechanisms.

- A district audit unit, as a part of AG's audit under the overall control of CAG.
- Right to information in all local governments.
- Citizens Charters for all basic services at local level, with compensation for every day's delay, and penalties levied on employees responsible for such delays.
- Independent vigilance body reporting to an independent Ombudsman and state legislature.
- An independent Ombudsman for every district, appointed by a collegium comprising of the government, opposition, and judiciary, with the powers and duties of enquiring and taking action against any employee or elected local government.

The Ombudsmen's directions must be binding and final, with a provision for appeal to state Ombudsman.

- A district staff committee to address grievances of employees on service matters.
- A staff review commission at the State level to review and determine staffing requirements.
- A mandatory requirement to ensure that no local revenue deficits are permitted, and diversions from capital account to revenue account are prohibited. Any deviations shall be a criminal offence.

12. Empowered Legislative Committees at the State Level to Give Legislators a Meaningful Role

The legislators at the state level often spend enormous sums to get elected. And yet, once elected and a stable government is formed, they have neither any legitimate role in executive functioning, nor any meaningful role in legislation. In a parliamentary executive system as it operates in our country, almost always legislation is fully controlled by the Council of ministers and the civil services. With the anti-defection provisions of the Constitution further tightened, the legislator has no real opportunity to influence the decisions of the Legislature even when there is a legitimate point of view. In other words, a legislator is reduced to a rubber stamp endorsing the government decisions or party directives.

In such a backdrop, the legislator's real power lies only in the nuisance value accompanying the threat of destabilizing the government. In order to appease the legislator, and in the absence of legitimate role in matters of state unless he becomes a minister, the government appeases the elected members of the Assembly by various means. These inducements include discretionary grants at the disposal of the MLA, and connivance in unconstitutional exercise of disguised executive authority in the form of transfers, postings, contracts, tenders, patronage in implementation of various development programmes and schemes, and interference in crime investigation and prosecution. This is the central reason why MLA's are generally opposed to effective devolution of power and resources to local governments, as they fear further marginalization of their own role. Notwithstanding broader political consensus on local government empowerment, these compulsions of real politic preclude the possibility of any serious measures to institutionalize local governments in accordance with the spirit of the constitution.

This fundamental problem needs to be addressed with honesty and sensitivity. Power abhors a vacuum. If positive power is denied to legislators, it will find expression as negative power harming public interest, and undermining local governments and true democracy.

One effective tool to create legitimate role and space to the MLAs, and giving opportunities to exercise positive power for public good is empowered legislative committees.

Some efforts were made to constitute standing committees of parliament in 1993. Rules were framed entrusting certain functions to these standing committees, including considering demands for grants of the concerned ministries and departments, examining bills if referred to the committee by the presiding officers, considering the annual reports of the ministries and considering the policy documents of the ministries if referred to the committee by the

presiding officers. While these committees and their functions are a vast improvement over the past, they are still too feeble and ineffective to make a real

impact on the functioning of the parliament. In most States there is hardly any committee system.

Our committee system in parliament and State legislatures is far from adequate. A similar committee system as in the US Congress needs to be adopted in our legislatures both at the Union and State levels. Such a committee system could have the following features and functions:

- approval of demands for grants
- receiving proposals from the government and the public for legislation
- obtaining government's views on measures proposed
- public hearings and expert depositions with the power of summons when necessary
- finalising the proposal
- recommending to the full house a proposal
- making public its meetings, deliberations and records through a variety of means including electronically
- consideration of proposals for appointments of constitutional functionaries and key public offices through public hearings
- monitoring and review of implementation of laws
- monitoring and review of government policies
- review of performance of government ministries and functionaries
- investigation into complaints of wrongdoing

Appropriate constitutional amendments should be considered to make the role of a legislator positive, citizen-centered, self-actualizing and in general promoting democratic values.

13. Decentralization of Police Functioning

Rule of law is the cornerstone of any democracy. The ultimate test of rule of law is the way the criminal justice system enforces law to protect the life and rights of citizens, and the police use the coercive power of the State to ensure compliance of law. Rule of law requires that all individuals are subjected to the same laws in the same measure. The first and most vital function of the State is maintenance of public order and peace in society and ensuring protection of citizens. In the ultimate analysis, the sanction behind State power is the use of force. They are the agency to enforce the will of the State, as expressed in laws. The way the police function is an index of liberty and rule of law in a democratic society.

The police have two distinct functions, one that relates to society as a whole, and the other that concerns individual citizens. The maintenance of peace and security and protection relates to the first. The prevention of crime and its investigation and punishment, when committed, relates to the second. All these functions are concentrated in a single police force, which has made police functioning increasingly complicated and highly specialized. Each function requires a degree of training, knowledge base, skill, and sophistication, which are not possible to sustain when many functions are concentrated in the same force. In the

absence of specialization, more resources and time are wasted to achieve the same results. Thirdly, certain areas of functioning have to be necessarily under political control and monitoring, whereas certain other functions have to be independent of political supervision and are in fact quasi judicial in nature. Since the functions are clubbed in one police force, it is impossible to separate control of one function from another. As a result, politicians have been playing a very prominent and dubious role in influencing crime investigation. This has, on one hand, vitiated the effectiveness of the police and, on the other, vested them with a great deal of extra-legal power.

Given this complex political and governance scenario, the horizontal fusion of all functions in a single police force has proved to be very damaging to our governance process. There is almost no single police station that is not subjected to pressure from the political class, on any given day, in its discharge of crime investigation functions. As criminalization of politics, and politicization of crime have both become the order of the day, increasingly, criminals have greater and greater influence in governance. For sheer survival, criminals have entered politics and politicians have become criminals. The Election Commission has gone on record that more than 700 of the 4,072 legislators in all the States of India have a criminal record. Once the electoral process brings such undesirable elements into public office, it is inevitable that the police force is subjected to unwarranted pressure in crime investigation. In fact, most criminals are tempted to enter the electoral fray only in order to be able to influence the police through public office.

The most important reform measure to be undertaken in the police forces is the separation of crime investigation from other branches of policing. By law, the police officials should be independent in discharging this function.

It is, therefore, vital to create an independent wing of police force fully in charge of crime investigation, which should obviously be controlled by, and be accountable to, an independent constitutional machinery. Several mechanisms and models have been suggested by various committees and commissions. Whatever may be the nomenclature, such a crime investigation wing should be under the supervision and control of a collegium at the State level, headed by a Chairperson drawn from the judiciary. Once a High Court judge becomes the head of prosecutions, s/he shall cease to be member of judiciary forever. The other members could be jurists, independent prosecutors, serving police officials at the highest levels, former police and civil officials and eminent citizens from various walks of life. The appointment of this prosecution wing itself should be by a committee comprising of the members of the government, the leaders of the opposition, Speaker of the legislature, and judges of the High Court. Such a body, be it called the State security commission, or the State board of prosecutions, or the State police board, should be fully in control of all matters of appointment, promotions, transfers, postings and disciplinary action relating to crime investigation wing. The crime investigation police should be permanently insulated from other wings of police, with no possibility of transfer from this wing to others or vice versa. Only when such fool-proof institutions are evolved, is it possible to make sure that crime

investigation is a truly professional, independent exercise in search of justice rather than making it a partisan tool in the hands of those in power.

There are several police functions which can also be discharged at the local level on a day to day basis, for instance, traffic regulations, patrolling, controlling offences of a minor nature, prosecution of minor offences, public nuisances, etc., can only be handled locally.

There can be a local force accountable to the local government at the panchayat or municipal level to discharge these functions. This local police can be organised as small, mobile, effective units under local control. However, there should be effective institutional mechanisms for integrating these local forces with the State police forces. The local police should be attached to a local court, which has jurisdiction over the territory as well as over the petty offences handled by such a police force.

There is still a vast area of police functioning including riot control, security of State properties, protection of important citizens and intelligence gathering. By the very nature of things, all these functions have to be under political supervision and control. Therefore these should be entrusted to a separate police force controlled by, and accountable to, the political executive under overall legislative supervision. There should be no movement, however, between such a police force and the crime investigation wing. The vertical mobility of the local police into the State level police force can be permitted, subject to certain norms and procedures. Such separation of functions will ensure that there will be no undue political interference in areas related to crime investigation, while the legitimate political intervention in areas of public order, riot control and intelligence gathering can be ensured.

A Suggested Model

1. There shall be a police station for every panchayat or group of panchayats comprising a population of about 25,000 and they should be entrusted with functions like traffic regulations, patrolling, controlling offences of a minor nature, prosecution of minor offences, public nuisances, etc., and they shall function under the local government.
2. The local police station shall be co-terminus with the local court.
3. Crime investigation to be separated into a separate independent wing functioning as a quasi-judicial body directly under the control of the judiciary.
4. Crime investigation to be completely and permanently insulated from other branches of policing, with no horizontal transfers from one wing to the other.
5. Riot control, security of State property, security of important citizens and intelligence gathering to still lie with the State level force accountable to the political executive under overall legislative supervision.
6. There should be effective institutional mechanisms to ensure that the local forces are integrated with the State forces.

The Police Act and manuals need to be suitably amended at the Union level to provide for such an effective, decentralized, accountable local police functioning.

14. Local Courts

An independent and impartial judiciary, and a speedy and efficient justice system are the very essence of civilization. However, our judiciary, by its very nature, has become ponderous, excruciatingly slow and inefficient. Imposition of an alien system, with archaic and dilatory procedures, proved to be extremely damaging to our governance and society. In the process, a whole new industry of administering rough and ready justice by using strong-arm tactics to achieve the desired goals has been set up by local hoodlums in almost all of our cities and towns, and increasingly, in recent years, in rural areas. The failure of the justice system has several disastrous implications in society. The only sanction to ensure good conduct and to prevent bad behavior in society is swift punishment. In the absence of the State's capacity to enforce law and to mete out justice, rule of law has all but collapsed. This alarming situation calls for speedy remedial measures. These measures should be practical and effective while they are in consonance with the basic features of the constitution. The judicial reforms, as envisaged, should be capable of providing speedy and efficient justice accessible to the ordinary citizens. At the same time, they should respect and protect the independence of the judiciary.

Because they have taken on themselves too much, the higher courts are not able to render justice speedily and efficiently. The age-old village institutions for justice have been allowed to wither away completely. Local people have neither the access to courts or the means to go through complicated, incomprehensible court procedures. As a result, most citizens avoid courts except in the most extreme circumstances, when they have absolutely no other recourse available.

Essentially, the failure of the civil and criminal justice system is manifesting in abnormal delays in litigation and huge pendency in courts. It is estimated that approximately 31.3 million cases are pending in various law courts all over the country till 2014 - 20 million cases are pending in district and subordinate courts, High Courts account for 4.4 million cases and Supreme Court has around 63,843 pending cases. The disposal of cases in our courts and the conviction rate is abnormally low, with only 8 percent cases resulting in conviction. Even in cases involving extremely grave offences with direct impact on public order and national security, there are abnormal delays.

In a large measure, the failure of justice system means that ordinary citizen cannot rely on law courts to enforce contracts and agreements. The undermining of the sanctity of contracts and agreements has had a very debilitating impact on investment creation and economic growth. The failure of the criminal justice system has led to the near break down of public order in many pockets of the country. This, coupled with the many inadequacies of functioning of the police, has led to a crisis of governability in India.

The Parliament enacted the Gram Nyayalayas Act in 2009 (Act 4 of 2009), providing for rural local courts for speedy justice through summary procedure, as an integral part of independent justice system. Under this law local courts should be appointed at intermediate Panchayat level. One of the problems of our justice system is many simple cases – civil or criminal – do not even reach the courts because of inaccessibility, cost and delays. Often

people suffer injustice silently, or resort to rough and ready justice through extra-legal, often violent means. Local Courts with summary procedures can provide speedy relief and justice in many simple cases at a low cost.

However, as of December 2013, only 172 Gram Nyayalayas have been notified in nine states, only 152 have been functional. There is urgent need to create these local courts. Even at one local court per block, we can create 5000 courts at a low-cost in rural areas.

15. Management of Education and Health care at Local Level

There is now an increasing much-needed, and long-overdue emphasis accorded to education and health care in our governance process. Large allocations are certain to be made by the Union in these sectors in future. However, these are largely driven by the states, as school education is essentially the states' responsibility, and health is a state subject. One cardinal principle of improving the quality of these services is local control, ownership and accountability. Therefore, in order to improve access and quality of service in school education and healthcare, local governments should be fully responsible for their delivery.

The Union should facilitate such local involvement, empowerment and accountability by a variety of means. The union has the leverage in promoting local empowerment through fiscal incentives over all state policy, and in designing and coordinating the structure and functioning of the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan and Health Missions. The following mechanisms are to be evolved and implemented through these Missions.

- Union allocations must be on the basis of agreement by states to effectively involve and empower local governments in these sectors.
- A district fund must be created in each sector with Union allocation and state funds devoted to the service.
- The fund should be augmented by local revenues raised by the panchayats and municipalities – as a local tax, or cess, or surcharge linked to property taxes. This should be dedicated to the respective sectors – education or health.
- The control of all schools – primary and secondary – in all respects, including infrastructure, staffing, service conditions, salaries, administrative supervision, disciplinary matters, and overall management must vest with the local government at the appropriate level depending on the specific matter. The funds will be drawn from the District Education Fund. Technical matters, syllabus and examinations will be controlled at the state level.
- The control and management of primary health centers, sub-centers, and other preventive health machinery, as well as all first referral and district hospitals will be vested in the local governments. All funds will be drawn from the District Health fund. Referral hospitals and technical standards and protocols will be the responsibility of state governments.
- In health care, there should be choice to citizens and competition among public service providers. This should be promoted in hospital care as part of the Health Mission through risk pooling, and progressively money following the patient by way of reimbursement on the basis of standard costs and services. This will give voice to citizens, promote competition and accountability among public hospitals, and

encourage the public-spirited staff to apply peer pressure on laggards as the failure of one will affect the prospects of all.

- Effective Ombudsmen should be empowered to check abuses and take corrective action.
- Citizen's Charters must be evolved to ensure high quality, predictability, and compensation for non-delivery of services.
- The Union and state will monitor performance and hold the local governments to account by effective performance auditing, and measurement of outcomes through sample surveys.
- Transparency, public participation, people's vigilance and social audit will be institutionalized so that there is pressure to constantly improve quality and give best value for the money utilized.

- **Giving the MLA a Stake in Local Government**

This is about making MLAs friends of panchayats. The conventional script on India's rocky road to decentralization is of them being opposed to each other. Promoters of decentralization feel that recalcitrant State governments at the behest of MLAs subvert panchayat raj. State governments on the other hand argue that if the Union is keen on decentralization why not start with the states. In the process the real big opportunity for improving governance is delayed. The debate though not sterile, is yet to come up with implementable solutions acceptable to both.

Such a solution is being suggested here. To break out of the current impasse, there may perhaps be a need to act on the political and administrative levels. Firstly, there may have to be a reimagining of the political space for alterations. Secondly, states need to be incentivised to buy into decentralization in exchange of improved finances and freedom from too many centrally sponsored programmes. Both political and administrative action would need to be conceived together.

Why are State governments (read legislators) against decentralisation? It is not merely a case of each level wanting decentralization only up to its own level. There is a major structural flaw in the current version of panchayat raj. Today we have a three-tier panchayat raj system of the village or Gram Panchayat, the intermediate level of the block panchayat and the district level of the Zilla Panchayat. The intermediate level of the block panchayat – a population of about a lakh people – is almost coterminous with the political constituency of the elected legislator to the state assembly. The MLA and the Block Panchayat system are both competing for political legitimacy at this level. The well-intentioned MLA also has perforce to become an opponent of panchayat raj to retain political space, which is seen as under siege from the panchayat system at the block level. The MLA prefers the line Ministries to execute tasks to keep panchayats at bay. In the process panchayat raj system and effective accountable service delivery get forsaken.

The nature of the 73rd Constitution Amendment is important here to appreciate the predicament. The Act passed by the Parliament as law is substantially different from the one conceived originally by the then Rajiv Gandhi government. Here, though there is an indicative list of functions listed in a Schedule, the actual conferral of powers is left to state

governments. Simply put, states can't be pushed to it. They can only be persuaded. Coming to persuasion, people can hardly be persuaded to act against their own interests and legislators are no exception. They are in the business of creating political allegiance and unwilling to sign on the legislations that disempower them. Even when states champion decentralization (few of them have) the real game is as much about giving without really giving.

The way out is to act on the structure itself. This could be done by structurally aligning the elected legislator with the panchayat raj system by eliminating the middle tier of Block Panchayat which is actually coterminous, almost, with the MLA's political constituency.

Then we would have the gram panchayat, no middle tier but an MLA who would prefer to do business at the village level through panchayats and thereby mentors them and has more congruence than conflict of interest. In a developing society where leaders compete for scarce political and economic resources, this would be a way out. It is pertinent to mention that the level of the intermediate tier of the block was created as

unit of administrative supervision given the difficulty in dealing with hundreds of villages from the district. While the gram panchayat has intrinsic integrity as a grassroots level social and political unit and the District Panchayat can be an effective planning and coordinating unit, the intermediate level of the block has no great merit to exist as a political unit. This will require a Constitution Amendment. The Amendment could be preceded by debate for consensus building. The current flaw can easily be perceived. Political leaders of every persuasion should be willing to support such a change that may offer a way out of the current deadlock over power-sharing. We can visualize the creation of a new political space that integrates MLAs vertically in the structure with no competition for space. This can have huge pay-offs in improving service delivery as state governments ought to have no major objection to devolving powers to panchayats.

The action in the political level needs to be complemented by action at the administrative level where the elements are all in place. There is a shared perception on the need for action to improve state finances. States have made forceful and reasoned pleas to the Government of India, the Planning Commission and Finance Commission. Solutions are being considered. The National Common Minimum Programme argues for winding down centrally sponsored programmes. The possibility here is to trade a financial bail-out package for states in return for a political buy-in into decentralization. The Planning Commission can further incentivise this by scrapping, winding up dysfunctional Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and offering block funds to states in some cases and in some cases to the panchayat raj system.

NCMP commitments in the social sector especially depend heavily on state-specific situations in delivery. Delivery on the whole can improve if states devolve powers to panchayats. Cash-strapped state governments today see union's desire to push resources to panchayats as cash that would have otherwise gone to them and resist decentralization. A virtuous cycle where state legislators get motivated to work with panchayats and improving delivery of services is possible if the alteration in the structure of panchayats to eliminate the middle-tier and easing of the burden on state finances and CSS comes about together. In the

interim, while a Constitution Amendment is being worked on, the middle tier can be rendered superfluous by not devolving funds to that level as done presently by Ministries like Rural Development. This, rather simple course of action can be adopted by the Government of India.

MLAs and panchayats need not necessarily be antagonistic if we undertake these design corrections. The Union and States working through panchayats can then conceive real improvements in service delivery. This would need climbing down from purist positions of the Constitution Amendment on the three-tier structure as sacrosanct. It would also need an appreciation of the compulsions of political democracy as it is practiced instead of trying to assume it away by invoking a Gandhian vision of village empowerment. First, let there be an alignment of political representatives at all levels for them to deal effectively with the concerns of the people.

14. Measures at the State Level

Much of the action to effectively empower local governments lies at the state level. In addition to local legislations and several fiscal and administrative measures, the Union needs to encourage States to adopt the following measures.

The Constitution permits multi-member constituencies for elections in local governments. Such an election of multiple members will facilitate entry of public-spirited citizens and reduction of money power. In addition, there will be fair representation of all groups and interests and scrupulous adherence to Constitutional provisions of reservation of offices. At the same time, there will be no need for rotation in offices at the council level in each local government, and greater continuity of leadership and participation of competent citizens are promoted. States should be encouraged to adopt such innovative methods of representation.

- Reorganization of village panchayats to ensure economies of scale, effective service delivery, and rapid breakdown of traditional caste hierarchies should be encouraged in states through Union incentives.
- The traditional division of revenue and development functions is now archaic in a democratic India. Local governments should progressively be responsible for both functions, and states should be encouraged to enable that through proper incentives and technical, infrastructural and financial support.
- Reorganization of police forces and creation of local police responsible for simple, local functions and accountable to local governments should be promoted by the Union through appropriate incentives and financial support.
- Constitution and effective functioning of local courts as an integral component of independent judiciary, and with clear separation of judiciary from the executive, with effective internal safeguards and accountability should be encouraged by the Union through fiscal incentives and appropriate support.

B. Empowerment of Stakeholders

In a democracy the citizens are sovereigns. The elected governments derive legitimacy from the willing consent granted by citizens in the form of vote. Vote is merely a transfer of part of the sovereignty to the state for meeting the collective needs of development, security and rule of law. However, representative governments – whether large or small, distant or local –

cannot fulfill the aspirations of people to the optimal extent resources permit and citizens need. Some amount of inefficiency and leakages are in-built in any public system. Also even the best vigilance of citizens is not sufficient to enforce accountability and high standards of probity in the public servants who manage the resources and have the authority to regulate conduct of others. Nevertheless, there is no substitute to representative government in meeting most collective needs of citizens.

However, there are certain services which naturally have clearly defined, exclusive stakeholders. In other words, the success or failure of service delivery impacts only on the lives of these defined stakeholders, and does not have a bearing on other. In such select services, it is feasible to redefine state, and create a new form of organization ensuring greater fusion between power and stakes. It is common knowledge that citizens usually care for services which directly affect them, and a public servant who does not need those services is not likely to work to improve them. Therefore, the finest form of effective decentralization would be fusion of stakeholding with power-wielding wherever feasible.

Water users associations in respect of irrigation, School Education Committees constituted with parents and teachers, fair price shop committees formed by ration card holders, marketing committees with producers paying cess and selling their produce, watershed committees with the involvement of potential beneficiaries, and stake-holders groups involved in micro-credit and thrift enterprises with state support and subsidies are some of the groups which can exercise authority directly to maximize the benefits at lowest cost possible. In all such cases, the stakeholders' groups have natural affinity, and are likely to work collectively to improve the quality of delivery of services. If indeed they fail, the loss is theirs, and others are relatively untouched.

Numerous stakeholder groups/community-based initiatives dealing with varied subjects are proliferating all over India. The growth of community-based initiatives signifies the growth of vibrant civil society. Even the Seventh Plan highlighted the importance of peoples' institutions comprised of stakeholder groups, producers or beneficiaries, which are accountable to local community and have the capacity to both draw up and implement need-based local level plans in close cooperation with the local administration. In spite of their growing numbers, the numerical strength and reach of these community organizations is no way near that of local governments. There are many villages where there are no community-based organizations. On the contrary, the 73rd constitutional amendment has ensured that the presence of Gram Panchayat or Gram Sabha is felt in almost all the villages. Agriculture, land improvement and minor forests, and soil and water conservation are part of devolved functions to local governments.

The independent arrangements for planning and organization of work, accounting for finances and the lack of any kind of accountability to the Gram Sabha have meant that the items of devolution to local governments have, in fact, been given to Watershed Committees and Vana Samrakshana Samithis and similar stakeholder groups.

The role of local government, to which social forestry and control of minor forest produce has been devolved, has not been specified clearly. To state it differently, the State government does not see any role for local governments in the management of natural

resources that fall under their jurisdiction. While on one hand, the powers of local governments are getting undermined with respect to management of natural resources, on the other, there is absolutely no coordination between the stakeholder groups and local governments, though both perform similar activities in a small geographical space. The reasons for the absence of co-ordination between local governments and stakeholder groups have been summarized below:

Areas of Contest:

- While the representatives of local governments believe that stakeholder groups are undermining their primacy, the stakeholders believe that local governments have no role in the activity in which they are the stakeholders.
- The stakeholder groups consider local governments as “political”, and treat them with contempt.
- The critics of the NGOs point out that the only difference is that while local governments are openly political by an election, stakeholder groups are political by covert infiltration.
- The representatives of local governments generally have low education status and they also lack fiscal powers to implement development initiatives vigorously. On the contrary, stakeholders have an edge over the local governments, as they get support from various NGOs, resulting in greater access to knowledge and latest technological advancements. These NGOs again are not accountable locally. Stakeholder groups and community-based organizations are also permitted to receive up to 50 per cent of the funds of Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) and Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS).
- While community-based organizations accuse local governments for non-performance, various reports have pointed out that sustainability of initiatives and maintenance of assets created has been a major problem area for the community-based organizations.
- A major criticism against the community-based organizations has been that they represent only a section of community, unlike an elected body.
- The functionaries of local governments accuse stakeholder groups of receiving favorable treatment from State government. For instance, while tanks larger than 100-acre command area have been handed over to WUA for maintenance, the smaller tanks are still under the jurisdiction of Panchayat Raj Engineering Department (PRED). While WUA get a share of irrigation tax, panchayats with smaller tanks neither get resources for maintaining them nor do they have supervisory powers over the works of the PRED.

In spite of the prevalence of discord between the functionaries of local governments and the stakeholder groups, it is vital to institutionalize a mechanism for coordination between these two overlapping interest groups. As they perform similar functions at the grass roots, it becomes imperative to develop functional and institutional linkages between them to facilitate faster development in the rural areas. Some of the areas that are amenable to stakeholder and local government convergence activities are, school education, water users in irrigation, marketing committees, fair price shops, watershed development, joint forest management. Development of functional and institutional linkages should be based on the premise of recognizing the primacy of local governments, as they are the elected bodies, rather than seeing stakeholder groups as contenders of local governments. The following

model can be considered for institutionalizing the linkages between stakeholder groups and local governments.

- State Panchayat Raj Acts provide for functional standing committees at the Gram Panchayat level. The stakeholder groups also perform similar type of functions. Therefore, Gram Sabha shall co-opt one or more members of stakeholder groups to the standing committee of the Gram Panchayat and, wherever necessary, elections will be held by secret ballot. These co-opted members will fully participate in proceedings of the standing committee.
- Members from the stakeholder group will be co-opted to the intermediary level standing committees from amongst the co-opted members of standing committees of the Gram Panchayat for each activity.
- In a similar manner, co-option from members of the stakeholders should be made to the standing committees of Zilla Parishads. Members from the stakeholder groups will be co-opted to the Zilla Parishad level standing committees from amongst the co-opted members of the standing committees of the intermediate panchayat, for each activity group.
- All funds in respect of devolved functions will be spent with the consent of the standing committees of which the co-opted members of the stakeholders are members.
- The functionaries, in respect of that service, shall be accountable to standing committee.
- The stakeholder groups will function under the overall umbrella of the local governments.
- Stakeholder groups will be strengthened by the involvement of independent initiatives and organizations with domain expertise or strong commitment.

Developing linkages between stakeholder groups and local governments, as stated above, will bring about convergence of various rural development programmes. Successful attempts at involving local governments in the activities of the stakeholder groups are readily available. In Uttar Pradesh, joint forest management was brought under the purview of the panchayats through a bill. Similarly, in West Bengal, the Chairman of the ZP, in consultation with site selection committee, distributed tube wells under a World Bank programme. Further, assurances were taken from farmers that they would purchase water supplied by the panchayat. The beneficiary committee looks after day to day working of the tube wells, which is a unique feature of West Bengal Panchayati Raj. Such convergence in the activities of the local governments and stakeholder groups is necessary for better implementation of programmes in the rural areas.

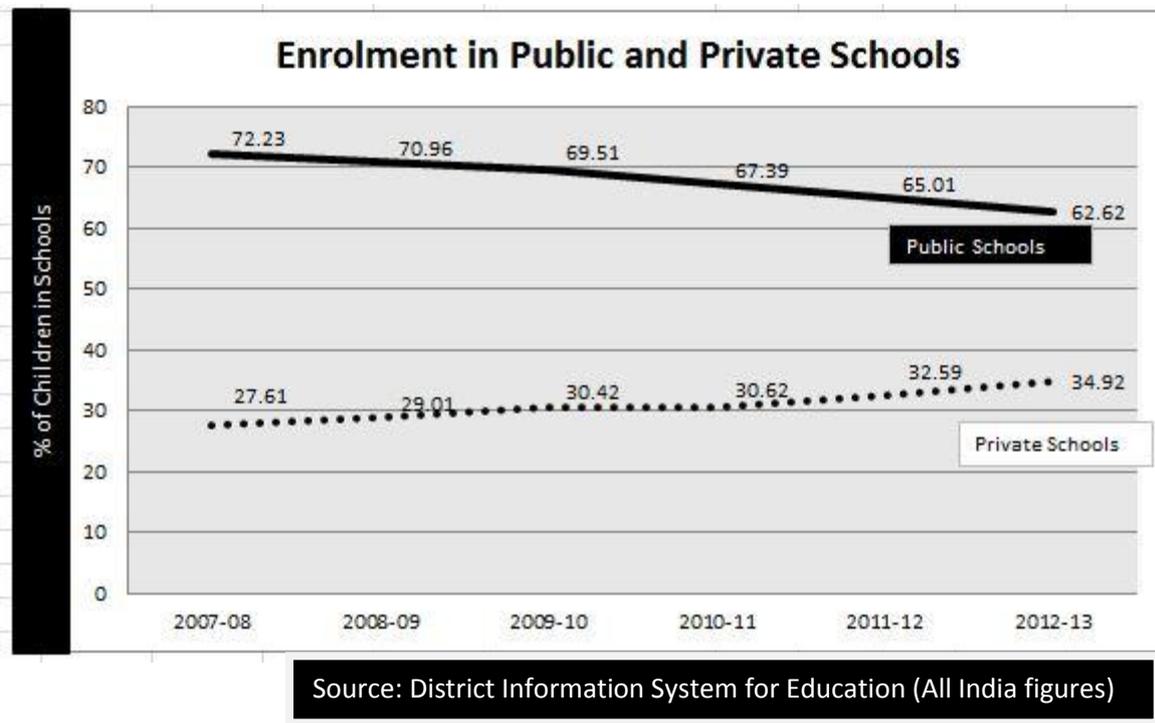
AN INCREASED ROLE OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Siddharth Sekhar Barpanda

Enrolment and Outcomes in Public Schools

Elementary Education (Class I-VIII) in India is a constitutionally guaranteed fundamental right. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, also called RTE Act, enacted on 4th August, 2009 ensured a free and compulsory education for children between 6 to 14 years of age under Article 21A of the Indian Constitution.

Since then, for the past six years the enrolment levels for the age group 6-14 in elementary schools have reached a saturation level (above 96%). Interestingly the enrolment has seen a significant rise only in the Private schools as can be inferred from the graph below.



(FDR Researcher), Foundation for Democratic Reforms

This clearly reflects shifting of public faith from public schools and the growing preference for private school education. The fact is access to good, quality education is mostly limited to urban centres in expensive private corporate schools where the elite or rich only send their children. As for the poor of the country, they have to gratify themselves with

the abysmal public schools facilities. No doubt, there is a great mismatch between the demand generated at the community level and the supply side of education, primarily catered by the public schools.

Elementary Education in Rural India

Since 2000-01, the Government of India has spent Rs. 2,86,000 crores on improving infrastructure and enrollment under the flagship its “Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan” programme. Moreover, Rs. 11,000 crores is the annual cost of providing midday meal in public schools. Sadly, this huge spending of public wealth is not improving the learning outcomes of the school children. For example, the oft quoted Annual Status of Education Report or ASER (which estimate the learning levels of class-appropriate school children) in its latest ASER-2014 edition have found that of all the children enrolled in Std. V in rural India, about half cannot read a Std. II level text.

The table here shows the dismal education outcomes of the 13 districts of rural Andhra Pradesh:

District Name	% children in Pvt school	% children out of school	% children (Std III-V) who can read a Std I level text or more
Srikakulam	27.6	1.8	79.4
Vizianagaram	28	0.8	70.4
Visakhapatnam	27.8	2.8	66.1
East Godavari	41	0.7	77.1
West Godavari	43.1	2.3	67.8
Krishna	34.8	2.0	73.3
Guntur	46.7	1.1	76.6
Prakasam	41.4	3.1	76.1
Nellore	28.4	4.6	81.5
Cuddapah	46.6	1.0	72.3
Kurnool	25.1	8.6	45.9
Anantapur	30.6	1.2	59.1
Chittoor	19.3	1.0	73.3
Andhra Pradesh	33.87	2.4	69.1

Source: Annual Status of Education Report, 2014

Visibly, more than 30% of children studying in Class III-V cannot even read a Std. I level text. Although, the Government has identified its thrust areas: providing better infrastructure, hiring more teachers and equipping teachers’ with state-of-art training programmes; there has been no drastic improvement in the learning levels of the public schools’ students as noted in the ASER survey done over the past decade. Therefore, there is a need to seriously consider some strong changes in the operation of public schools and their

teaching outcomes. After all, the expense of public schools per children is more than in private schools, but they do much worse at helping them learn.

Empowering PRIs to Improve Public Schooling

Education is one of the 52 listed items in the Concurrent List which means the Union Government provides specific directions and policy guidelines whereas the States are responsible for the expansion and growth of education in respective regions. But, education is also one of the 29 subjects listed in Schedule XI of the Constitution of India allowing Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to prepare and implement plans/schemes on elementary as well as secondary Education as per the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992. Unfortunately, both the Union and State governments have shown little interest in devolving powers or authority to the local governments on this subject.

Moreover, the limited insufficient financial resources available at the disposal of the government for spending on education are tied up mostly in improving existing school infrastructure, providing for building toilets and drinking water facilities. This combined with the lack of quality education has led to a loss of trust in public schools among common public. To offset this declining trend of student enrollment in public schools, empowered Panchayats should be allowed to make decisions and play a greater role in ensuring public provision of good quality education.

To bring schools' facilities (such as Infrastructure, Teachers and Teaching aids) in tune with the local needs, it is imperative to transfer greater responsibilities to the local bodies. Gram Panchayats, Panchayat Samitis and Zilla Parishads in many States such as Kerala, Goa, Manipur, etc; play a larger, significant role in the education sector of their respective regions.

In Kerala's rural areas the functioning of high schools and upper primary schools have been transferred to District level and the primary schools have been transferred to Village Panchayats; in urban areas, all schools are run by the urban local governments. Similarly, in the State of Manipur too, the Panchayati Raj Institutions School Management Committees, Village and Urban Slum Level Education Committees, Parents' Teachers' Associations and other grass roots level structures are involved in the management of elementary schools. In both the cases, it is the local governments' responsibility to ensure a smooth and creative functioning of the schools in their respective region.

State	Private School	Std V Learning Levels: All Children		Std VII Learning Levels: All Children		
	% Children enrolled in Pvt. schools	% Children who can read a Std II level text	% Children who can at least do subtraction	% Children who can do division	% Children who can read English sentence	% Children who can tell meaning of the sentences
Kerala	62.2	66.8	71.3	52.7	80.0	87.1
Manipur	73.3	66.6	85.3	67.0	92.8	80.1
All India	30.8	48.1	50.5	37.8	38.8	66.3
AP+Telanagana	36.7	56.3	71.5	48.4	63.9	75.8
			Source: Annual Status of Education Report, 2014			

Andhra Pradesh: Areas of Improvement

Compared to Kerala and Manipur, the erstwhile undivided state of Andhra Pradesh has a poor performance in the learning levels of school children. It establishes the fact that the decentralized governance system of the States such as Kerala and Manipur characterized by their participatory local level planning and empowerment with an array of functions, funds and functionaries allows them to act as Local Self-Government (LSG). This helped the LSGs to innovate good models for the improvement of quality of education in their respective regions.

Local Self-Governments and Public Schools

According to the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, the number of Gram Panchayats in the 22 districts of undivided Andhra Pradesh is 21,823 while the total number of all public schools in AP + Telangana is more than three times - 75089. Now, majority of these public schools have very poor quality of learning outcomes, as evident from ASER-2014 report cited above. Moreover, under Section 18 of RTE, all private schools are required to obtain a certificate of recognition in order to be functioning but public schools are not subjected to the same level of scrutiny, despite many of these schools not complying with the norms and standards specified.

Therefore, to ensure the learning outcomes of the school children - the elected local bodies, i.e. Panchayati Raj Institutions in rural areas and Municipal systems in urban areas, should hold the public schools accountable. The local bodies will be liable for implementing need-based programmes. They will also have a larger say in the School Management Committee and the School Development Plan along with the Parents of the children and the Alumni of the school.

Local Self-Governments and Private Schools

Also, an important take-away from the above table is the percentage of children enrolled in private schools in rural India. While the figures for Kerala and Manipur are more than double the national average; the corresponding number for AP+Telangana is quite close the

all India average. No doubt, the private schools are attracting more children than the public schools. Therefore, it is evident that private schools have an important, inescapable role to play in elementary education. Also, the Government, instead of burdening itself with establishing and operating schools at every neighbourhood, should allow for an effective and creative role for the private and/or non-profit organizations to set up schools. This will ease considerable burden on the Government's part.

Choice, competition and greater accountability to parents would be possible through a voucher based Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) schooling system. In such a schooling system, the cost of schooling would, to a significant extent, shift from the parents to the Government. Even under such an arrangement, where private schools have a key role to play, local governments have major functions : to ensure that the School Management Committee functions effectively, School budgetary plans are properly prepared and resource allocation is efficiently done and the autonomous district educational boards are monitoring service delivery effectively.

The Principle of Subsidiarity states that "functions shall be carried out closest to citizens at the smallest unit of governance possible, delegated upwards only when the local unit cannot perform the task". Hence, it is only logical to empower the local bodies with regard to elementary education as it will lead to better linkages between government schools and public good.

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Role of Common Service Centres in Rural Development in India: A Critical Appraisal

Durga Rao Ganta*

Introduction

Service delivery is essentially about a committed state fulfilling its responsibilities towards its citizens' needs for essential services. Service delivery is one of the most important interfaces between a modern democratic state and its citizens. The aim of public service delivery is to deliver cost-effective, high-quality services that the private sector is unable to or unwilling to deliver. A wide range of civic and welfare services are covered by any comprehensive definition of service delivery. Social expenditure, which is the core of public service delivery includes expenditure on health, nutrition, education, social welfare safety nets for vulnerable groups and all other areas that improve the quality of life of citizens. For developing countries that have a large proportion of their population below the poverty line, the goal of poverty alleviation requires that essential services be brought within the reach of the poor who need them most.

Problems of Traditional Public Service Delivery

The traditional public service delivery methods followed by different government departments are complex and cumbersome. The citizen needs to visit each department to avail a service provided by that department. As the number of staff available in each department is much less than required, they need to stand in long queues. They also need to travel long distances as the departments are established in different corners of the city or town. For example, if a person wants to pay electricity bill and water bill, which are regular activities for every citizen, first he has to go to the electricity department, stand in the queue, pay the bill and then travel a long distance to arrive at the water resource department, again stand in a queue and then pay the water bill. Due to this disintegrated service offering, the person spends nearly half of the day for paying these utility bills.

Most often, there is no universal coverage of essential services. Citizens are not fully informed and aware of their rights, and public services are not delivered in an equitable, efficient and transparent manner. Services are inadequate, poor in quality, difficult to access and often

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unaffordable for large sections of the population. The expansion in coverage of existing services and the ever-increasing demands for a new set of services over citizens' life cycles makes service delivery a long-term process. Economic changes occurring within countries

and globally are leading to more competitive markets for goods and services and consequently greater uncertainty about livelihoods. This will lead to greater dependence on the state for economic security, with implications for public service delivery. The emphasis on citizen-centric governance is another factor influencing current approaches to public service delivery. As societies adapt to the fast-changing reality and citizens have greater expectations and demands from the state, the whole framework of service delivery is being looked at from a different perspective. This also means that a comprehensive set of basic services (essential to human rights) remains within the framework of state provision in the foreseeable future. Thus the developing countries have inherited a structure of governance that was characterized by large amount of paperwork and file handling, time consuming processes, and many levels of controls and approvals.

E-Governance – ICT based Public Service Delivery

With the advent of Information and Communication Technologies, there is a tremendous change in the delivery of public services. Since then Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have received special attention in the pursuit of Good Governance, usually under the banner of E-Governance. ICTs have been deployed to improve Public Sector Governance by improving the efficiency of bureaucracies and enhancing the quality of information for Public Sector Decision Making by prefixing 'E' to Governance. In fact adding 'E' as a prefix to 'governance' changes the way of governance of a country. The advent of globalization has given birth to the concept of 'good governance'. The ultimate good of the people is viewed as the theme of good governance. There are number of ways for achieving good governance, and e-governance is one of them. In other words, e-governance is a vehicle of good governance. E-Governance facilitated mass deployment of technologies to increase the functioning of Public Institutions and to improve the interface between Government and Citizens.

Under the E-Governance banner, a large number of development interventions, endorsed and supported by the international development community, focus on the role of ICTs for enhancing the efficiency, accessibility and democratic accountability of Public Administration and collective decision making. In 2003, at the first World Summit of Information Systems (WSIS) conference held in Geneva, it was agreed that all public centres and governments should have an online system of administration by 2015. Since then the support provided for E-Governance projects by agencies such as the United Nations Development Project (UNDP) and the World Bank has been growing. The UNDP has recently implemented 195 E-Governance projects that provide information and services to citizens in 110 countries. According to World Bank, E-Governance can serve a variety of purposes including better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, and more efficient government management. E-Governance initiatives have proliferated in many parts of the world.

E-Governance is in essence, the application of Information and communications Technology to government functioning in order to create 'simple, moral, accountable, responsive and

transparent' (SMART) governance. The revolution in Information and communications Technology (ICT) has brought a whole new agenda for governance into the realm of possibility. E-Governance comprises decisional processes and the use of ICT for wider participation of citizens in public affairs. Citizens are participants in E-Governance. The purpose of implementing E-Governance is to improve governance processes and outcomes with a view to improving the delivery of public services to citizens.

e-Governance needs to transform all levels of Government but the focus should be on local governments since local governments are the closest to citizens, and constitute for many, the main interface with government. The relationship of citizens and local authorities tends to be one based on proximity as the interests at stake for both parties are closely entwined concerning issues such as public services, local development, education etc. e-Governance based administrative reforms in local governments can have maximum impact on citizens.

In rural parts of the developing world, this type of E-Governance application finds expression in the telecentre movement which aims to provide a rural outreach facility for citizens to more actively participate in improving their living conditions by engaging in commercial activity and by obtaining government information and services. In this context, it is very important to understand what E-Governance is and the reforms underwent within the Government under the label of E-Governance especially in the Indian context.

Indian Context

For a huge and heterogeneous democracy like India, reaching the masses is an uphill task; however, keeping in view its capabilities and recognition in ICT in the country, it is all achievable. E-Governance has brought so many changes in delivery of public services in India. Several ministries of the Government of India and state governments have realized the potential of E-Governance and are now very actively trying to implement E-Governance solutions. Some of these are already in full-blown implementation and have been outstanding successes. In its report on e-Governance, the Second Administrative Reforms commission (ARC) has tried to analyze the successes and failures of e-Governance initiatives in India and at the global level, in order to extrapolate the best practices, key reform principles and recommendations that can help the government to implement a new paradigm of governance in the country. This new paradigm would focus on the use of information technology to bring public services to the doorsteps of our citizens and businesses on the basis of revolutionary changes in our institutional structures, procedures and practices that would transform the relationships between our three levels of government, our businesses and our citizens. India, being the largest democracy in the world, has much to gain from e-Governance, especially when citizen participation in governance is one of the features of the fully evolved stage of e-government.

Common Service Centre (CSC)

It has been defined as "ICT-enabled outlet set-up to bring access to a range of services, content and information to citizens in the village or town, in which it is located". It is a one-

stop window designed to leverage a range of government, education, entertainment and other services which is termed differently by different sets of people in India. Examples are Common Service Centres (as mentioned in NeGP), Information Kiosk, Information Centres, Village Knowledge Centres (as mentioned in Mission 2007), Telecentres, Citizen Service Centres, etc.

Table 1: List of names of common service centres in different states

Sl. No	State	CSC Name
1	Andhra Pradesh	Rajiv Citizen Service Centre
2	Andaman and Nicobar	eDweep
3	Arunachal Pradesh	Common Services Centres (CSCs)
4	Assam	Arunodoy Kendra
5	Bihar	Vasudha
6	Chandigarh	Gram Sampark Centres
7	Chhattisgarh	Grameen Choice Centres
8	Delhi	Jeevan Centres
9	Goa	Lok Seva Kendras
10	Gujarat	e-Gram
11	Haryana	e-Disha
12	Himachal Pradesh	Lok Mitra Kendra
13	J &K	Khidmat Centre
14	Jharkhand	Pragya Kendra
15	Karnataka	Nemmadi Kendra
16	Kerala	Akshaya Centres
17	Lakshadweep	Aashraya
18	Madhya Pradesh	Nagrik Suvidha Kendra
19	Maharashtra	Maha e Seva Kendra
20	Manipur	Common Service Centres
21	Meghalaya	Rainbow Centres
22	Mizoram	Mizoram Online Centres (MOC)
23	Nagaland	Nagaland One, Common Service Centre
24	Odisha	Common Services Centre
25	Puducherry	Common Services Centre
26	Punjab	Gram Suvidha
27	Rajasthan	e-Mitra
28	Sikkim	Common Services Centre
29	Tamil Nadu	People's Computer Centre
30	Tripura	e-Pariseva Kendra
31	Uttar Pradesh	Jan Seva Kendra
32	Uttarakhand	. e -Uttara
33	West Bengal	Tathya Mitra Kendra

(Source: nios.ac.in/media/documents/csclist.pdf)

Government of India has formulated the National E-Governance Plan with the vision of providing all government services in an integrated manner at the doorstep of the citizen, at an affordable cost. The NeGP initiatives consist of 27 Central, State and Integrated Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) along with 8 other support components for rapid introduction of e-

governance in the country. The NeGP envisions a three pillar model for delivery of “web-enabled Anytime, Anywhere access” to information and services in rural India. These are:

- a) Connectivity: State Wide Area Networks (SWANs)/NICNET
- b) National Data Bank/ State Data Centres (SDCs)
- c) Common Services Centers (CSCs)

Structure of CSC

CSC is classified in to three-tier architecture

- State Designated Agency (SDA) – a Government agency that monitors entire scheme in the State
- Service Centre Agency (SCA) – a Private partner who establishes and manages CSCs in Districts
- Village Level Entrepreneur (VLE) – An individual who setup CSC in his / her locality

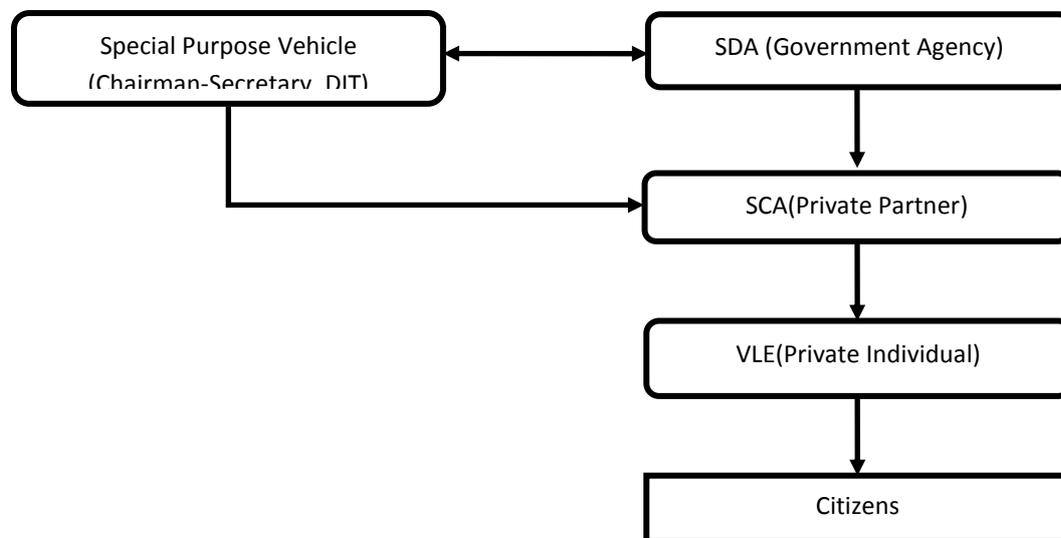


Figure1 - Implementation of CSC framework under Public-Private Partnership

Other Agencies:

National Level Service Agency (NLSA): There are significant challenges in exploiting opportunities to achieve economies of scale in the identification, customization and implementation of the physical and digital infrastructure required for the project. Further, many of the potential citizen-centric services would lend themselves to aggregation at the national level. To enable the State-specific implementation plans to benefit from such economies of scale, aggregation of best practices, content providers, etc., the DIT would be appointing a National Level Service Agency (NLSA).

Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV): In addition to the NLSA, an SPV has been proposed for the day-to-day monitoring of the CSC Scheme, in terms of channeling Government support, content aggregation, etc. While the SPV is proposed to be set up during the initial

implementation phase of the Scheme, it is essentially an entity created to be an integral part of the CSC.

National Level Service Agency (NLSA) at the central level would be given the responsibility to implement and manage this programme. State governments would be playing a major role in facilitating the establishment of large number of CSCs in rural areas. **At the state level, Government agency (SDA) designs, monitors CSC policy matters and builds financial contracts for private partners (SCA). Government invites bids for setting up CSCs in various districts to private agencies.** SCA at the district level identify VLEs and establish CSCs. These centres would be on an entrepreneurship business model at the Panchayat or village level and would encourage opportunities for non-government or private entities to play a role in actual implementation of the scheme. As a Village Level Entrepreneur (VLE) would not be in a position to manage and sustain a CSC from the very beginning, there would be a Service Centre Agency (SCA) to handhold VLE by providing business and technical support. One SCA may typically support 100 or more CSCs in a district/ part of a State. The SCA would be responsible for identifying the required applications and services, harnessing the network, identifying and training the VLE, establishing the CSC (either directly or through the VLE), supplying, aggregating and updating the content and also addressing various requirements of the CSCs from time to time. The SCA will also be responsible to conduct a detailed benchmark survey for the specific area to assess demand and viability, identify content, create appropriate service package, and evaluate the suitability of a location for establishing a CSC. The primary responsibility for economic sustainability of a CSC rests with the SCA and therefore the SCAs would be crucial to the success of the programme. These centres would deliver a package of government and localised services as required by local citizens. As per the guidelines, a list of possible services covering – agriculture, animal husbandry, citizen services, health, education, land, employment, social welfare, utility services, business, panchayat matters, consumer welfare, tourism, transport and entertainment has been suggested. The monitoring would be done through an appropriate State level Project Monitoring Committee with representatives from the Department of IT, GoI and State National Informatic Centre (NIC) Unit to review and monitor the process of implementation.

CSC's role in Rural Development

About two-thirds of India's predominantly rural population having agriculture as its primary occupation, account for less than one-third of the National Income leading to disparity in incomes in rural and urban India. Government agencies, domestic and international institutions associated with development, and NGOs have been engaged in addressing this persistent development problem, each in their own space and time, armed with their respective development ideologies and tools. Traditional rural development interventions have centered round:

- a) Rural development programmes and schemes launched either at central, state or local government level;
- b) Decentralization of Planning;

c) Better enforcement of land reforms; and,

d) Greater access to credit

The strategy has been evolving with changing times and taking into its fold new approaches such as participatory local governance, community development, technology diffusion, and rural entrepreneurship. While the participatory local governance and community development approaches have been well absorbed and adopted by the Government agencies, NGOs and the grassroots alike, the induction of ICT and 'rural entrepreneurship' into the rural development domain has been more or less unorganized (despite the promising growth in ICT infrastructure and information system in urban areas). Hence, Government of India has shown commitments to improve the infrastructure, service delivery and economic development of villages with Common Service Centre scheme, a Mission Mode Project under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP). NeGP envisages Common Service Centres (CSCs) as one of the integrated projects to provide a primary mode of service delivery channel and to bring the benefits of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to the citizens throughout the country, especially those in rural and remote areas. This initiative is based upon the fact that common service centres set up in rural areas, would need special financial assistance and other support from Government as compared to their urban counterparts. This is because cities in India cannot be compared with its rural areas, where needs and service requirements are at a very different level. With poor infrastructure, government service delivery becomes a much-more formidable task in 6,40,000 villages of India. Therefore, Government and other organisations are taking a lead to bring ICT related benefits to rural India. According to the guidelines provided by department of IT, it is proposed that the government would create an enabling environment for establishment of at least 100,000 CSCs in rural areas by the year 2007 to provide all possible services.

The CSC Scheme envisions CSCs as the front-end delivery points for Government, private and social sector services to rural citizens of India, in an integrated manner. The objective is to develop a platform that can enable Government, private and social sector organizations to align their social and commercial goals for the benefit of the rural population in the remotest corners of the country through a combination of IT-based as well as non-IT-based services. Undertaking such a mammoth task calls for active participation and close interaction amongst various stakeholders such as State Governments, local bodies, opinion makers and agencies/ institutions involved or having interest, commercial or otherwise, in rural areas/ markets.

CSC as a Change Agent:

The CSCs cannot be seen as mere service delivery points in rural India. The CSC has to be positioned as a Change Agent - that will promote rural entrepreneurship, build rural capacities and livelihoods, enable community participation and effect collective action for social change - through a bottom-up model that focuses on the rural citizen. ICT in isolation cannot undertake such monumental socio-economic change. However, Rural Entrepreneurship driven by Government, Private and Social sector agencies, and supported

by continuous capacity building and training has the power to undertake dramatic changes in rural incomes as well as attitudes. The intensity of national goals fuelled by local entrepreneurial vigour can act as a powerful catalyst to empower rural India.

CSC for Rural Empowerment

CSC can be a powerful enabler of developmental goals as its use can dramatically improve communication and exchange of information for strengthening and creating new economic and social networks. It can be applied to the full range of human activity—from personal use to business and government. CSC is multifunctional and flexible, allowing for tailored solutions to meet diverse needs of the population. It facilitates disintermediation, as it makes it possible for users to acquire products and services directly from the original provider, reducing the need for intermediaries. It is fair, equal and transparent as it does not differentiate on the basis economic status, religion or castes of its users.

The Development Challenge:

The CSCs would focus on content customization and multi-lingual delivery of end-to-end services for income enhancement in rural areas. These (CSCs) are being designed as ICT-enabled retail distribution outlets for delivery of Government, Social as well as Private Sector services in the areas of Telecom, Agriculture, Health, Education, Entertainment, FMCG products, Banking and Financial services, Utility payments, etc.

Other Advantages:

- CSCs empower the rural people to get government service and save their money and time. It creates new jobs and helps in poverty reduction. It also offers new access to financial, agricultural and health related services as well as new knowledge, information and education.
- E-Government services offered by CSCs have their significance that they help CSCs to get recognised in rural community as an authenticated service provider. These services provide assured source of income to VLEs.
- CSCs have a potential to become the gateway for tapping the rural market by companies offering different products and services. CSCs are opening new distribution channels for different products and services.
- Make access to education; information and knowledge through ICT enabled CSCs to rural people especially youth.
- CSC offered IT-Computer and English skill courses will transform the young rural population into skilled human resources for IT-BPO industry.
- SCAs will play the role of driver in this business model. SCA will bag the IT/ITes contracts/business from domestic and offshore markets and then they sublet to CSC. These CSC will distribute work among IT and English educated rural youths. CSC will act as coordinator between SCA and these rural youth.
- This IT enabled rural workforce is cheap when compared to urban based workforce in India. Indian IT/ITes services become cheap in compared to other IT/ITes providing countries in the world. *GramIT - A Rural BPO Centre* in Andhra Pradesh is a classic example.
- This lucrative business attracts more private investment in rural areas, other than CSCs. In future more and more IT infrastructure and parks will develop. In future IT/ITes industry will be connected with most of rural households.

- This business model of CSC enables the IT/ITeS industry to penetrate in rural areas and generate wealth by creating new job opportunities for rural people. If income of rural people increases it leads towards building more disposable income in rural community that can be tapped by CSC for their sustainability and profitability.

Challenges of CSCs:

Despite of this remarkable progress, CSC scheme is facing some major challenges in the following areas– Delay in deployment of G2C services

- Lack of Entrepreneurship in VLEs
- Less demand that hampers sustainability and financial viability
- Lack of capacity building effort
- Inconsistent Connectivity and Electricity
- Inadequate content in regional languages
- Lack of Awareness about ICT and CSC Scheme
- Suitable place selection for CSC
- Appropriate population in the catchment area of an CSC
- Inappropriate monitoring system for VLEs
- Lack of credibility of VLEs in local rural community due to inconsistent service delivery
- Maintenance of computers in remote area etc.

Conclusion

The CSC is a great effort by the government of India making government and commercial services accessible to rural people at their doorstep on affordable prices with a vision to bridge urban-rural digital divide. The goal of the CSC project to empower the rural community and catalyse social change through modern technologies is resulted in mushrooming of enormous CSCs in rural areas across the country with different names. These CSCs have become a vehicle for rural inclusion and inclusive growth to unlock the potential of rural India. Thus an analysis of CSC gives a broad picture of internal and external potential and challenges that helps us to focus on some key issue like how to build disposable income in rural community and building market linkages through CSC offered services. If these potentials are tapped in a consistent and organised manner, CSCs can transform rural areas, bring socio economic change and include all the rural areas in the growth trajectory.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS: A STUDY

Dr. M RAVI SEKHAR.
Dr.P. YEDUKONDALU

Introduction

The dawn of India's Political Independence in August 1947 and the establishment of a Republican form of state in 1950 brought to women the promise of adult franchise and equality of opportunity in all spheres which included social, economic and political activities. The assumption underlying these provisions was that every adult women, irrespective of her social status, would function as a citizen and as an individual in the task of nation building. The constitutional rights were to serve as instruments for achieving equality of status and opportunities in all spheres. Equality in all spheres is inseparable from active political participation. This means not only « using the right to vote but also power sharing, profit sharing, co-decision-making and co-policy-making at all levels of government. The highest law of the land i.e., the Constitution of India pledges equality of status and opportunity, justice - social, economic and political and dignity of the individual, to men and women equally.

The globe also was generating awareness about the problems of women in all spheres of life. The Charter of the United Nations dedicated that organisations to “promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion,” while the Preamble to the charter spoke of “the equal rights of men and women.”

The convention on the political rights of women adopted by the General Assembly in 1952 stated that ‘women shall be entitled to hold public office and to exercise all public functions, established by national law, on equal terms with men, without any discrimination.’ This was the first instrument of international law aimed at granting and protecting of women's rights on a world-wide basis. The United Nations declared 1975 as the ‘International Women's Year’ and 1980 as die ‘Year for Development of Women.’ The member nations declared 1975-1985 as the ‘Women's Development Decade’. During this period the nations of the world were to focus their attention and resources on the problems of women and aim at integrating women with the social, economic and political activity.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are as follows.

1. To understand the concept of women empowerment with a particular emphasis on political empowerment.
2. To evaluate the perceptions of sample women representatives on the various facets of their leadership and performance.

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3. To suggest measures for the improvement and strengthening of Panchayat Raj Institutions with a special emphasis on women.

Methodology

Keeping in view the objectives of the study the data for the present study is collected both from primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected by administering Interview Schedule of different nature. The Interview Schedule elicit the opinions of sample women representatives. The secondary data is collected from the published books, journals, periodicals, published reports, action plans, unpublished thesis, official documents, brochures and official records. Data also collected from various offices like District Panchayat Office, Zilla Parishad Office, Mandal Offices and Research Institutions.

Sample Design

For in depth study on the functioning style of women representatives, Guntur district was selected by simple random sampling method for administering Interview Schedule. Interview Schedule was purposively administered on 150 local body representatives of three tiers of Panchayat Raj institutions in four Revenue divisions of Guntur district at the rate of 80 representatives from lower tier, 40 from middle tier and 30 from upper tier. The total sample respondents are 150.

Historical Perspective

Balwantray Mehta Committee Report (1957) recommended inclusion of two women members in Panchayats in order to carry on the specific programmes for women and children. Those two women members were to be co-opted in case they did not get themselves elected. Following the recommendation of the Committee, women joined Panchayati Raj Institutions in many States, as adopted members rather than elected ones. But, they were neither aware of their roles, their rights and duties, nor they did know much about the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions. They had virtually no practical experience to actively participate in the proceedings or PRIs or taking up issues or specific problems of women and children. Thus, their contribution in decision-making process has been in consequential.

The appointment of the Committee on Status of Women (1975) was an important landmark in the development of women in India. The Committee pointed out that woman constitutes a critical in-put in national development. The Committee recommended the establishment of statutory women's Panchayats at the village level with autonomy and resources of their own for the management and administration of welfare and development programme for women and children as a transitional measure to break through the traditional attitude that inhibits most women from articulating their problems and participating actively in the existing local bodies. They could be directly elected by the women of the village and should have the right to send representatives to the Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad.

This recommendation had not any statutory status. Only in Andhra Pradesh such all women Panchayats have been formed. The reason for not implementing this provision was that instead of integrating women with the society, it segregated them from the society. In 1976, with the publication of the Report of the Committee there was a demand for the representation of women in the Panchayati Raj through reservation.

The Ashok Mehta Committee Report (1978) recommended that two women who get the highest number of votes in Zilla Parishad elections should be the member of Zilla Parishad. In case no women come forward for election, two women might be co-opted. Similar provision and procedures were recommended for the Mandal Panchayat. In the light

of these development, certain States have made provision for reservation for women, of which Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka are worth mentioning.

After a long gap, the national Perspective Plan for Women, 1988, proposed the empowerment of women at the grass-root level of democratic institutions. The Plan recommended 30 per cent reservation of seats for women from Gram Panchayat to Zilla Parishad. It was also recommended that 30 per cent posts of Chairpersons of all panchayats should be reserved for women* In addition to this, certain percentage of Chief Executives Of Panchayati Raj bodies at lower, middle and apex levels must also be reserved for women.

Women's movement gained further momentum under the leadership of Late Rajiv Gandhi. For the first time, the Government of India have set up a separate department on women. In pursuance of the proposals of the U.N. Committee on the Status of Women, "National Commission on Women" was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990.

Ultimately, participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) has been considered as the most effective instrument to remove their inequality, invisibility and power- lessness. All Women's Organisation in India, which met successively under the leadership of 'Mrs. Margaret Alva, Minister of Women's Development, gave their considered opinion that they should have 50 per cent representation on the Panchayats. But, ultimately 33 per cent representation were agreed upon and this was granted by 73rd Amendment Act in 1992.

The 73rd Constitution Amendment Act, 1992 is a step towards this direction as it provides that not less than one- third of the elected members will be women. Besides, not less than one-third Chairpersons at the different tiers (Village, Block and Zilla), or panchayat will also be women. This a landmark in the history of women empowerment in decision makings in the political process in the country. The 73rd amendment can be considered as the greatest event for women's empowerment

The Constitution (73rd) Amendment Act, 1992, Article 243 D(3) reads :

"Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled up by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat"

And Clause (4) of the Act has the following provisions:

"... not less than one-third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be- reserved for women.

Provided also that the number of offices reserved under this Clause shall be allotted by rotation to different Panchayats at each level."

The provision of reservation of one-third of seats for women in Panchayati Raj bodies incorporated in the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution should be viewed in the broader context of the attempts made in our country since independence to improve the social and economic status of women, after the declaration of the Women's Decade by the UNs in 1975. The Constitutional Amendment will have far-reaching consequences in Indian political and social life. This is indeed a welcome, though delayed, gesture.

In 1992, an international Seminar at Seoul was held on the participation of women in politics, an excerpt of declaration is quoted here : 'Convinced that in any fair, representative and efficient society, women should be active participants at the policy-making level in all forums that contribute to the political process and that they should be active executors of policy one made... It went on further to recommend legislation to "...ensure minimum levels of female representation in legislatures through systems such as reserved seats..." At an Asia Regional Seminar on Decentralised Governance at the Institute of Social and Economic Change, Bangalore held in March 1993, experts from Bangladesh, China, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines and Nepal discussed decentralised governance in their respective countries. It was

clear from the proceedings that with the exception of India, none of these countries were contemplating reservation for women in the local bodies in the near future.

Women and Political Empowerment

The issue of women's political empowerment had gained momentum in the global debate for women's rights at the time of the Fourth World Conference on Women held at Beijing in 1995. The issue continued to hold centre-stage of all discussions on gender justice and equality. Women's equal access to, and full participation in decision making was emphasized in the Platform for Action, as one of the critical areas of concern. It unequivocally declared "Women's equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of advancement of women. Women's equal participation in decision making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account". It also affirmed that women should have at least a thirty percent share of decision making positions".

Politics has been the principle pillar of empowerment. The more the participation of women in politics, the more they can change the modalities and outcomes of politics. Several studies on post-seventy third Amendment suggest that after the introduction of the seventy-third Amendment Act, rural women although, are participating in large numbers in rural grass-root level institutions, they still remain largely outside the realm of power and decision making. The gender difference in rural participatory politics is still very high. Many interrelated factors affect women's ability to participate in politics. The social hierarchies and inequalities that exist in Indian society deter the woman for centuries to play an active role in the societal functions including participation in political institutions.

The political empowerment and assumption of leadership role resulting from the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (1993), therefore, has had impact in two socio-political areas. There is, first of all, a visible improvement in the administration and delivery of services at GP (Gram Panchayat) level mainly, or of greater focus on the felt needs of the people, transparency, greater reliance on horizontal linkages and greater participation of people particularly women members of the village community. Secondly, the amendment has made possible the creation of political space, which has enabled women, to gain social status, confidence and to shake of age-old strong hold of repressive tradition.

Women and Panchayati Raj Institutions in AP

Andhra Pradesh was one of the first-two states in India to establish the PRIs in the year 1959. The state legislature created a three-tier PR set-up under Andhra Pradesh Praja Samiti and Zilla Parishad Act (APPSZP), 1959, this act has provided for co-option of two women. The Andhra Pradesh Gram Panchayat Act (APGP), 1964, governed the composition and functions of the Gram Panchayat (GP) in Andhra Pradesh. This act provided for reservation of two seats for women if the total strength of the GP is 9 or less, 3 seats if the strength is between 10 and 15 and 4 seats if the strength is more than 15 (Mishra, and Singh, 1993: 39). It is dear that the act ensured between 22 per cent to 25 per cent of representation of women in these bodies. In the middle level bodies, till, 1986, women representation was governed by the Andhra Pradesh Praja Samiti and Zilla Parishad Act of 1959, which provided for co-option of two women for each Panchayat Samiti, in addition to the possibility of women members finding membership in PS through the electoral process. Based on the recommendations of Ashok Mehta Committee Report (1978), the Mandal Praja Parishad, Zilla Praja Parishad Abhivrudhi Mandal Bill was introduced in legislative Assembly in July 1986. This bill' completely altered the PRIs set-up in AP and in 1987, a new reservation set-up was introduced for BCs and Women, i.e., 9 per cent Thus, women got further encouragement to share in the democratic decision-making process of PRIs.

Keeping in view the Amendment Act of 1993, State Government of Andhra Pradesh has enacted a new law thereby making the previous PR system in-operative. In this new arrangement, after the first elections, the representation of women at Gram Panchayat (GP) level was 33.84 per cent, at Mandal Panchayat (MP) level it was 37.01 per cent, and at Zilla Parishad (ZP) level it was 38 per cent. This has contributed for the enhancement of women leadership especially in PRIs to get access to decision-making process concerning to vital problems of economic development, social reconstruction and distribution of scarce resources.

Impact of PRI Membership on Women Empowerment

The rationale behind providing 33 per cent of reservations is intended to empower women politically and there by to achieve social and economic empowerment. In this study an attempt is made to assess the empowerment impact of PRI membership, by examining the access to resources, control over resources, personal savings, cash in hand, debt position , possession of silver and gold ornaments, ability to handle PRI works, respect within family, possession of permanent assets, dependency on males, hesitance in expressing views, participation in political discussions, decision making status on family matters, social status, awareness about laws, rules and regulations, positive attitude towards women, leadership development, role in political parties, level of political ambition, level of political efficacy, level of sense of political knowledge, economic status etc. On these parameters the responses of respondents has categorized into significant increase, marginally increased, status quo and can't say.

Access to Resource

The membership of PRIs is likely to enhance the access to resources in case some women and will not bring any change in case of other women. The respondent's views on their access to resource is given in table 1

Table – 1
Impact of PRI Membership on Access to Resource

S. No.	Responses	No	%
1	Significantly Increased	82	54.67
2	Marginally Increased	46	30.67
3	Status Quo	14	9.33
4	Can't say	8	5.33
Total		150	100.00

Source: Field Data

It can be found from table 1 that as many as 85.34 per cent of sample respondents declared that the membership in PRIs has positive impact in their access to resources. Among them 54.67 per cent reported significant change and 30.67 per cent reported marginal increase. Nearly 9.33 per cent of sample respondents reported status quo in the in their access to resources due to membership in PRIs in the study area. Negligible percentage (5.33 %) of respondents has no opinion on the increase in access to resources

Control over to Resource

The access to resources will yield good results if the control on such resources is there and otherwise not. the control over resources in out side the family is essential for empowerment of women. Table 2 gives such details.

Table – 2
Impact of PRI Membership on Control over to Resource

S. No.	Responses	No	%
1	Significantly Increased	41	27.33
2	Marginally Increased	9	6.00
3	Status Quo	89	59.33
4	Can't say	11	7.33
Total		150	100.00

Source: Field Data

As per table 2 nearly 59.33 per cent of sample respondents reported that the membership in PRIs has no change on the control of resources in the study area. Around 27.33 per cent of total sample stated significant increase in their control over resources and 6 per cent reported marginal change in their control over resources. About 7.33 per cent have no opinion on the impact of PRI membership in their control over resources in the study area.

Personal Savings

The membership of women in PRIs gives some scope for them to have personal savings. As PRI members, they receive honorarium from the government. The details of the impact of PRI membership on savings is presented in table 3.

Table – 3
Impact of PRI Membership on Personal Savings

S. No.	Responses	No	%
1	Significantly Increased	71	47.33
2	Marginally Increased	17	11.33
3	Status Quo	58	38.67
4	Can't say	4	2.67
Total		150	100.00

Source: Field Data

It can be found from table 3 that as many as 58.366 per cent of sample respondents declared that the membership in PRIs has positive impact on personal savings. Among them 47.33 per cent reported significant increase and 11.33 per cent reported little change. Nearly 38.67 per cent reported status quo on personal savings due to PRI membership of women in the study area. Negligible percentage (2.67 %) of respondents has no opinion on the increase status quo in personal savings.

Cash in Hand

The increased access to resources as well as control over resources, are likely to enhance the cash in hand. Table 4 gives the details of respondents responses on the cash in hand due to PRI membership.

Table – 4
Impact of PRI Membership on Cash in Hand

S. No.	Responses	No	%
1	Significantly Increased	88	58.67
2	Marginally Increased	22	14.67
3	Status Quo	32	21.33
4	Can't say	8	5.33
Total		150	100.00

Source: Field Data

It can be found from table 4 that nearly 73.34 per cent of respondents reported that the membership in PRIs have positive impact on cash in hand. Of them 58.67 per cent reported significant increase and 14.67 per cent reported marginal increase. Status quo or no change was reported by 21.33 per cent of respondents. About 5.33 per cent have no opinion.

Impact on Debt Position

The PRI membership's impact on debt position of sample respondent's households' of women representatives is given in table 5.

Table – 5
Impact of PRI Membership on Debt Position

S. No.	Responses	No	%
1	Significantly Decreased	6	4.00
2	Marginally Decreased	61	40.67
3	Status Quo	74	49.33
4	Can't say	9	6.00
Total		150	100.00

Source: Field Data

Table 5 indicates that the debt position of sample respondent households decreased due to PRI membership of women in study area. About 40.67 per cent reported marginal decrease and 4 per cent of total sample respondents declared that there is significant decrease in debt position of family. Only negligible percentage of (6 %) respondents have no opinion on the decrease of family debt. While majority of the respondents i.e. 49.33 per cent have expressed that there is no change in debt position of sample respondent households even after becoming members of PRIs in the study area.

Possession of Gold & Silver Ornaments

The particulars of the impact of PRI membership on possession of gold and silver ornaments on sample women representatives is given in table 6.

Table – 6
Impact of PRI Membership on Gold & Silver Ornaments

S. No.	Responses	No	%
1	Significantly Increased	46	30.67
2	Marginally Increased	25	16.67
3	Status Quo	68	45.33
4	Can't say	11	7.33
Total		150	100.00

Source: Field Data

It can be noted from table 6 that a preponderant majority i.e. 45.33 per cent of respondents reported status quo in the possession of gold and silver ornaments. On the other hand significant increase is reported by 30.67 per cent of respondents in their possession of gold and silver ornaments. Marginal increase in the possession of gold and silver ornaments is reported by 16.67 per cent of sample respondents. 11 out of 150 (7.33 %) respondents have no opinion on the impact of water harvesting structures on children educational level in the study area.

Ability to handle PRIs Works

The involvement in day to day works of Panchayat Raj Institutions gives chances to improve the abilities of women representatives to handle works efficiently and effectively. Table 7 gives the details of the sample respondents responses on the impact of PRI membership of their ability to handle PRI works.

Table – 7
Impact of PRI Membership on Abilities to handle PRIs Works

S. No.	Responses	No	%
1	Significantly Increased	94	62.67
2	Marginally Increased	0	0.00
3	Status Quo	54	36.00
4	Can't say	2	1.33
Total		150	100.00

Source: Field Data

The study indicates that as many as 62.67 per cent of sample respondents reported significant increase in the respondent's ability to handle Panchayat works. Status quo is reported by 36 per cent of sample respondent women in their ability to handle Panchayat works. Only 1.33 per cent of respondents have no opinion on the impact of PRI membership in their ability to handle Panchayat works.

Respect within Family

The improved economic and political status is likely to improve the stature of women members in the family land which in turn increases the respect within the family. Table 8 gives the particulars of the impact of PRI membership on respect within family.

Table – 8
Impact of PRI Membership on Respect within Family

S. No.	Responses	No	%
1	Significantly Increased	93	62.00
2	Marginally Increased	6	4.00
3	Status Quo	47	31.33
4	Can't say	4	2.67
Total		150	100.00

Source: Field Data

The study denotes that more than half (31.33 %) of the respondents denied the impact of PRI membership with regard to respect within family. On the other hand nearly 66 per cent of sample respondents reported positive impact of PRI membership in case respect within family. Among them 4 per cent reported marginal increase and 62 per cent reported significant change. Negligible percentage (2.67 %) of respondents has no opinion on the impact of PRI membership on respect within family.

Impact on Possession of Permanent Assets

The additional adding to income of the family in the form given to women representatives, makes the family on the possession of permanent assets. The details of the impact of PRI membership on the possession of permanent assets is given in table 9.

Table – 9
Impact of PRI Membership on Permanent Assets

S. No.	Responses	No	%
1	Significantly Increased	39	26.00
2	Marginally Increased	14	9.33
3	Status Quo	92	61.33
4	Can't say	5	3.33
Total		150	100.00

Source: Field Data

The study notices that more than half (61.33 %) of the respondents reported no change in their possession of permanent assets due to PRI membership. Marginal increase in their possession of permanent assets is reported by 9.33 per cent of sample respondents. About 26 per cent of respondents declared that there is a significant increase in their possession of permanent assets. 5 out 150 respondents have no opinion either on increase or no change in their possession of permanent assets.

Dependency on Males

In rural India the dependency of females on the males is more visible on all social, economic and political activities. Table 10 gives the particulars of the impact of PRI membership on dependency of males.

Table – 10
Impact of PRI Membership on Dependency on Males

S. No.	Responses	No	%
1	Significantly Decreased	54	36.00
2	Marginally Decreased	69	46.00
3	Status Quo	19	12.67
4	Can't say	8	5.33
Total		150	100.00

Source: Field Data

Table 10 indicates that the dependency on males decreased due to PRI membership in the study area. Among them 46 per cent of respondents reported marginal decrease and 36 per cent declared significant decrease on their dependency on males. While 12.67 per cent of the respondents have expressed that there is no change on their dependency on males due to PRI membership. Only negligible percentage of (5.33 %) respondents has no opinion on the dependency on males in study area.

Impact on Hesitance in Expressing Views

Generally, the Indian women are modest and shy to express their feelings and views. As such during field survey the women respondents were asked “To what extent PRI membership improved or not your hesitance”. The responses to that question are registered and presented in table 11.

Table – 11
Impact of PRI Membership on Hesitance in Expressing Views

S. No.	Responses	No	%
1	Significantly Decreased	84	56.00
2	Marginally Decreased	21	14.00
3	Status Quo	41	27.33
4	Can't say	4	2.67
Total		150	100.00

Source: Field Data

As per table 11 more than half (70 %) of the sample respondents reported that there is some amount of decrease in the hesitance in expressing views due to PRI membership. Moreover nearly 56 per cent of respondents observed significant decrease in the hesitance in expressing views by sample women leaders in the study area. Marginal decline in hesitance in expressing views was reported by 14 per cent of respondents. About 27.33 per cent of the respondents stated that there is no change in the hesitance in expressing views in the study area. Nearly 2.67 per cent of respondents have not framed any opinion on the hesitance in expressing views in study area.

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Devolution of Funds, Functions and Functionaries to Panchayati Raj Institutions-A perspective

Dr. V.Govindu

Gandhiji's vision of making every village a Republic, was translated into reality. With the passage of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act in 1992, Panchayati Raj institutions were given constitutional status, and a three-tier Panchayati Raj system was formed to ensure people's participation in rural development. With 496 Panchayats at district level, 5,905 at block level and 2,30,762 at village level, India is today world's largest functioning democracy. These Panchayats are manned by 34 lakh elected representatives, including 10 lakh women, 3.64 lakh Schedule Castes and 2.59 lakh Schedule Tribes.

Since 1992, Panchayati Raj system has gone a long way. Today, it is the bedrock of India's rural development and poverty alleviation efforts. It has the potential of building a progressive India in harmony with the felt needs and aspirations of the people. Gram Panchayat is the mirror of the village; it reflects social reality. Thus, by strengthening the Panchayati Raj system, the community will be empowered to take their own decisions and implement them. Panchayati Raj system is the forum for decentralized planning and implementation of Government programmes; it is the best platform to give vent to the people's needs and aspirations. Hence, empowerment of PRIs is essential for economic and social development of Rural Bharat.

Since the passage of the 73rd Amendment Act, a new era had begun in the federal democratic system of the country. All states/UTs, except Jammu and Kashmir, Uttaranchal and National Capital Territory Delhi have passed legislation in conformity with the provisions of the Constitution. All states/UTs except Arunachal Pradesh, Delhi and Pondicherry have also conducted elections.

73rd Amendment Act:

The main features of the act are:

1. Establishment of the Three-tier structure-Village Panchayat, Intermediate Panchayat and District Panchayat
2. Regular elections to Panchayats every five years
3. Proportionate seat reservation for SCs/STs
4. Constitution of State Finance Commissions to recommend measures to improve the finances of Panchayats
5. Constitution of State Election Commissions
6. Gram Sabhas at the Gram Panchayat level

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Power devolved to the Panchayats:

The Constitution has provided the following powers to PRIs:

1. **Article 243-G** vests powers in the State Governments to endow Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government. Panchayats are responsible for preparation of plans and their execution for economic development and social justice with regard to 29 subjects listed in the 11th Schedule of the Constitution.
2. **Article 234-H** vests powers in the State Governments to:
 - Authorize Panchayats to levy, collect and appropriate taxes, duties, tolls and fees
 - Assign taxes, duties, tolls and fees collected by States to Panchayats
 - Provide grants-in-aid to the Panchayats from the consolidated fund of the state and,
 - Provide for constitution of such funds for Panchayats for crediting all money received by or on behalf of Panchayats and also for the withdrawal of such money there from.
3. **Article 243-I** provides for constitution of a state Finance Commission every five years to review the financial position of Panchayats and to make recommendations to the Governor on issues related to:
 - The distribution of the states' net proceeds of taxes, duties etc, collected between the states and the Panchayats at all levels
 - Assignment of taxes, duties, tolls etc, to Panchayats
 - Grants-in-aid from states' Consolidated Fund to the Panchayats
 - Improvement of the financial position of the Panchayats

The 11th Schedule (See table -1) in the constitution listed 29 subjects which are to be devolved to Panchayats. Devolution means transfer of powers relating to a specific activity from the State Government to the local self-governments. Apart from transfer to powers, the local self-governments require staff and resources to effectively implement their decisions. In fact, funds, functions and functionaries would help each other with regard to transfer of powers in PRIs.

Table-I
Subjects allotted to gram Panchayats under 11th Schedule (Article 243-G) of the Indian constitution.

Sl.No	Allotted Subjects
1	Agriculture, including agricultural extension
2	Land improvement, implementation of land reforms, land consolidation and soil conservation
3	Minor irrigation, water management and watershed development
4	Animal husbandry, dairying and poultry
5	Fisheries
6	Social forestry and farm forestry
7	Minor for forest produce
8	Small-scale industries, including food processing industries
9	Khadi, village and cottage industries
10	Rural housing
11	Drinking water

12	Fuel and fodder
13	Roads, culverts, bridges, ferries, waterways and other means of communication
14	Rural electrification, including distribution of electricity
15	Non-conventional energy sources
16	Poverty alleviation programme
17	Education, including primary and secondary schools
18	Technical training and vocational education
19	Adult and non-formal education
20	Libraries
21	Cultural activities
22	Markets and fairs
23	Health and sanitation, including hospitals, primary health centres and dispensaries
24	Family welfare
25	Women and child development
26	Social welfare, including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded
27	Welfare of the weaker sections, and in particular, of the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes
28	Public distribution system
29	Maintenance of community assets

The following points can be discussed in order to know about the devolution of powers and functions to Panchayats:

1. Devolution of Functions
2. Devolution of Functionaries
3. Devolution of funds and financial autonomy

Devolution of Functions:

All State Governments/UTs have informed that most of the subjects have been devolved at different levels to PRIs. There is no significant change due to the laws enacted by the States in accordance with the 73rd Amendment Act. In many States, different functions under Gram Panchayats are civic duties. The State Governments have not given appropriate functional responsibilities to newly established institutions in the States, where Intermediate Panchayats or District Panchayats did not exist for decades. Even in Panchayats, where all the three tiers exist, old laws have been enacted with few changes. Though the ministry has suggested a structural form in the book titled Devolution of Powers and Functions to PRIs in 1995 itself, States/UTs did not follow it. Many State Governments have not taken actions to formulate the necessary instructions or guidelines to be followed by PRIs to help them in delivering their functions. On the other hand, State Governments should realize that by just providing duties unless they are given functional powers. In many play for rural development. The reason is that they do not have clarity about the role with regard to lawful functions allocated to them. The functions devolved upon Panchayats are mentioned in the form of subjects rather than activities or allied activities. Some States have devolved more powers to District or Intermediate Panchayats, whereas some other States have ignored District Panchayats and transferred powers to only Gram Panchayats and

Intermediate Panchayats. In many States, the State Government departments are formulating and implementing the functions of PRIs. On some occasions, the Government departments are getting approval for the schemes from the standing committee related to the District or Mandal Panchayat. There is no role of Panchayats in their implementation. In some States, Sarpanches have to contact Block offices for funds and technical clearances. The village bodies should be able to spend the funds without technical clearance of the Government officials.

Devolution of Functionaries:

Many State Governments have not transferred the required staff to the PRIs after the devolution of the powers. Some States like Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan have only transferred the functionaries and issued instructions to keep them under the control of the Panchayats. In many instances, the attitude of State official machinery is not favourable to the PRIs. Many Government officers are not willing to work under the administrative control of elected PRIs. The State Governments should not only keep required staff under the administrative control of PRIs but also see that they actively work in the activities related to Rural Development.

Devolution of Funds and Financial Autonomy:

The State legislatures have been empowered to devolve powers to the Panchayats. The Panchayats cannot fulfill their functions without sufficient funds and financial autonomy. Many states are not transferring funds to the Panchayats for the subjects devolved upon them. Only some States have granted financial autonomy to the PRIs. Financial autonomy to the Panchayats would give them financial powers to release funds without any technical clearance or approval from BDOs or district officials. For example, in Kerala and Punjab, the Panchayats can spend up to Rs. 1 lakh and in Madhya Pradesh, the Panchayat can spend upto 3 lakh to take upward without any outside clearance. In West Bengal, there is no limit of funds to the Panchayats. The kerala Government have allocated 40 percent of the Planning funds to the PRIs as consolidated funds. This will help the Panchayats to formulate their development plans in accordance with their requirements. The consolidated funds can be allotted to the Panchayats as per their requirement and priority in accordance with the guidelines for the implementation of Rural Development. Table-2 gives a statement on the status of funds, functions and functionaries to Panchayats.

It is better to assign some responsibilities and powers to collect some taxes and to levy taxes to augment their own resources. In many states, the villages Panchayats have been authorized to collect more taxes. But the other two tiers of the Panchayats have not been given powers to mobilize their internal resources. There is a need for consensus among the States on assigning the local taxes like land levy and taxes on buildings, profession and businesses to the Panchayats. PRIs should take steps to collect these taxes without fail.

Table-2
Status of Transfer of Funds, Functions and Functionaries to Panchayats.

Sl.No	States/UTs	No. of Departments/Subjects transferred to the Panchayats		
		Funds	Functions	Functionaries
1	Andhra Pradesh	05	17	02
2	Arunachal Pradesh	--	--	--
3	Assam	--	--	--
4	Bihar	--	20	--
5	Jharkhand	--	--	--
6	Goa	--	--	--
7	Gujarat	--	--	--
8	Haryana	--	16	--
9	Himachal Pradesh	02	23	07
10	Karnataka	29	29	29
11	Kerala	15	29	15
12	Madhya Pradesh	10	23	09
13	Chattisgarh	10	23	09
14	Maharashtra	18	18	18
15	Manipur	--	22	04
16	Orissa	05	25	03
17	Punjab	--	07	--
18	Rajasthan	--	29	--
19	Sikkim	24	24	24
20	Tamil Nadu	--	29	--
21	Tripura	--	12	--
22	Uttar pradesh	12	13	09
23	Uttaranchal	12	13	09
24	West Bengal	12	29	12
25	Andaman Nicobar	06	06	06
26	Chandigarh	--	--	--
27	Dadra/Nagar Haveli	--	03	03
28	Daman & Diu	--	29	--
29	NCT Delhi	PRIs yet to be reconstituted		
30	Pondicherry	--	--	--
31	Lakshadweep	--	06	--

The constitution (73rd Amendment) Act does not apply to Jammu & Kashmir, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland.

Salient Features of reports of State Finance Commissions:

1. The Panchayats should get sufficient funds to function effectively in accordance with their new role as self-government institutions. The funds should match the functions devolved upon them. Article 243-I provides for constitution of a State Finance Commission to make recommendations to the Governor on the subjects mentioned in Article 243-H.

2. State should mobilize their own resources before transferring required funds to the Panchayats to enable those functions as institutions of self-governance. The 73rd Constitution Amendment Act has amended Article 280 related to setting up of the Central Finance Commission. As part of this amendment, the following sub clause is included in clause 3 (b)

of Article 280. (b “These steps are required to increase State Consolidate Funds to provide resources to the Panchayats in the State in accordance with the recommendations of the State Finance Commission”.

3. All States/UTs except Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and Chandigarh have constituted their State finance Commissions (SFC). There is no delay in the constitution of SFCs and submission of the reports by SFCs. All States/UTs except Bihar, Gujarat and Goa have accepted the recommendations of the SFC fully or partially. The Report of SFC in Bihar is awaited. The Governments of Goa and Gujarat have not yet accepted the recommendations. The Ministry of Home Affairs has accepted the recommendations of the Finance Commission relating to the UTs of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Diu & Damans, Dadra, Nagar Haveli and Lakshadweep.

Many States have to constitute a second finance commission on completion of period of five years of their SFCs. States like Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh are yet to constitute the second State Finance Commissions. Table-3 gives a statement on the status of SFCs in various States.

Taxes, duties, tolls and fees assigned to Panchayats:

Though the Panchayati Raj laws in Bihar, Orissa, Rajasthan, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim have provided for collection of some taxes and arrears by Panchayats, these powers are made optional after some period. In Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, even levy of taxes assigned to Mandal Panchayats is made optional. In Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa, these Mandal Panchayats do not have and powers to levy the taxes. In Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Manipur, Sikkim, West Bengal, Maharashtra, respective Panchayati Raj Acts have assigned some powers to the District Panchayats to augment their resources. But these powers are also made optional.

**Table-3
Status of Reports of State Financial Commissions**

Sl.No	States/UTs	Reports of the Financial Commissions	Acceptance of the Report
1	Andhra Pradesh	Received	Main recommendations Accepted
2	Arunachal Pradesh	Not appointed	--
3	Assam	Received	Partially Accepted
4	Bihar	Yet to Receive	--
5	Jharkhand	Not appointed	--
6	Goa	Received	Under consideration
7	Gujarat	Received	Under consideration
8	Haryana	Received	Main recommendations Accepted
9	Himachal Pradesh	Received	Accepted
10	Karnataka	Received	Main recommendations Accepted
11	Kerala	Received	Accepted

12	Madhya Pradesh	Received	Accepted
13	Chattisgarh	Received	Accepted
14	Maharashtra	Received	Main recommendations Accepted
15	Manipur	Received	Accepted
16	Orissa	Received	Accepted
17	Punjab	Received	Accepted
18	Rajasthan	Received	Accepted
19	Sikkim	Received	Accepted
20	Tamil Nadu	Received	Accepted
21	Tripura	Received	Accepted
22	Uttar pradesh	Received	Accepted
23	Uttaranchal	Not appointed	--
24	West Bengal	Received	Accepted
25	Andaman Nicobar	Received	Accepted
26	Chandigarh	Not appointed	--
27	Dadra/Nagar Haveli	Received	Accepted
28	Daman & Diu	Received	Under consideration
29	NCT Delhi	Not appointed	--
30	Pondicherry	Received	Under consideration
31	Lakshadweep	Received	Under consideration
32	Meghalaya	Not applicable	--
33	Mizoram	Not applicable	--
34	Nagaland	Not applicable	--
35	Jammu & Kashmir	Not applicable	--

Suggestive Recommendations:

* Keeping in view the functions to be delivered by each tier, it should be seen that each of the 29 subjects mentioned in the constitution comes under the purview of the activities and tasks undertaken at various tiers.

* The powers given by the State Governments should be specific, clear and easily understandable to the Panchayats.

* The State Governments shall amend the present Act to authorize the Panchayats to levy, collect and appropriate taxes, duties, tolls and fees to augment their resources.

* The State Governments shall try to create consolidated grand's to enable Panchayats to utilize the money as per their requirements and priorities. It shall keep in view the limitations decided earlier for utilization of funds. The Gram Panchayats and Mandal Zilla Panchayats can receive funds for consolidated grants. On 70:30 basis.

* The State Governments shall commence necessary steps for integration of the schemes for the convenience of the PRIs in responding to local requirements.

* The state government shall devolve more financial powers to the PRIs to provide more autonomy in decision-making process at various levels.

* An officer shall be appointed as Chief Executive Officer (can be on per with the district collector). A separate cadre may be created for the PRIs. All the Class-I posts from the State Cadres may be filled up on deputation basis. All Class-II posts may be filled up through the State Public Service Commission or direct recruitment. All the Class-III and below Class-III posts can be filled up at regional/district levels through an independent recruitment board.

* Apart from package of devolution of powers, the PRIs need qualified and trained technical staff to help them in day-to-day transactions at various levels. The technical staff posted at block level may be assigned to work in some Gram Panchayats to advise them in formulating action plans and technical feasibility of the plans.

* An officer from State Account Service may be appointed at District and Mandal levels to prepare and audit the accounts of the Panchayats. Trained staff may be appointed on contract basis to prepare and audit the accounts of Gram Panchayats. The staff may be even appointed for a group of Panchayats depending on the size of Panchayats.

* Subjects committees may be appointed to implement the schemes and work as per the decisions taken at the Panchayat meetings.

* Social Audit through Gram Sabha is essential.

* District Planning Committees shall be appointed and made functional to enable the Panchayats to prepare their annual plans.

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**EMPOWERMENT OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS
PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES – WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
ANDHRA PRADESH
SUB-THEME
EMPOWERMENT AND DEVOLUTION OF POWER TO PRIs –
FUNDS, FUNCTIONS AND FUNCTIONARIES**

Dr.N.SUNDARA RAO

INTRODUCTION:

It is now nearly 20 years – and will be 25 years by 2017, the last year of Twelfth Five Year Plan – since the dream of Mahatma Gandhi and the “Power to the People” vision of Shri Rajiv Gandhi regarding Panchayats, was incorporated in the Constitution of India. Over these years, the mandatory provision of the Constitution have, by and large, been implemented by all the State Governments. However, the progress made is highly uneven among States as regards the devolution of functions and empowerment of Panchayats, so that they could evolve into institutions of self governance and also plan and implement programmes for economic development and social justice. Even in States which have made some progress, further steps have been stalled.

The enablement and empowerment of Panchayats through devolution of functions, funds and functionaries are largely the responsibility of State Governments. In views of the tardy progress during the last two decades, it is necessary to devise measures to induce the State Governments to act in the direction of such empowerment. Since the Government of India has undertaken a number of important schemes, with large outlays, in sectors which fall within the purview of local governments, the working group is strongly of the view that the planning Commission and the concerned ministries of the Government of India should give the lead by recognizing the centrality of Panchayats through the guidelines, structure of planning, mode of financing and implementation of such centrally sponsored schemes. Panchayats have been largely sidelined and parallel bodies have been created for planning and implementation.

WHY INDIA AND SO A.P. NEEDS PRIs:

It ‘Gram Sawarj’ dream of Mahatma Gandhi and the ‘Power to the People’ exhortation of Rajiv Gandhi are the essence of true democracy. Prime Minister in his address on January 16, 2009 has observed that “We are a large, oung and restless nation. On the move. There is no other way to include the aspiration sof all our people to guide our collective destiny other than to develop a strong local government system. Inclusive growth, which is the motto of the 11th Five Year Poan, can be achieved only through inclusive governance. And the key to this is an effective, well functioning system of Panchayats”

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The 73rd Amendments to the constitution has given constitutional status to the Panchayats, provided it a complete frame work and also imparted it certainly. It envisions the Panchayats as the Institutions of local self governance and also the universal platforms for planning and implementing programmes for economic development and social justice. It has deepened the democracy and ensured social and political empowerment of the people, particularly the dis-advantaged through 2.4 lakh Panchayats and 2.8 million elected representatives, over 30% of whom are women, 19% S.C., 12% S.T and also OBCs in proportion to the population in the most States.

THE BACKGROUND TO P.R.:

The Panchayathiraj is a south Asian political system mainly in Indian continent. It is the oldest system of local government here. Indian Governemtn has decentralized several administrative and financial function to the local bodies empowering the elected representatives. PR is a system of governance in which the PRIs form the pillars of the nation. Mahatma Gandhi advocated PR a decentralized form of government, where each village is responsible for its own affairs as the foundation of India's democratic political system.

INDIAS INDEPENDENCE – CONSTITUTION:

As soon as India got Independence, it had adopted its own constitution on 26th November, 1949. It came into force on 26 January, 1950. Part IV of the constitution has directive principles of State Policy which are declared according to 36 to 51 articles. There are three principles under it head. One among them is **Gandhian Principles** which include – Organisation of village Panchayats (Article 40).

COMMITTEES AND AMENDMENTS IN THE CONSTITUTION:

Indian Government appointed committees from time to time and tried some and succeeded in amending the constitution to establish and strength PRIs. There are (1) Jay Prakash Narayan Committee (2) Ashok Menta Committee and (3) Balwantrai Mehata Committee. A sub committee of the Ministry of Rural Development under the Chairmanship of Sri P.K.Thungan. 64th Amendment Bill did not become an act. With a view to grant constitutional status to the PR Scheme which exemplifies the true decentralization of Democracy in the country and brings about uniformity, the parliament passed the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act. 1992 in December, 1992. It came into effect from 24 April, 1993. It initiated the establishment of Panchayats as units of local self government in all states and union Territories. The act has provision for devolution of powers and responsibilities to the PRIs for the preparation of economic development plans, social justice and also for the implementation in relation to 29 subject listed in the (Eleventh) XI schedule of the constitution.

DEVOLUTION OF POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Article 243 of the constitution envisaged transfer of powers, resources and responsibilities and enjoined upon the State Legislatures to enact laws/amend existing laws on 29 functions assigned to PRIs as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self government, make provisions for devolution of powers and responsibilities with respect to

- Preparation of plans for economic development and social justice
- Performance of functions and implementation of schemes as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to matters listed in the eleventh schedule of the Constitution;

- Authorizing and assigning to PRIs to levy, collect and appropriate taxes, duties and fees in accordance with the procedure;
- Provision of grant-in-aid out of consolidated fund of the State;
- Constitution of State Finance Commission (SFC) for distribution of taxes, duties, toll and fees leviable by State between PRIs and State Government and setting up a permanent SFC cell in Finance Department to determine taxes duties, tolls and fees to be assigned to / appropriated by the PRIs and measures required for improvement of financial position of PRIs.
- Setting up of District Planning Committee (DPC) to consolidate plans prepared by LBs and to prepare a draft development plan for District as a whole having regard to matters of common interest, spatial planning, sharing of physical and natural resources, integrated infrastructure and environmental conservation.

The finance Commissions suggested certain measures to augment State fund to supplement resources of the LBs, based on which Government of India (GOI) circulated guidelines together with Local Bodies grant scheme which among other provided for

- Conducting of elections timely in all tiers of LBs as per the mandate of the Constitution
- Amendment of laws for schedule V areas
- Accounts to be maintained in standardized formats
- Performance Audit System was to be adopted
- Best practices for augmenting resources of PRIs

THE CAUSES FOR THE PRIs FOR NOT FUNCTIONING UPTO THE MARK:

I am sorry to say that the Panchayats are functioning sub-optimally (not up to the mark).

The root cause is that the Panchayats are not seen as local governments with clear roles. This leads to:

Grossly inadequate devolution: Many States have not taken effective steps to devolve 3Fs to the PRIs to enable them to discharge their constitutionally stipulated function. Further, it is imperative that the PRIs have financial resources and manpower to match the responsibilities entrusted to them. While SFCs have submitted their recommendations, not many states have implemented these are taken steps to ensure PFIs fiscal viability.

Parallel Systems: Parallel Systems and organizations set up under various Central / State developmental programmes have further sapped strength of the Panchayats, pared away their legitimate functional space and even encroached upon their political space.

Excessive control by bureaucracy: In some States, the Gram Panchayats have been placed in a position of subordination: Gram Panchayat Sarpanches have to spend extraordinary amount of time visiting Block Offices for funds and/or technical approval. These interactions with the Block staff / office distort the role of a Sarpanch as elected representatives.

Tied nature of Funds: Activities permitted under the schemes are not always appropriate for all parts of the district. This results in unsuitable activities being promoted or an under-spend of the funds.

Reluctance to use fiscal powers: An important power devolved to GP is the right to levy tax on property, business, markets, fairs and also for services provided, like street lighting or public toilets, etc. Very few Panchayats use their fiscal power to levy & collect taxes. The argument pushed by Panchayat-heads is that it is difficult to levy tax on your own constituency, especially when one lives in the community. But when Panchayats do not raise resources and instead receive funds from outside, people are less likely to request a social audit.

Status of the Gram Sabha: Empowering the Gram Sabhas could have been a powerful weapon for transparency, accountability and for involvement of the marginalized sections. However a number of the State Acts have not spelt the powers of the Gram Sabhas nor have any procedures been laid down for the functioning of these bodies or penalties for the officials.

SOME MORE CAUSES:

The State Government constituted Finance Commission but the prescribed periodicity and action taken on reports of the Finance Commission were not maintained by the state

Apart from shortfall in release of funds to the PRIs by the State Government towards their share of taxes out of State revenues against the SFCs recommendation, transfer of funds was too meager of the gross revenue of the State.

Large number of recommendations were still to be implemented. Assignment of entertainment tax, surcharge on stamp duty, K.L.Grant, Land acquisition charges and fees collected from minor minerals etc. were not made to PRIs due to non-amendment of the relevant act. There was no centralized system of maintenance of a data base at the State level to monitor the actions taken and track the actual transfer of funds made by the State Government against the SFCs recommendations.

In order to avoid overlapping of functions and its balances distribution amongst the different levels of PRIs, an activity mapping concerning to 29 functions consisting of 83 activities listed in the eleventh schedule was evolved by the SFC along with the mechanism for inter tier co-ordination. Against the above Government developed only some functions to the PRIs out of which activity mapping for a few functions consisting of lesser activities were done by the department for implementation.

It was seen that a large number of activities remained either unimplemented or partially implemented for which the activity mapping done by the Department was not made fully operational by the PRIs and the administrative exercise done at the Government level had no practical utility in the field.

An order of Government placing the official associated with GPs and MP works under direct control of official accountable to ZPs indirectly restricted the autonomy of PRIs . Resultantly, line departments of the State Government continued to formulate and prepare GP plans separately for each department and obtain approval of GP in piece meal; as such consolidated plan of GP was missing. The financial and administrative powers of GPs were being exercised by State Government officials.

As such, the formal action of devolution of activities did not have any practical effect on the transfer the subjects or bring any structural change in the functioning of the GPs.

PRIs ARE NOT INVOLVED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CSP SCHEMES:

There were a number of centrally sponsored plan (CSP) implemented by different line departments, the functions of which were within the ambit of the local bodies. However, the development of funds made by the State to the PRIs was largely restricted to schemes implemented by the Union Ministries of Rural Development and Urban Development. There were major schemes of other departments, the funds of which were not devolved to the local bodies although the related activities were assigned to the PRIs. These schemes, in general had a tendency to prescribe programmes had their own perspective plans and annual action plans prepared by different committee at the grass root level such as village health and sanitation committee under NRHM, watershed committee under different watershed programme without active involvement of the PRIs. As each programme oriented plan was implemented as a stand-alone process by different departments, the institutional mechanism of integrated planning through involvement of the PRIs was missing.

ASSETS NOT TRANSFERRED TO GRAM PANCHAYATS

GOIs guidelines stipulated that all common property resources vested in GP were to be identified, listed and made revenue productive for augmenting resources of the PRIs as recommended by the TFC, such assets included assets created under various State and Central Schemes. The Government have not identified the various assets generated under these schemes and issued formal orders for transfer of assets created to the GPs

NON-PROVISION OF FUNDS UNDER PANCHAYAT SECTOR

Panchayat Sector in the State budget was to be created for effective performance of the functions devolved to the panchayats through activity mapping by entrustment of all schemes pertaining to the activities devolved upon the PRIs. Panchayat Sector in the State budget was not opened in the State budget and the respective line Department continued to make separate budget for operation of departmental schemes. Consistent with the devolvement of functions, the matching funds to carry out the functions were not provided to the PRIs except assignment of the State Revenue through SFC grants.

TAXATION POWER AND RESOURCES OF PRIs

The generation of income from sources was either ‘Nil’ or negligible. No efforts were made by the GPs to levy and collect the tax and non-tax revenues indicating poor resources mobilization from own sources.

They are only in receipt of funds from Government towards share of revenue and grant-in-aid as recommended by the Finance Commissions. Besides, they received funds for various schemes implemented by them from Government. There was no generation of income from internal sources.

ZPs were not vested with appropriate funds and powers to levy taxes like the GPs.

The ZPs only received funds from the Government to meet the establishment expenses of the parishads which included the salary and allowances of the staff, honorarium and traveling allowances payable to the elected bodies and other contingent expenses. The functions performed by the ZPs were mainly restricted to attending to the various committees and supervision of the works related to the schemes implemented by the MPs and GPs, as such, establishment of the ZPs at district level in the State with a meager annual expenditure.

RECOMMENDATION-CONCLUSION:

The State Government was yet to devolve sufficient functions, funds and functionaries to ensure autonomy in functioning of PRIs.

The government should ensure that:

- A consolidated annual plan covering Central/State schemes and GP programmes should be prepared and approved by elected body so also annual accounts prepared and discussed in general body meeting.
- Annual Accounts should be prepared by the PRIs regularly and timely in prescribed format;
- Date base on finances are maintained in all levels of PRIs and made accessible to used
- Schemes should be implemented as per Guidelines and completed timely
- Assets created under various schemes/programmes should be put to revenue generating purposes;
- Effective control and supervision should be applied to prevent over stacking and misappropriation of food grains;
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation of performance of the PRIs should be made through specific and regular returns and reports;
- Statutory deductions should be remitted to Government accounts timely;

- Administrative restructuring of the departments of the Government should be made to devolve functions; functionaries and institutions to bring them under control of PRIs to ensure and evolve their autonomy;
- Legislation may be enacted to amend laws on the remaining eight subjects for administration of the same by the PRIs in the Schedule V areas of the State as recommended by the EFC and provided in the GOIs guidelines;
- DPC should be strengthened by providing secretariat, technical and inspection staff for discharging their function as intended in Constitution and the Act enacted there for separately;
- Share of state revenue and grant in aid to local bodies and transfer of funds should match the responsibility & functions devolved upon PRIs.
- Monitoring and evaluation of performance of PRIs by DPCs need to be strengthened;
- System of preparation of budgets and maintenance of accounts in prescribed formats need to be followed

Empowering People through Gramsabha

Dr. (Smt.) B.V.L.A. MANGA*,

Local institutions constitute the strength of nations. A nation may establish a system of free government but without local institutions it cannot have the spirit of liberty.

- De Tocqueville

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Decentralization process got a fillip in the country with the 73rd Amendment providing the constitutional mandate to the rural local bodies. It has instilled participatory development at the grass root level through creating 'institutions of self government' and implementing plans for 'economic development and social justice' need an altogether different paradigm of politics, development and culture. Effective functioning of Panchayat Raj Institutions depends largely on ensuring that the system is accountable to the people.

Democracy for John Dewey, the philosopher of education said that Gram Sabha was both a means and an end to the building of good and just society. For successful functioning of Panchayat Raj Institutions, there is a need for ordinary people to transient narrow loyalties and to become more aware citizens and participate in decisions which affect one's life. These qualities enhance the social and political capital, which play a significant role in the progress of the society.

Here in the context of Gram Sabha participation refers to the involvement of a significant numbers of persons in situations or actions that enhance their wellbeing such as self reliance and self esteem. It also tends to give more attention to decentralized development and recognition of the need to understand and use local approaches to development. In other words Grama Sabha is a tool to sensitize people, to increase the receptivity and ability of the village people to respond to development programmes as well as to encourage local initiatives. Thus participatory development assures power. Power refers to the ability to do something. Chamber (2006) asserts five categories of power which refers to being able to do something power over : what we normally mean power with : which is collective power, within which is self confidence and there is a fifth power, power to empower.

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An empowering approach to development puts people at the centre of development and views them as important resource rather than as the problem. Empowerment is generally seen as a key for good quality of life, increased human dignity, good governance, pro-poor growth, project effectiveness and improved service delivery.

Empowerment approaches include four key principles :

- Access to information
- Inclusion and participation
- Accountability and
- Local organizational capacity

The advantage of empowering people is

- ❖ It delivers demand driven services
- ❖ Increases self esteem and confidence
- ❖ It is built through enhancing capacity, participation and ownership.

Coming to Grama Sabha, it is an instrument for empowering people at the grass root level strengthening bottom up approach. At this juncture this paper throws a light on the functioning of Grama Sabha, the deficiencies and how to overcome.

Grama Sabha (GS) according to 243 (B) has been defined as a collective people in village, with in the area of Panchayat, who are registered in electoral rolls. In other words it is the general assembly of villages. It is a tool to ensure decentralized planning, social audit, identification of beneficiaries, supervision and monitoring of accounts which lead to good governance. It has been given 'watch dog' powers and responsibility by the Panchayat Act in most states to supervise and monitor the functioning of Panchayat elected representatives and government functionaries. Hence it may be emphasized that Grama Sabha is the cornerstone of the entire scheme of democratic decentralization initiated through 73rd amendment of the constitution. With regard to the powers and authority of Grama Sabha 243 (A) of the constitution says that the Grama Sabha may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the legislature of the state may be, by law. It is in the light of this that state legislatures have endowed certain powers to this corporate body relating to the development of the village.

Few powers and functions of Grama Sabha :

- ❖ Discussing the reports of socio-economic development programmes, implemented by the Grama Panchayat (GP) in the previous financial year.
- ❖ Examine the annual statement of accounts and audit report as well as a rural administration of the Grama Panchayat in the last financial year.
- ❖ Identification of various anti-poverty and rural development programmes.
- ❖ Undertake programmes of adult education and family welfare in the village mobilization of voluntary labour and contribution in kind or cash or both for community welfare programme and promoting unity and harmony among all sections of people.

From the above list, it is obvious that Grama Sabha has only the power to discuss, debate, examine and scrutinize. There is no binding on the part of the Grama Panchayat to implement the directions and decisions of the Grama Sabha. If the institution of Grama Sabha has to be made functional as it ought to be, it must be endowed with power to implement schemes. 73rd constitutional amendment has not only extended development, planning and audit functions to the Grama Sabha but also endowed it with management and control of natural resources with traditions and customs.

The field experience across the country does not however give a bright picture about the functioning of Grama Sabha. The performance is little better in Southern states than in states elsewhere in the country.

Challenges faced by Grama Sabha:

- In most of the states people are apathetic towards this body.
- The conduction of meetings of Grama Sabha has become a formality. Further meetings were conducted without any consideration of quorum
- Decisions were not taken by Grama Sabha but by the local elite.
- Absence of women and weaker sections of the rural society.
- People who are dependent on their daily wage labour, they cannot afford to forego their labour for attending the meetings.
- Most of the Grama Sabha members are not aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- Only good numbers of people are attending the Grama Sabha meetings when it is meant for identification of beneficiaries in anti-poverty programmes.

Thus it is playing only a ritualistic role and to make it fulcrum of the democratic decentralization, the following remedial measures may be taken.

- ❖ Active participation of entire village community, particularly weaker sections of the society should be initiated.
- ❖ More involvement should be there in preparing village plans pertaining to community development prioritizing the local needs.
- ❖ Officials have to learn how to respect Grama Sabha, and how the democratic power flows to the grass roots.
- ❖ It should be pervaded in to the community with optimum level.
- ❖ Developing a prioritized data base of needs of individual households and community to select the beneficiaries.
- ❖ Complaint and suggestions box should be placed in the public of the village.
- ❖ There is a need to evolve a special mechanism to keep a check on the effectiveness of the programs after its completion.
- ❖ All the programmes should be clearly articulate the role of Grama Sabha in their policy / programme / schemes.
- ❖ It should be given scope for tapping the needs of the people.
- ❖ There should be a constant and suitable place for conducting Grama Sabha meetings which will accommodate sufficient number of people.
- ❖ Integrating of Panchayat Raj institutions with civil societies organizations will bring better results.
- ❖ There should be effective utilization of media.

Thus empowering people is not an event but it is a longtime process which requires raising the awareness of the people, forming community groups, upgrading the requisite resource managing abilities; and creating norms or internalizing their mechanism and improving capabilities for external negotiations. The shaping and planning of this empowerment process requires both a long term vision and willingness to improve and bolster traditional community system as tools of participatory development. The participatory development is the basis for good governance. Good governance focuses on achieving self reliance, sustainable development and social justice to make the Grama Sabha functioning most effectively and efficiently. As a consequence participatory development and good governance are intertwined, while participatory development focuses on raising the quality of participation by local people, which is important from the people oriented development, good governance is foundation for participatory development. Thus in the long run, good governance evolves in to stronger aspirations for further democratization. As per the contemporary beliefs, the Grama Sabha is supposed to empower people especially women and those from economically and socially marginalized sections of the society and a platform to train people in healthy democracy.

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GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PANCHAYAT RAJ FRAME WORK IN KARNATAKA

***Vijaya Kumar. B.**

INTRODUCTION:

The Constitution of India in its original form, referred to Panchayat Raj only as part of the State Directive Principles, where in the states were asked to promote these institutions as instrument of self government. Four factors need to be kept in mind while reading the original provisions in the Constitution relating to panchayat raj. Firstly, it represented the `unitary mindset of the constitution makers. Secondly, the issue of state and local rights was accorded a `secondary status` by the founding fathers. Thirdly, the leadership in the Assembly was convinced that the `sociology of local politics` inevitably encouraged divisiveness rather than unity. Finally, the constitutional provisions on local government appeared to be a minor concession extended to the `Gandhians`, many of who made a passionate plea for incorporating the Gandhian dream of `Rama Rajya` in constitution.

Three important landmarks need to be flagged in the progress of panchayat raj institutions in India after the inauguration of the Constitution. The impact and implications of the Balwantray Mehta Committee report (1957), the Asoka Mehta Committee Report (1978) and its ramifications and finally the amendment of the constitution and the guaranteeing of a constitutional status to local bodies (73/74 Amendment).

Article 40 of the Constitution of India provides that the State shall take steps to organize village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority to enable them to function as units of local self Government. However, even after the recommendations of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee and Ashoka Mehta Committee on Panchayats had been put into force, several ills continued to afflict the Panchayat Raj System in the country in the post independence period. There were long delays in holding of Panchayat elections, frequent suspension/suppression/dissolution of the Panchayat bodies, lack of functional and financial autonomy, inadequate representation of marginalized and weaker sections and meager, occasional and tied Government grants. This crippled the functioning of Panchayats and did not allow them to function as institutions of local Self Government as had been envisaged in the Constitution. An imperative need accordingly emerged to enshrine in the Constitution of India, certain basic and essential features of local self-government so as to enable local bodies to function as institutions of self-governance both in planning and implementation of development programmes. Consequently Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 was passed and was brought into force with effect from 24.4.1993. The Act does not apply to Schedule V and VI Areas of Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and Mizoram, State of Nagaland, hill areas of the

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State of Manipur for which District Councils exist and the Panchayati Raj Gram Panchayat meeting in progress.

Objectives:

1. The paper makes an historical impact of the constitutional developments of the PRI's in Karnataka
2. This article gives a brief account of the developments and growth of the PRI's
3. The legal framework has been projected to identify the legal implications and the law making process in Karnataka.

Constitutional amendments - 73rd and 74th

The 73rd and 74th amendment of the Constitution was in 1992. As a result Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) gained constitutional status and came to be regarded as the third level of governance.

The 73rd and the 74th Constitutional amendments came into effect on 20 April 1993. All State governments had to enact laws to conform to the broad framework enunciated in the constitution. The Constitutional amendments heralded major departures with regard to the authority and powers of the local bodies. The amendments gave each local body a constitutional right to prepare its annual plans, subject to the revenues made available and to the guidelines given by the State government. The Constitutional amendments have thus created an enabling framework for the State Legislatures to determine the scope and extent of actual decentralisation to local bodies.

The 73rd amendment to the Constitution envisages setting up of local governance structures with the intention of deepening democracy at the grass roots. This was to be achieved by bringing the marginalized groups to the mainstream political process through affirmative action. Positive discrimination in the form of reservation of seats in the local governance structures resulted in spaces being created for better and increased participation by various politically marginalized groups.

Panchayat Raj Institutions in Karnataka

The forerunner of the present state of Karnataka, the princely state of Mysore, also had a long and somewhat chequered history of decentralisation. Commencing as far back as 1881 it went through several phases up to independence. Given the stage of political development and the infancy of democratic institutions and traditions, it was inevitable that these initiatives were able to register only limited success. Shortly after Independence three committees examined and reported on measures to strengthen local government. They were the Venkatappa Committee (1949), Chandrashekaraiiah Committee (1954) and Kondajji Basappa Committee (1962).

Policies, which were evolving at the national level, also had an impact on developments in the State. Following the report of the Balwantray Mehta Committee (1957), The Mysore Village Panchayats and District Boards Act 1959 was enacted and continued to be in force until 1983.

In contrast to many states, in Karnataka the *Panchayat Raj* institutions functioned quite effectively under the 1959 Act. Its limitations came to be registered in the course of time. In 1978 the Asoka Mehta Committee submitted its report. One of the major recommendations of the Asoka Mehta Committee was that there should be a two tier local government structure with *Zilla Parishads* at the district level and *Mandal Panchayats* at the lower level. The Committee suggested that where *Panchayat Samitis* were already in existence they could continue without direct elections. This report was the basis for the

Karnataka Zilla Parishads, Taluk Panchayat Samitis, Mandal Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayats Act 1983, which came into effect in 1987.

Prior to the 73rd Amendment, a reasonably well-functioning PR was in place in Karnataka. Since the constitutional amendment, grassroots institutions empowering local populations have been weakened. It still constitutes one of those few states where grassroots institutions have been strengthened.

Present day Karnataka was formed in 1956. The Village Panchayats and Local Boards Act, passed in 1959, followed the BRMC recommendations for PRI. Major restructuring of PRI on the Asoka Mehta model occurred again 1987, following a second Act passed in 1983. The Act created an institutional arrangement for planning and management at local levels. It reserved 20 percent of the seats for BCs and 25 percent reservation for women. The authority of local elected representatives was recognized by officials. PRIs performed well in diversified sectors of development: health, education, and poverty alleviation. During five years of functioning (1987-92) the Mandal Panchayat and Zilla Parishads successfully strengthened local democratic development processes.

With changes in state-level political leadership, the new government began dissolving the powers of PRI towards end of 1991. In the meantime, the Karnataka PR Act, 1993, was adopted, which was a step backwards since it provided for administrators to take over responsibilities of elected representatives. The government of Karnataka appointed Nayak Committee to review controversial promotion of this Act. Accordingly, the act was amended in March 1994. It has made CEO, EO and other officials of superintendence and control of chairperson of these bodies who have now been designated executive heads. The act has differentiated functions (though there is overlap also) for the three tiers based on the principle:

The state of Karnataka has a fairly impressive record in terms of decentralization. The first major landmark in recent times is the 1983 Act [The Karnataka Zilla Parishad, Taluk Panchayat Samiti, Mandal Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayat Act 1983]. This Act, influenced by the Ashok Mehta Committee's recommendations (1978) at the national level, went further in some respects. It established a two-tier structure with the Zilla Parishad (ZP) and Mandal Panchayat (MP), both elected and a Taluk Panchayat Samiti which was ex-officio. A notable feature was 25 per cent reservation for women in ZPs and MPs even before this was mandated by the Constitution. Elections under this Act were held in 1987.

This Act was substituted by a new legislation in 1993 (**the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993**). This was due partly to the need to accommodate the mandatory provisions brought in by the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution. By virtue of these amendments Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) obtained a constitutional status. Further a three-tier elected structure was also made mandatory (with a few exceptions). As a result the 1993 Act provides for the following three-tier structure – Zilla Panchayat (district level), Taluk Panchayat (Block level) and Gram Panchayat (village level).

Given this long history, extensive research has been conducted on the Karnataka decentralization model. However, research on local governments in Karnataka has not focused sufficiently on the interface between the customary institutions and formal structures of governance. The reasons for this are many. One is the assumption referred to above that the Customary Panchayats are shrinking in the face of competition from formal structures and that Grama Panchayats have filled the vacuum left by these shrinking customary institutions. However, field research indicates otherwise. Contrary to popular belief, there has not been a unilinear displacement of Customary Panchayats by the formal structures of governance such as Grama Panchayats. Rather there is some evidence to suggest that customary institutions themselves both influence and adapt to the existence of formal governance structures.

Article 243I states that every five years a state Finance Commission shall be constituted to review the financial position of the panchayats and to make recommendations to the Governor as to the principles which should govern:

- (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 panchayats;
- (iii) the grants-in-aid to the panchayats from the Consolidated Fund of the state;
- (a) the measures needed to improve the financial position of the panchayats;
- (b) any other matter referred to the Finance Commission by the Governor in the interests of sound finance of the panchayats.

Article 243ZD creates Committees for District Planning at the district level, which shall consolidate the plans prepared by the panchayats and the municipalities in the district and prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole.

This committee has a composition that gives representation to both members of panchayats and municipalities in the district. In preparing the draft development plan, the District Planning Committee (DPC) shall clearly spell out the way forward for the integrated development of infrastructure and environmental conservation and the extent and type of available resources, whether financial or otherwise, in matters of common interest between the panchayats and the municipalities including spatial planning, sharing of water, and other physical and natural resources. The duty of the DPC is to forward the development plan, as recommended by such Committee, to the government of the state.

Article 243N sets a one-year limit to the continuance of any provision of any law relating to panchayats that is in force in a state immediately before the commencement of the Seventy-third Constitution Amendment Act, 1992 (73rd CAA), which is inconsistent with the provisions of Part IX.

In Article 243N the premise is implicit that after one year of coming into force of the 73rd Amendment, no provision of any law that relates to panchayats can exist. In other words, the panchayat law enacted under the provisions of part IX of the Constitution would gain precedence over any provision of any law. It is thus clear that legislations empowering panchayats with powers and responsibility have a special and predominant status. The spirit of Part IX of the Constitution is that the panchayats are expected to be constituted and to function as units of rural local self-government. The emphasis is to 'empower them with certain functional mandates, give them a significant degree of autonomy and impart to them an element of self-reliance and self-sufficiency through fiscal transfers, taxation powers and tax assignments' (MOPR, 2006). The expressions in Article 243B relating to the constitution of panchayats are very similar to those in Article 79 relating to that of Parliament and Article 168 relating to that of the Legislatures in states. Article 243L, which speaks of the creation of the State Finance Commissions, has a wording similar to Article 275 related to the constitution of the Finance Commission regarding recommendations to the President as well as the distribution of the net proceeds of taxes between the Union and the states and other related matters. The expressions used in Article 243K with respect to the State Election Commission are similar to those used in Article 324 relating to the Election Commission. In fact, it is not farfetched to suggest that the relationship between the state and the panchayats is designed on lines similar to that of the Centre and the state, with the notable difference being that there are no legislative powers conferred on panchayats, but a representative list of functions that may be assigned to them, in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution.

Social justice is an avowed objective of Panchayat Raj. It is important to note that Karnataka experimented with reservations for women in local bodies much before the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments were passed. The 1983 Act reserved 25% of the seats in Zilla Parishads for women. Seats were reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population but the minimum was fixed at 15 and 3 per cent respectively.

In the wake of the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution, Karnataka enacted a new legislation, the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act that came into force from 10th May 1993. This Act, was not fundamentally different from the 1983 Act. With regard to empowering women a few facts need to be stressed. The new Act increased the percentage of reservations from 25 to 33. It also provided for reservations in the positions of Chairpersons of local bodies and reservation for women among various other caste based social categories of reservation. Karnataka can take pride in the fact that inspiration for the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution (as also the 64th Amendment moved by Rajiv Gandhi) was the states initiative.

The term of all members in local governments is five years. Adhyakshas and Upadhyakshas of Taluk and Zilla Panchayats hold office for 20 months. This is with the intention that in a period of five years, the rotation of the offices will cover three categories of reservation.

CONSTITUTION OF GRAMA PANCHAYATS

Area comprising a village or group of villages having a population of not less than five thousand and not more than seven thousand to be a panchayat area, Provided that the Government may order that an area with a population of not less than two thousand five hundred may be so declared as a panchayat area in such areas of the districts of Belgaum, Chickmagalur, Dakshina Kannada, Dharwar, Hassan, Kodagu, Shimoga , Udupi , Haveri and Uttara Kannada as may be specified by the Government:

Provided further that irrespective of population, wherever it is found necessary, the Government, as a special case, may, order that an area within a radius of five kilometers (diameter of ten kilometers) from the centre of a village may be so declared as a panchayat area in such areas of the districts of Belgaum, Chickmagalur, Dakshina Kannada, Dharwar, Hassan, Kodagu, Shimoga Udupi , Haveri and Uttara Kannada as may be specified by the Government: Provided, the previous permission of the Government declare any area comprising a village or group of villages having a population of either less than five thousand or more than seven thousand to be a panchayat area.

Constitution of Grama Panchayat.- The Grama Panchayat shall consist of such number of elected members as may be notified from time to time by the State Election Commission, at the rate of one member for every four hundred population or part thereof of the panchayat area:

Seat shall, subject to the general or special order of the State Election Commission, be reserved by the Deputy Commissioner in a Grama Panchayat,-

(a) for the Scheduled Castes; and

(b) for the Scheduled Tribes;

and the number of seats so reserved shall bear as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats in the Grama Panchayat as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the panchayat area or of the Scheduled Tribes in the panchayat area bears to the total population of the panchayat area;

Not less than one third of the seats reserved in each category, for persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward classes and of the non-reserved seats in the Grama Panchayat shall, subject to the general or special order of the State Election Commission, be reserved for women.

Conclusion:

Representative institutions in a democratic process have often been viewed, as forums for the expression of popular will. John Stuart Mill eloquently outlined the role of such representative institutions. In modern democracies, representative institutions were perceived to be `pillars of democracy and rule by popular consent (that) mirror the aims, aspirations and sentiments of the people`. From the perspective of a conscientious citizen, the representative assembly is the `conscience keeper of the nation and the repository of public confidence Representative assemblies provide a better and more visible access to positions of power and legislators have an opportunity to make an important intervention on issues that touch the live of common people.

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POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH PANCHAYATRAJ INSTITUTIONS IN KARNATAKA

Dr. Mohan Das. K

INTRODUCTION:

Panchayath Raj Institutions in Karnataka

Karnataka state was one of the very few states in India to act early on the obligation set by the 73rd Amendment. In Karnataka, an Act was passed in the year 1993 and accordingly a three tier panchayat raj system consisting of Zilla Panchayat (ZP) at the district level, Taluk panchayats (TP) at the taluks level and Grama Panchayats (GP) at the village level has been established in the year 1994 and 1995. A large number of important functions have been assigned to the panchayats in Karnataka. Under karnataka Panchayat Raj Act 1993. Schedule I assigns 29 subjects to the GPs, schedule II assigns 28 functions to TPs and Schedule I assigns 29 functions to ZPs. These functions include basic amenities, infrastructure and development sectors like agriculture, horticulture, fisheries, health, education etc. In fact, the functions delegated to the PRIs include almost all the functions enumerated under 248(G) of the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution. The state government has transferred more that 400 states and centrally sponsored schemes to panchayats for implementation. Taluk Panchayats and Gram Panchayats to correspond to the functions, assigned to them in schedule I. II and III of the Panchayat Raj Act, 1993. Again, certain functions have been reallocated between the ZPs, TPs and GPs on the basis of the recommendations of a 'High Power Committee'

The Panchayats in Karnataka have been given adequate finances to execute their functions. The GPs have been given some independent powers of taxation and a fixed statutory grant of Rs, 1 lakh per annum to each GP. On the other hand the taluka and zilla panchayats have no independent powers of taxation but they get a share in the state's budget for plan and non-plan purposes.

The administrative set up that existed before the establishment of panchayats i.e. the departments at the district and taluka level have been merged with the respective levels of the panchayats. The DRDA (District Rural Development Agency) which was implementing a large number of rural development/poverty alleviation programmes are also merged with the zilla Panchayats as far back as in 1987. Thus, as many as 3 lakh officials in about twenty development departments were brought under the control of the panchayats.

Objectives:

1. The paper examines the empowerment of women in an historical perspective.
2. It represents the state of Karnataka in very brief scenario.
3. The paper looks into the loopholes of women empowerment in the PRI's
4. Finally it suggests the ways in order to put the political emancipation of women in the right tracks.

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WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

As discussed in the earlier chapters, the Panchayat Raj, a system of self-governance, was introduced in 1959, following the submission of Balwant Rai Mehta Committee Report of 1957. The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee had recommended that besides 20 members of the Panchayat Samiti (block level body), there should be two women as co-opted members.

This may be said to be the first official declaration to enter active politics at the grassroots. Following this, the Maharashtra Zilha Parishad (district body) & Panchayat Act of 1961, provided for nomination of one or two women to each of the three bodies, in case no women were elected. As it happened, out of a total of 320 women representatives of Panchayat Samities & Zilha Parishads in Maharashtra in 1978, only 6 were elected members. In many parts of India, women were recruited to the Panchayat Raj by co-option rather than through election. Subsequently, The 64th Constitutional Amendment Bill was introduced in Parliament in 1989, which provided for 30% reservation for women. But it could not be passed. The Bill was defeated by a narrow margin in the Upper House. The Bill was reintroduced in September 1991, as the 73rd & 74rd Constitutional Amendment Bills with an additional provision such as one-third representation for women in chairperson positions. The Bills were finally passed on December 1992. Ratified by half the states by April 1993, they came into operation as 73rd & 74th amendments to the Constitution of India on 24th April 1993.

The provisions of the 73rd & 74th Amendment had far reaching consequences. It provided for direct elections to all the seats for the Panchayat – from the village level to the intermediary block committee (Panchayat Samiti) to the district level (Zilla Parishad) for a period of five years. The act is most significant for the reservation for women & Scheduled Caste (lower caste) & Scheduled Tribes.

There are certain general features, which could be taken advantage of by women. Such as direct elections for membership & Sarpanch (village head or chairperson) post, at the local as well as the block level. If the states so desired, they could make provisions for reservation to the membership for chairpersons to citizens of backward classes.

This amendment can be considered as a landmark in the empowerment of women, as shortly after the 1992 election in Maharashtra, a total of 28,000 Panchayat Raj yielded positions of power to 93,333 women in various Panchayats as members & as chairpersons.

The History of Women's inclusion in Political Representation in India:

- ◆ 1946 There were 16 women out of 150 members in the Constituent Assembly.
- ◆ 1957 when Panchayat Raj was first introduced, the concept was to co-opt two women “who are interested in work among women and children” (Balwantrai Mehta Committee Report).
- ◆ 1961 Maharashtra Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti Act of 1961 provided for the “nominating of one or two women” to the Panchayat bodies “in case women were not elected”.
- ◆ 1973 West Bengal Panchayat Act, also provided for co-opting 2 women.

◆ 1976 The Report of the Committee on the Status of Women (CSWI) demanded representation of women in Panchayat was well as brought into Panchayat only through co-option.

◆ 1983 As many as 25 per cent of seats were reserved for women in the Karnataka Zilla Parishads, Taluk Panchayat Samithis, Mandal panchayats and Nyaya Panchayat Act of 1983. Elections under this Act delayed for various reasons and could only be held in 1987. Some 14,000 women were elected out of 30,000 candidates who contested.

◆ 1988 Elections were held in Uttar Pradesh for 74,000 village Sabhas, the first elections for 22 years. There was provision made for the co-option of only one woman.

◆ In Panchayat elections, less than one per cent of women came through elections.

◆ 1991 Orissa Panchayat Samiti provided for “not less than one third of the total number of seats to be reserved for women”. Elections were held in 1992 and over 22,000 women were elected. In Kerala Districts council’s elections, while 30 per cent seats were reserved for women, 35 per cent seats were won by women.

◆ In 1993 about 71,000 women candidates contested elections and with 33 per cent seat reservation, 24,900 women came in through the ballot box.

◆ 1994 In Madhya Pradesh 150,500 women were elected to village, block and Zilla Panchayats.

◆ 33 per cent of seats were reserved for women in village panchayat and women captured 43 per cent of the seats.

The field observations and place of the study

The micro study was made in order to understand the women in the panchayats in the state of Karnataka in the Bangalore rural district. The study consisted of a sample study of 50 families of elected members in PRIs. It is evident that out of the total 52 members there are 25 representatives with 48.08% belonging to medium family, followed by 14 representatives with 26.92% belonging to small family and the lowest number 13 representatives are with 25.00% belonging to large family.

The distribution of opinion about the awareness of the objectives of PRIs. It is evident from the discussion that out of the total, the highest number 30 with 57.69% representatives have understood the objectives of PRIs. The over all observation is that the majority of women representatives in the study area not understood the objectives of PRIs.

The opinion about freedom of participation in the working of PRIs shows that out of the total 52 representatives, the highest number 30 with 57.69% representatives have opined that they are freely involving as representatives of PRIs. On other hand 22 representatives with 42.31% have opined that they do not have freedom for participation as the representatives of PRIs. These members are being restricted by the male members of their family.

The over all observation is that the majority of women representatives are participating freely in the working of PRIs. Opinion towards family cooperation evident

from the that out of the total 52, the highest number 34 with 65.38 % representatives opined that their family members have extended the fullest cooperation to participate as the representatives in PRIs. On the other hand 18 with 34.62% representatives opined that their family members are not cooperating to participate as the representatives of PRIs. The over all observation of is that in the study area the majority of women representatives are being extended their family cooperation.

The opinion about the people's cooperation in PRIs shows that the highest number 30 with 57.69% representatives opined that the people in general are not cooperating with the women representatives. And 22 with 42.31% representatives opined that the people are cooperating with the women members.

The opinion about the cooperation of male members in PRIS shows that 28 with 53.85 % representatives opined that the male members are not cooperating with women representatives. And 24 with 46.15% representatives opined that the male members in PRIs are cooperating with women representatives.

The overall observation the is that the majority of women representatives in PRIs are not cooperated by male representatives. Opinion about resolutions moved by or no is evident from is that the highest number 40 with 76.92% representatives have moved resolutions seeking the implementation of programmes in PRIs. And 12 representatives with 23.08 % have not moves any resolutions . The overall observation of the is that the majority of women representatives have moved the various resolutions in PRIs. The status of resolutions moved by women representatives shows that the highest number 32 with 61.54 % representative's resolutions have accepted in PRIs. And 201 with 38.46 % representatives resolutions have been rejected in PRIs. The overall observation is that the majority of women representative's resolutions are accepted in PRIs. The involvement of women representatives in policy formulations shows that the highest 42 with 80.77% representatives opined that they are involving in the policy formulation in PRIs. And only 10 with 19.23% representatives opined that they are not involving in the policy formulation. The overall observation of the is that the majority of women representatives are3 involving in the policy formulations.

The over all observation of the is that in the study area the majority of elected representatives area from medium and small family.

1. In the study area the majority of women representatives are not having awareness of powers of PRIs.
2. The majority of women representatives in the study area are not having knowledge of 73rs amendment act.
3. In the study area the majority of representatives have awareness about the women reservation in PRIs.
4. The over all observation is that the majority of women representatives in the study area not understood the objectives of PRIs.
- 5 The majority of women representatives are participating The over all observation is that in the study area the majority of women representatives are being extended their family cooperation.

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Inclusive Democracy to Achieve Holistic Panchayat Raj

Satyanarayana Kanakala

Talking of the democracy, the first thing that comes to one's mind that India is the largest democracy of the world. It is not only the largest democracy but also a democracy which has been successfully operating for last 65 years. But the second thought that immediately creeps into mind is whether India is a democratic country only when it comes to casting of votes or it's a country, which includes democratic functioning at all levels of government institutions. The reference here is towards inclusive democracy. The difference between Democracy and Inclusive Democracy is same like the difference between an illiterate person who is considered to be literate just because of his/her ability to sign and a literate person who with the help of his/her literacy uses the reasoning faculty and leads one's life.

The term "democracy" originates from the antiquity and denotes "people's power" (from the Greek: demos – "people" and kratos – "power"). Democracy is not confined to merely holding of elections, having parliamentary debates or enacting laws. It is much wider; indeed, the real test of democracy lies in how inclusive it is. Success of democracy is judged by the extent to which people have progressed and is to be measured in terms of the numbers having access and equity in enjoying fruits of democracy. Welfare and care of every single member of the society, especially underprivileged, marginalized and the excluded, needs to be taken into consideration. Inclusive democracy must necessarily evolve into inclusive development; development not taken narrowly as only economic progress but also ensuring economic and social justice to every section of population.

Considering all these factors where one sees the gaps in working of democracy to give equal opportunity to all, where discrimination is still made on the basis of class, caste religion, gender and Economic status. One can conclude that it is only a fiction that India has an inclusive democracy because the above mentioned problems clearly show that it is still a dream and effort should be made to make our democracy more inclusive. No country can be described as being completely democratic but efforts can be made towards providing a just and equal society. There is continuous struggle for recognition of all persons as equal and for their dignity to be maintained. There is an urgent need to bring a change on large scale which can only take place through collective struggle. Inclusive democracy must necessarily evolve into inclusive development (development not taken narrowly as only economic progress but also ensuring economic and social justice to every section of population).

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation in a reply to a query on his "Dream for independent the poorest will feel, in who's making he has an effective voice" Rightly applies to achieve inclusive democracy. After six and half decades of democracy leave most of individuals as distant from having an "effective voice" in the making of their nation as their ancestors dreamt from the colonial rule. Gandhi wanted our democratic institutions to be built on the foundations of PanchayatRaj(PR). Parliament eventually incorporated key elements of the Gandhian vision in our scheme of government, by passing, unanimously, the 73rd and 74th amendments to our constitutions in Dec 1992. When the act came into force it was hailed as "historic" and beginning of a silent revolution in our democratic setup. It was a radical piece of legislation in form and content but, where does it stand now after about 24 years. The shortcomings that PR face today call for a new deal and can bring open chapter for more than half of the people in our villages.

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Panchayat Raj has a long and interesting history that holds an important place not only in the political canvas of India but it has also transcended into the contemporary development debate of India with an extended wing of promise for more inclusive growth; where every common man will be an active player in the making of his own future. The high growth rate is no longer indicative of the high equitable and more inclusive growth. The fact is established that, only an inclusive governance can promote inclusive growth. However, a miracle cannot be expected from local government to drastically increase the income for majority of Indians yet the inclusive governance of Panchayat Raj is more likely to improve the standards of living of vast majority with increase in access to public goods and services such as education, health, drinking water and sanitation etc. In spite of, several researches, reports, surveys, public, people and civil societies' efforts to- strengthening the local government still belongs to a category of yet to be achieved government target.

The contrast between development and inclusive growth is clear in the recently published approach to twelfth Plan where Planning Commission stated "The economy has performed well on the growth front... Growth in 2011-12 is likely to be around 8 per cent. The economy is therefore likely to achieve an average GDP growth of around 8.2 per cent over the Eleventh Plan period..."¹ It further added "Thus poverty declined at roughly 0.8 percentage points per year during the eleven year periods before the Eleventh Plan..." With these figures one can easily draw the contrast that where GDP has grown at 8 per cent per annum poverty alleviation has meager decline of 0.8 per cent annually. In order to establish a positive link between development and role of PRIs in this development debate it is prerequisite to understand the accountability matrix. The accountability matrix introduced in World Development Report, 2004 exhibited that the present relation between the government and the beneficiaries in the development programme has a longer root of accountability where the receiving end of public services/ beneficiaries has no direct hold on the service provider as the bureaucratic model is accountable to higher up rather than lower down. It is the fit of local government/ panchayat raj in Indian context that makes this longer root into a much shorter root; it is so as the beneficiaries has a hold on the service provider in case of collapse in the quality of service. At this point it is important to understand that PRIs can reduce this root of accountability only if it has an active voice as a unit of local self-government with more roles to play in the development efforts of the country. With this background this paper will be examining the basic proposition of brief historical development of PRIs and the contemporary state of PRIs in development debate.

Towards Holistic Panchayat Raj-

Report of the Expert Committee on leveraging PRIs for the More Effective Delivery of Public goods and services chaired by Manishankar Aiyar in three sets, of what the report calls "collateral measures" submitted the suggestions :

First, arguing that "bad Panchayat Raj is perhaps worse than no Panchayat Raj", the report stresses that Panchayat Raj must not deteriorate into Sarpanch raj. To this end, the Report urges that PRIs be structured legally and administratively to function as collegiate bodies, with all elected members being involved in preparing programmes, key decisions being taken by the Panchayat as a whole and not at the whim and fancy of the President, and implementation being under the effective supervision of the Panchayat members concerned and not just the sarpanch. The report points to the "holistic" nature of the 73rd and 74th Amendments and, therefore, the necessity for the holistic approach to the implementation in letter and spirit of the provisions of the Constitution.

Second, the Report dwells at length on the "sound finance;" of the PRIs. The committee requested the 14th Finance Commission to raise the share of PRIs in the divisible pool from the present level 2.5% to 6-7%, and to restructure the current pattern.

Third key set of “collateral measures” recommended relates to the imperative of invoking all relevant provisions of the 5th schedule and part IX of the Constitution, and PESA-Forest Rights legislation, for thwarting the growing menace of naxalism.

The constitution describes PR institutions as “Institutions of self-government” not self-governance, a distinction vital to the affective empowerment Panchayats. Inclusive democracy works when people from all sections of society are empowered to participate in governance, raise objections, take decisions and ensure social and political accountability. Such a vision of democracy requires delegations of power from below and true devolution of power to the common man. The local self-government could be a key realise the promise of Indian democracy in its true sense which is inclusive nature and character.

In this paper a birds view was studied and find the problems in achieving the holistic Panchayati Raj through inclusive democracy as the PR institutions are away from their autonomy, what the constitution expected and why the reservations in the PR institutions failed are also enlighten.

The Recent Changes in the Political Economy of Panchayat Raj

The Ministry of Panchayat Raj since 2006 has published three (biannual) State of the Panchayat Report; initially this report was the principle source of information in the context of effective devolution to the panchayat in different states. Recently the series of five annual Devolution Indices are another document that added to the information. The recent series of Devolution Indices 2010-11 marked the beginning of analyzing the impact of panchayat raj on human development indicators. Apart from effective devolution on all the three Fsi.e functions, functionaries and funds. It has also talked about an ‘enabling environment’ for panchayat raj. The finding ranked Kerala on top on function and functionaries devolution while Karnataka overtakes Kerala in financial devolution. States like Karnataka and Sikkim stands on second and third position in overall ranking. These Indices suggest that the best performed states in the context of devolution are six to seven times better in performance in panchayat raj than the worst performing states. There is considerably large variation in the performance between the states.

However the point which needs attention is that though principally the devolution of functions to the panchayat must be followed by parallel devolution of functionaries and fund but neither best nor the middle and the worst performing states in the Devolution Indices have successfully synthesized the three parameters of effective devolution that is functions, functionaries and finance along with the enabling environment for panchayat raj. In the absence of or in the presence of panchayat raj undermine the capacity of people to plan and implement their development need as per their priority with the help of their elected representatives thus leading to more inclusive development rather than accelerated growth alone.

There is a systematic failure in realization of the fact that the eleventh schedule areas entrusted to the PRIs are implemented by agencies, parallel bodies, bureaucracy and civil societies. It is more evident in an example of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan where primary education is a task for elected local bodies.

The delivery of education service under SSA is through registered societies established by state education departments, NGOs and line departments resulting to poor outcomes of programme. The impact analysis of the programmes may highlight the bottlenecks in the delivery system. Also a comparative study of delivery of public goods and services provided under public programmes would be helpful in bring some of the credits in the account of PRIs. The Cabinet Secretary in October 2004 issued a circular to modify their CSS guidelines to bring the centrality of panchayat in planning as well as implementation. Though the task

commenced but faded gradually without due force from higher authorities. Also Planning Commission circulated a letter in August 2006 recommending States that the Eleventh Five Year Plan of respective states would be considered only if the proposal would be in accordance with the process in Article 243 ZD. With Planning Commission deafness for their own proposal, State governments also adopted the same.

Attributing the failure of public programmes to the states' management failure, Planning Commission failed to realize their commitment for a democratically driven inclusive growth and development.

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

The recent report 'Towards Holistic Panchayat Raj' released on 24th April 2013 have come up with extensive study and made various recommendations to integrate the PRIs in the development process and hence checking the bottleneck that has crept into the system with no PRIs.

The report resulted in issuing of the Cabinet Secretary Circulars [CCS] to all the ministries clearly stating that the recommendation of Expert Committee suggested in report 'Towards Holistic Panchayat Raj' and the need of devolution in the letter and spirit as envisaged in the Constitution. The Cabinet Secretary proposed to the ministries to undertake the task of revising the guideline of their respective CCS and develop a model activity map to be attached with the guideline to illustrate the devolution on all the 3 Fs (functions, functionaries and finance). With this shift it is expected that the desired change in the effort of development specific to poverty elevation and social sector will be followed. Not only making the PRIs more empowered but through them the empowerment of common man/ aam Admi is likely to be seen.

Conclusion

India is moving in the direction of being an inclusive democracy. India has begun to rise from below. The PR has begun to change the grammar of politics. Institutional innovation is the name of the game. The empowerment of historically disadvantaged groups like women, SCs & STs in the PRIs has gone a long way to deepen democracy. Inclusion is a crucial instrument in maintaining high levels of commitment to democracy but also in ensuring the legitimacy of democracy itself. The rationale power for empowering women, SCs & STs is compelling: it promotes growth, reduces poverty and leads to better governance. India has made a departure from 'benefits of growth' and 'trickle down' to 'inclusive growth'. Thanks to Panchayati Raj, the country also moving towards inclusive governance.

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GANDHIAN PERSPECTIVE OF THE PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM

Dr.D.Venkateswara Rao

Gandhi's ideas on democratic decentralization and Panchayati Raj have their roots in his understanding about the role the state and government in the lives of people. On one hand, he says that state had no place in an ideal society; it is inimical to human progress.

State, which is based on power and violence, represents violence in a concentrated form. Hence, there is no room for such institutions. According to him, "political power means a capacity to regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes as perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary. In such a self regulated society there arises no need for an external authority to regulate the conduct of individuals. It is a society free from exploitation, inequality, class domination, class conflict, communal disturbance, strikes and any kind of violence. No society could be built on the denial of individual freedom. In a democratic state, people reserve the right to withdraw their support to the government in case it betrays the masses. But, at the same time, they should not obstruct it by agitating against it, as it derives its strength, vigour and power from the individuals. He was of the opinion that society should be organized in such a manner that the individual gets maximum freedom and opportunity to develop his personality and his character to the fullest extent. He was more concerned with the quality of life of the people.

Democratic Decentralization:

However, what he rejects is the western democratic model, which allows exploitation and denial of justice to the poor in society. He was for Parliamentary Swaraj in accordance with the wishes of the people. He writes in the Harijan in 1946 that legislatures can be useful if they carry out the popular will to benefit the masses. It is good only if the representatives are willing to work for the masses and in accordance with the will of the people. In his understanding, equality was possible only when the ordinary amenities of life that a rich man enjoys are available to the poor also. Only then one can effectively say that one has attained Purna Swaraj or complete self- government.

When asked about power politics, he opined that political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling people to better their condition in every aspect of life. He was of the view that any group or party can serve the people even without capturing political power or government. One can even serve one's own country by remaining outside the government. According to him, people are fully competent to retain political power in their hands to reduce the interference of the state as minimum as possible, and to establish self-government to avoid coercive control. However, Gandhi was not for unrestricted freedom of the individual. With the right education individuals would be able to tailor his needs and adjust according to needs of society and for social progress.

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On democratic decentralization, which is the focus of this paper, the whole basis of his premise was that it could provide individuals the opportunity to participate in the management of their own affairs and self-government. This is particularly true in countries like India where 80 percent of the population live in rural areas. Decentralization is incompatible with force and violence which are the hallmarks of a centralized political and administrative setup. Economic and political democracy is inseparable and economic democracy can reach millions of people in rural areas through mass efforts by the people themselves.

Gandhian Perspective of Panchayat Raj:

The vehicle that was most ideal to initiate both political and economic democracy at the grassroots level was the Panchayati Raj system. Mahatma Gandhi's tours all across the country reinforced his convictions that India would benefit if the villages were governed by Village Panchayats based on the principal of "simple living and high thinking". These were village republics which were self-contained and self-reliant and having all that people want. These were the institutions where minimum standard of living could be accorded to all human beings. An individual had maximum freedom and opportunity to develop his personality to the greatest extent. In these republics there would be a diminution of the state and the roots of democracy deepened. According to him centralization cannot be sustained as a system without adequate force. He aimed for economic decentralization by setting up of Khadi Movement and village industries. This would promote the production and distribution of the necessities of life, promote the interests of the poorest and the helpless, promote full employment of human resources of the society. Such a measure would minimize discontent and provide adequate opportunity for expression of reasoned discontent. Involving the people in such institutions would accord them a new status, which constitutes the strength of a nation. Gandhi wanted villages to be production centres and the towns clearing houses for such products. Each village a little republic, self-sufficient, enjoying maximum freedom for deciding the affairs of the locality. As Ensminger puts it, "with democratic decentralization the administration will shift from making decisions and issuing orders to helping people to make decisions through their Panchayats, Cooperatives and Samithis". He writes that the city people are brokers and commission agents for the big houses of Europe, America and Japan. According to him, "Indian villages produced and supplied to the Indian towns and cities all their wants. India became impoverished when our cities became foreign markets and began to drain the villages dry by dumping cheap and shoddy goods from foreign markets". In the same vein, Acharya Kripalani wrote that the most intelligent and active members who could have contributed to the life of the villages have migrated to cities, to seek employment as the industrial complexes are located there. Gandhi also proposed a scheme of government under the Gandhian Constitution beginning from the primary unit the Village Panchayat to the level of the All-India Panchayat, with the powers being assigned to all levels of the government. He spoke about the distribution of powers and finances to the seven hundred thousand villages which would become the shareholders of those assets. And this in turn would make them responsible for the effective management of these assets. These villages should not only be self-sufficient but also capable of defending themselves, even if need be, against the whole world.

The basic functions he assigns to the Village Panchayat are education, sanitation, medical needs, upkeep and cleanliness of the village wells and ponds and the uplift of the so-called untouchables. During the non-cooperation movement the Panchayat System offered an alternative to the cumbersome English judicial system. These Panchayats functioned as

arbitration courts to dispense speedy justice to the parties. Several thousand Panchayats were established during the non-cooperation movement 'to provide speedy, cheap and efficient justice'. In his Presidential Address at the Belgaum Congress, Gandhi said that the Panchayat was not only a right medium for securing cheap justice but also an instrument for avoiding reliance on government for the settlement of mutual justice. Accordingly, the poor peasant need not go out of his village, spend his hard earned money and waste weeks and months in towns for litigation purposes, if the village Panchayats were equipped with both civil and criminal jurisdiction to dispense justice. Gandhi was of the view that the rajas, zamindars and capitalists will continue to hold sway so long as the common people do not realize their own strength. Only through non-cooperation can the hold of such powers can be stemmed. He stated that every village can become such a republic today without much interference from the present government whose sole effectual connection with the village is the exploitation of the village revenue. Here is a perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-violence rules him and his government".

Gandhi's ideas on democratic decentralization and Panchayati Raj system were not without their critics. As Fesler put it, "the Gandhian approach is an inspiration...to turn the clock back ... to restore traditional values and face-to-face dealing between men. This approach is an attractive picture, a romantic work of art or that of terrifying ideological conflicts". Gunnar Myrdal opined that the village as a basic unit of polity should not be preserved as it is the stronghold of stagnation. The forces of change can be mobilized only by integrating the village into a bigger unit right from the start. Only then can we see some level of socio-economic transformation. Alvin Toffler categorized Gandhi as the thinker of the future, for his is the voice of the age to come and not that which is fading and should fade away. A Utopian, for him, "sought to prepare us for life in a disarmed world. We must pull out of the world of strife and hatred and get ready to work on the basis of cooperation and harmony

CONCEPT OF SMART VILLAGE-A BRIEF REVIEW

Dr.B.V.V.Balakrishna

Andhra Pradesh is committed to achieve holistic, inclusive and sustainable development of the state. The state has a vision "Swarnadhra Vision 2029" to be a developed state and to be among the best three states in the country. To release this vision, the government has adopted the mission based approach to create the social and economic infrastructure: has initiated campaigns to create awareness seeking participation of stakeholders. The Government has constituted Seven missions in important sectors of economic growth and infrastructure.

As an extension of Janmabhoomi-Maa voru, Government of Andhra Pradesh intends to initiate a programme "Smart village-Smart ward" to decentralize governance by delegating power and authority to the Gram Panchayat /ward integrating public services and developmental schemes for effective convergence at village/ward level to promote quality of life of the people and forging partnerships for accelerated fulfillment of its commitment with greater effectiveness and towards creating a Swarnadhra Pradesh.

In tune with the Hon'ble Prime minister 's call to build smart villages government of Andhra Pradesh call to build call to smart villages Government of Andhra Pradesh appeal to ministers, MPs, MLCs, MLAs, ZPTCs, MPTCs, Mayors, Actors, NRIs, Corporate Houses, NGOs and volunteers etc. to partner/facilitate a village/ward by hand holding the development process to rejuvenate new energies among the children, women, all communities with special focus on deprived and marginal groups.

The objective is to establish such partnerships for all 16,383 Gram Panchayats/Wards so that the entire state can be transformed into "Smart Andhra Pradesh". Building on the existing Missions, Campaigns, Grids, Programmes and Schemes of the state and central government, the smart village smart ward programme intends to achieve SMART infrastructure, SMART service delivery, SMART technology and innovation, SMART institutions along with optimal mobilization and utilization of available resources leading to faster and more inclusive growth.

The present paper tries to analyse the concept of Smart Village and examine the challenges before the process of development.

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As an extension of Janmabhoomi - Maa Vooru, Government of Andhra Pradesh intends to initiate a program "Smart Village - Smart Ward" to decentralize governance by delegating power and authority to the Gram Panchayat / Ward, integrating public services and developmental schemes for effective convergence at village / ward level to promote quality of life of the people and forging partnerships for accelerated fulfillment of its commitment with greater effectiveness and towards creating a Swarna Andhra Pradesh.

In tune with the Hon'ble Prime Minister's call to build smart villages, Government of Andhra Pradesh appeals to Ministers, MPs, MLCs, MLAs, ZPTCs, MPTCs, Mayors, film actors, directors, producers, NRIs, NRVs, corporate houses, NGOs and volunteers etc. to partner/facilitate a village/ward by handholding the development process to rejuvenate new energies among children, women and all communities with special focus on deprived and marginalized groups.

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A 'Smart Village/Ward' displays sustainable and inclusive development with all sections of its community enjoying a high standard of living. This is achieved when the village/ward excels in the following human/social/economic/environment development and governance indicators;

1. Every household has vibrant livelihood opportunities and/or micro-enterprise
2. Every household has vibrant livelihood opportunities and/or micro-enterprise
3. Home for all - with access to toilet, safe-drinking water, and power
4. Open defecation free
5. 100% institutional deliveries
6. No maternal deaths
7. No infant deaths within one year of birth
8. Malnutrition free (children below 5 years of age)
9. Zero school drop outs of boys and girls up to 12th class
10. No girl-child marriages (girls below 18 years of age)
11. Functional toilet, portable water, electricity available in Anganwadi Centres, School, health centre, GP Building/Ward
12. Gram Sabha/Ward Sabha held 4 times a year with 2/3rd attendance
13. Every village household has a functional bank account/PM Jan Dhan Bank Account
14. Every farm has soil health card and diversification with livestock, trees, etc.
15. GP/Ward has its own dynamic development plan prepared by community participation
16. Has green trees all over its geographic boundaries
17. Has functional water conservation and harvesting structures
18. Has functional grievance redressal system
19. Has functional Village Information Centre, Village Computer Lab, and Mee-Seva Centre
20. Has telecom/internet connectivity
21. Has functional solid/liquid waste management system

To achieve the 'Smart Village/Ward' status, the community, individually and collectively, will be empowered to take smart decisions using smart technologies and with the support of smart manpower and by managing to be self-sufficient. Parent(s) will be encouraged to bring in innovative ideas, technology and resources and disseminate information on best practices to facilitate and accelerate the process. They may also interface between the community and the service providers to achieve the LAST MILE REACH to the most marginalised and the vulnerable.

Achievement of the Smart Village/Ward status will be monitored on the above listed indicators against the baseline and agreed milestones over the span of five years. Annually, a social audit will be carried out by the community with support from the Partners and service providers to assess the achievement, identify the gaps and modify the plans/strategies to address them. Once a village/ward achieves the key indicators, it will self-declare as a 'Smart Village/Ward' and display it on the village/ward information board erected at a public place/entrance of the Gram Panchayat/Ward office.

Approaches

The 'Smart Village - Smart Ward' program would adopt the following approach in achieving its objectives;

1. Engaging with and mobilizing the community for participatory local level development;
2. Converging government schemes and private and voluntary initiatives with people's aspirations and local potential to achieve comprehensive development;
3. Leveraging the leadership, capacity, commitment and energy of the Partner, who volunteer to join in this task;
4. Building partnerships with voluntary organizations, co-operatives, academic and research institutions;
5. Attention to a life cycle approach;
6. Focusing on outcomes and sustainability;and
7. Above all a participative approach of the GP/Ward with partners to develop and manage for self reliant development.

Growth Strategy for Smart Village

1. Formulate Growth Strategies for the village to make it self-sufficient taking into account the investment climate and protecting native occupation and heritage of the village.
2. If a village is a tourist location, then the growth strategies should be aligned towards restaurants and hotels, transportation services like cabs or buses, vocational training to act as guides, security, working as chefs in restaurants or kirana shops selling the unique products made in the village, pharmacies and hospital services in a mobile van etc.
3. The residents can be trained in providing these services & the funding agencies, Micro finance Institutions or NGOs can be approached

Strategies in Smart Village - Smart Ward Program

The elements and activities of the Smart Village/Ward Program will vary from place to place coordinated at the Mandal/Urban Local Body Level. However, the Parent(s) should aim to play a catalytic role in its support to the community by adopting a combination of cross-cutting strategies in tune with the 7 missions, 5 grids and government policies and development schemes.

Smart Village concept is an extremely difficult subject to handle because of the range of its content and huge variety of social, economic and ecological situations in which it takes place. Smart Village generally refers to the process of improving quality of life and economic well-being of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas but it

is a new emerged concept.

Suggestions

1. Investment on human resource should be done. Core leadership training programs should be taken up by the government on war footing basis, to train top level middle level and field level leaders.
2. Participatory democracy should be practiced respecting every citizens ideas by settingup suggestion boxes and creating websites and means to analyse and followup suggestions, as there are many solutions found at the rural level it self.
3. Ethics and values should be take the center stage, once again in our society and this can come only from the leadership training programs of the government.
4. The government must provide more funds to the development of the smart villages. (but it is great burden to newly emerged Andhra Pradesh)
5. Offer more prizes to smart villages
6. To inspire NRIs should be encouraged to come on board to become part of the program. (Adoption of villages)

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GRAM SABHA & WARD SABHA

* Sri V. Venkateswara Rao

** Smt. G. Indira Kumari

ABSTRACT

In a bid to make the year of Gram Sabha an eventful and meaningful period for future planning the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has issued specific guidelines. The objective is to make unabated inroads for the developmental schemes across the rural areas in the country. Under the guidelines the activation of Gram Sabha, Ward Sabha and other People's Assemblies during the year of Gram Sabha is one of the foremost target for accomplishment.

Since, for the rural local governance to be effective, energizing Gram Sabhas is the real challenge. There is a need to evolve mechanisms for regular and meaningful meeting of the Gram Sabha, active participation of its members and monitoring its functioning. Good practices that provide for people's assemblies below the Gram Sabha such as Ward Sabha, Mahila Sabha and Bal Sabha should be promoted. Formation and federation of Self Help Groups of women on the pattern of Kudumbshree of Kerala would in particular expedite roll out of the proposed National Rural Livelihood Mission.

As the area and population of a Ward Sabha is smaller and commonality of interest greater, people would discuss with close involvement matters that they wish taken up through the Ward Member to the Gram Panchayat and evolve a consensus. Evidentially, the ward Sabha etc., need to meet before the Gram Sabha meeting.

The States should make appropriate provisions in their State Panchayati Raj Acts to provide for this. The draft 'Model Panchayat and Gram Swaraj Act' circulated by this Ministry and available on the website of the Ministry. This also includes provision for Gram/Ward development Sabhas; assignment to them of powers vis-à-vis economic, social welfare and monitoring; power of recall of chairpersons of Village Panchayats; citizen report cards; sumoto disclosure of information, social audit etc. Provisions of PESA Act would be a good reference for other Areas as well in this regard.

Accordingly, the scope of deliberations in the Gram Sabha meetings can be enhanced to make these more interesting and meaningful, such as:

- (a) Gram Sabha can be an effective forum for information sharing on programmes, schemes, good practices and matters of common interest for which assistance from the State and Centre is available through different policies and programmes.
- (b) Gram Sabha can discuss issues such as (i) quality of life and Millennium Development Goals, (ii) Social Security, gender justice, female feticides, substance abuse (alcohol, tobacco and drugs), hygiene, nutrition, (iii) sustainable development, diversification of agriculture, better cropping practices, opportunities for improving incomes, drought / flood management, soil & water conservation, (iv) infrastructure development, etc.

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- (c) Gram Sabha should fully participate in planning implementation and performance review of various schemes viz., BRGF, NREGAM NRHM, SSA, ICDS, IWMP, RKVY etc. in preparing plan and shelf of projects, realistic assessment of resources should clearly articulate the role of Gram Sabha in their Policy / Programme /Scheme.

The role & responsibilities of Sarpanch, Panch and Secretary should be clearly defined. Sarpanch & Panch should represent the voice of people and not be rendered as mere functionaries of the administration. Secretary, while being accountable to the Gram Sabha through Gram Panchayat, should be duly protected from local pressures.

These guidelines are a follow up of the Recommendations of the 2nd ARC on Local Self Governance that the Gram Sabha occupies a central place in the entire scheme of local governance because it provides an opportunity to the individual villager to participate in the local decision making process. The village plan emerges from the Gram Sabha. Moreover, there is a direct relationship between proper functioning of the Gram Sabha and empowerment of the PRI's.

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Role of Gram panchayats to implement Poverty alleviation programs in rural India.

K.ANANDAKUMAR

Introduction:

The broad strategy of rural development in India is reflected in our constitution. This strategy is based on the progressive elimination of inequalities among the different sections of the society in the country. India has strong hierarchical social system with different social and economical inequalities in rural areas. Keeping this in view, the Government of India has taken initiatives for rural poverty alleviation. The initiations have been taken from the First Five Year Plan, it is envisaged that the successive five year plans would create a better, richer and fuller life for the thousands of rural communities in India (Vinod Kumar Lawania, 1992). The first ever rural development program in India was initiated by the Government of Uttar Pradesh in 1948. This was known as Etawah pilot project (Kavoori, J.C. and Singh, 1967). With the same basic philosophy, the National Extension Service was started in 1952 with the establishment of 55 community development projects across the states of India. By the year 1963, the community development program was extended to cover the entire country by a network of 5,265 community development blocks (Chattopadhyay, B.C, 1985). In the Five Year Plan seeks to a process of transformation of the social and economic life of the village is envisaged (Planning Commission, 2007). The Community Development Program is the method and Rural Extension is the agency. The community development program was the process by which the efforts of the people are to be united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions to integrate these communities in to the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress (Mukherji, B. 1967). The major focus of this program was to induce people's participation in rural development and is aimed at utilization of local available natural resources (Singh, K. 1986).

The Government of India's poverty alleviation programs are broadly of five categories; they are Self Employment Programs, Wage –employment programs, Area Development Programs, Social Security Programs and other programs such as Integrated Rural Development Program, Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, Annapurna, Antyodaya Anna Yojana and Pradhan Manthri Gram Sadak Yojana, National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme and Farmers' Debt Relief Scheme. As Katar Singh pointed out the Community Development Program proved to be one of the under achievement programs and the failure was more deplorable in the agricultural sector. This failure is due its diffused character, as it did not give sufficient and direct emphasis on agricultural production. The financial, material and administrative resources of Community Development Program were spread too thinly all over the countryside to provide any tangible impact on agricultural production (Singh, K. 1986).

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The Community Development Program (Dak, T.M. 1957)¹ criticized on the ground that it has not been a poor people's program, benefited the richer sections and it has employed a large army of untrained workers who lacked coordination among themselves. They were less a source of help to the villagers and more a source of confusion. Lack of fundamental responsibility at the block level led to a good deal of confusion and interdepartmental jealousy. It is in this regard, the Government of India has given considerable importance to rural development (Dak, T.M. 1957).

Initially, India adopted a development strategy which was based on the trickle-down concept. When that. T.M. Dak, *Social Inequalities and Rural Development*, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 1982, from Program Evaluation Organization, 1957, p.18., Dube, 1958, *India's changing Villages*; Human Factors in Community Development; Ront ledge and Kegan Pant, Ltd, Government of India, 1961, the Report of the study Group on the Welfare of the Study Group on the Village Community, Vol. I, New Delhi: Ministry of Community Development and Cooperation, Planning Commission, Third Five Year Plan, p.342. Development strategy failed to meet the basic needs of millions of rural poor, the need for direct intervention in favor of the poor was recognized. Consequently, the government embarked on the preparation and implementation of comprehensive antipoverty programs. Major focus of analysis was put on The Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP), The Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment, Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY), Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MGNREGA) Act.

Objectives of the study:

1. To find out the role of Gram panchayats to implement the rural poverty alleviation programmes.
2. To analyze the rural development programmes for better implementation of rural poverty.

Methodology:Secondary sources of data was used for this study .Data from Ministry of Rural Development,Planning commission's data ,various Books ,journals ,magazines ,internet search also used for this study purpose.

Critical Analysis on Rural Poverty Programs:Government of India has taken care to help the poor and empower them. And appropriate schemes are incorporated in evaluation studies found that the Five Year Plans have not been fully helpful to serve the purpose (Minhas, B.S. 1974). It was also found that the needy sections of society could not enjoy the benefits of the development plans. The Government of India, especially under Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi announced the Twenty Point Program to give a new orientation to growth by emphasizing the welfare of the common man in general and weaker sections of the society in particular. The program stressed the core points of development like land reforms, irrigation and power. It was focused on every needy section of society like workers, land less, labourers, students, the unemployed and the middle class with an integrated approach development (Bhattacharya, Vivek Ranjan, 1983). Thus, the integrated poverty driven program was initiated. The program is popularly known as the Integrated Rural Development Program.

The Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP) was a Centrally Sponsored Scheme which is in operation in all the blocks of the country since 1980. Under this scheme Central funds are allocated to States on the basis of the proportion of rural poor in a State to the total rural poor in the country. Subsequently, (Ganga Kalyan Yojana, Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment, Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas, Supply of Improved

Tool Kits to Rural Artisans etc., were introduced as sub-programs of IRDP to address the needs of the rural population. These schemes were, however, implemented as 'stand alone programs', Poverty alleviation programs of rural India, approach which substantially detracted from their effectiveness (Planning Commission, 2007).

The program has been financed partly by government subsidies and partly by bank credit. The District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) set up especially for the purpose of implement the program. The management of the program has been coordinated at the State level under the guidance of a High Power Coordination Committee. The responsibility for providing the policy frame and general guidelines for implementation has rested with the Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment at the national level.

There have been some modifications in the scheme as a result of feedback from the field as well as findings of the concurrent evaluations. There has been a shift in the program strategy towards achieving qualitative results and investment in infrastructure. A new category of beneficiaries has been identified for assistance under the program. This category comprises of educated unemployed rural youth living below the poverty line, who are eligible for subsidies of up to 50% of project costs, subject to a ceiling of 7,500. The IRDP suffered from several defects which include sub-critical investment, unviable projects, illiterate and unskilled beneficiaries with no experience in managing an enterprise, indifferent delivery of credit by banks, overcrowding of lending in certain projects such as dairy, underemphasize on activities like trading, service and even simple processing, poor targeting and selection of non-poor (Planning Commission, 2000).

As regards the performance of Integrated Rural Development Program in Andhra Pradesh, leakages, retention of assets, employment and income gains have been noticed (Dev, S. Mahendra and P.Padmanabha Rao, 2002). The leakages of the IRDP have been assessed through three parameters viz., entry of non-poor, non-retention of assets by the poor and the expenditure incurred in obtaining the scheme. Entry of non-poor into the program is found. It is obvious from the empirical observation of the study that the retention of assets was very low among Scheduled Caste households (Dev, S. Mahendra and P.Padmanabha Rao, 2002:60).

As economically viable and technically feasible schemes, the programs have brought substantial changes in the lives of rural poor. It has aimed at improving the economic conditions of the rural poor, generation of additional employment and sufficient assistance in the form of productive assets (Dev, S. Mahendra and P.Padmanabha Rao 2002:60). But, the study explored the some important issues relating to problems in the program implementation from selected villages.

The Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM) was launched in 1979, aimed at providing basic technical and managerial skills to the rural youth from families of below the poverty line to enable them to take up self-employment. The program, especially, focused on, in broader sense, agriculture and allied sectors, industries, services and business activities. In 1983, objectives were subsequently enlarged to include wage employment for trained youth (Dev, S. Mahendra and P.Padmanabha Rao, 2002:60).

The TRYSEM program was evaluated for the first time in a Quick Study by Planning Commission (June to August 1993) conducted through independent research institutes/organizations. The main findings of the evaluation study are area skill surveys were not carried out, of the total number of beneficiaries, who got training under TRYSEM, roughly 47.19% were unemployed after the training and 32.54% took up self-employment after training of whom 12.41% took up employment in trades other than those in which they were trained, a majority of the beneficiaries were faced with lack of funds as a major reason for not taking up self-employment independently after the training, a major proportion of

TRYSEM trainees did not apply for loan under IRDP, inadequate number of assistance and most of the beneficiaries felt no improvement in their socio-economic conditions as a result of TRYSEM training (Planning Commission, 2002). The report also speaks in terms of targeted goals that TRYSEM has been a weak link in the overall strategy for self-employment in rural areas.

The program was targeted to improve the employability skills for the youth through trainings. But, the training imparted in several instances was not related to the capacity or aptitude of the trainees not to demand for the respective skills. According to the study of Ankita Gupta (2006), many TRYSEM beneficiaries viewed that the program simply is a means of receiving a stipend during the training period and not as a way of developing genuine skills which would help in self employment (Ankita Gupta, 2006). A study of D.K. Ghosh (1993) in West Bengal noted that the program resulted in limited success of the program, lack of supportive actions to make viable to combat rural unemployment and poverty is noticed (Ghosh, D.K. 1993). In general the results have been mixed and there is large scope for improvement.

Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) was launched in 1982 as a third sub-program of IRDP. Initially, it was implemented in only 50 districts as a pilot scheme. Later, it was extended to all districts of the country. The basic objective is to provide income generating skills and activities to poor women in rural areas, thereby improving their social and economic status.

The Document of Ninth Five Year Plan found several shortcomings which has hindered its successful and effective execution in some States. Several Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have become defunct over time. The reasons include improper selection of groups; lack of homogeneity among the group members; and selection of non-viable economic activities which are mostly traditional and yield low income. The linkages for supply of raw material and marketing of production are either deficient or not properly planned. The result is DWCRA groups have become vulnerable to competition (Ghosh, D.K. 1993).

In Andhra Pradesh and newly formed Telangana as well, the DWCRA program is intended to improve the survival of young children and women and the quality of lives of women and children, and to achieve a significant growth in the income of poor women through appropriate interventions and to organize women in groups to create a demand pool on the existing delivery system along with creation of awareness to strengthen their bargaining capabilities. Available research found that there has been slight improvement in the levels of household income of most of the beneficiaries studied. However, in majority of cases, the improvement does not seem sufficient to enable them to cross the poverty line. Even though a majority of the beneficiaries could not derive much income from the activities, a few of them have made marked improvement in their asset position (S. Mahendra Dev P.Padmanabha Rao, 2002:86).

The Government of India has introduced SGSY merging several self-employment programs in 1999 to rectify the situation of lack of proper social intermediation, absence of desired linkages which were targeted earlier on self-employment programs such as Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans (SITRA), and Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY).

The scheme of SGSY is funded by the Center and the States in the ratio of 75:25. The SGSY is conceived as a holistic program of micro enterprise development in rural areas with emphasis on organising the rural poor into self-help groups. Capacity-building, planning of activity clusters, infrastructure support, technology, credit and marketing linkages are also emphasized the program to promote a network of agencies, namely, the District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs), line departments of state governments, banks, NGOs and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) for the implementation of the program.

The SGSY recognizes the need to focus on key activities and the importance of activity clusters. The program has in-built safeguards for the weaker sections. It insists that 50% of the Self-Help Groups must be formed exclusively by women and that 50% of the benefits should flow to SCs and STs. There is also a provision for disabled beneficiaries. The program is credit driven and subsidy is back-ended. The key feature of the SGSY is that it does not seek to promote individual economic activities. It seeks to promote self-help groups that are trained in specific skills so that they can formulate micro enterprise proposals. Such projects are based on activities that are identified for each block on the basis of local resources, skills and markets. The projects are supported by bank credits and government subsidies.

Under the program, the families of Below Poverty Line (BPL) are identified through BPL census duly approved by the Grama Sabha for assistance. The objective of the program is to bring every assisted family, especially women above the poverty line within three years, by providing them income generating assets through mix of bank credit and government subsidy. Another important objective was that the identified and assisted family should be able to earn 200 per month in a period of 2 to 3 years. The program envisages promotion and marketing of goods produced by the SHGs through institutional arrangements, consultancy services and development of markets. Until the end of 2004, more than nine million SHGs have been formed in India (Anil Bhumali, 2005).

Jawahar Rozgar Yojana as a rural wage employment scheme was initiated by merging the National Rural Employment Program (NREP) and the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Program (RLEGP) in 1989. The main feature of the JRY was that the implementation functions were devolved to the Grama Panchayats to ensure better utilization of funds. According to a mid-term appraisal of the Ninth Plan done by the Planning Commission, the JRY suffered with providing the adequate employment, lack of resources and violation of material –labour norms and corruption (Planning Commission, 2000) and could not provide adequate employment.

The second stream of JRY was merged with Employment Assurance Scheme at the end of 1995. Under the third stream, special and innovative projects such as those aimed at the prevention of labour migration, the enhancement of women's employment, special programs through voluntary organizations for drought-proofing and watershed development. A review of the program after 1992-93 revealed that the employment of the person was inadequate in terms of requirement and did not provide enough income to the poor (Planning Commission, 2000). The program gave preference to communities of SCs and STs and free bonded labourers in Andhra Pradesh. The types of works undertaken under JRY are building construction, lying of roads and side drains (S. Mahendra Dev P.Padmanabha Rao, 2002). The study found that JRY has benefited the poor sections of the society. It is also observed that there is substantial increase in the family income of the SCs beneficiaries. But, in case of STs, and BCs, there is not much increase of the family income in this study (S. Mahendra Dev P.Padmanabha Rao, 2002).

Employment guarantee scheme was experimentally started in 1965 and was subsequently expanded as part of an Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP) (Hema Arora, 2005). To implement a basic set of social and an economic objective, the Common Minimum Programs (CMP) was announced in 2004 to address the hunger and food security in rural areas. In August 2005, the Indian Parliament passed the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MGNREG) Act. This is hailed as one of independent India's most ambitious interventions to address rural poverty and empower poor people. The NREGA follows a set of legally enforceable employment norms. Its aim is to end food insecurity, empower village communities, and create useful assets in rural areas. It is based on the assumption that every adult has a right to basic employment opportunities at the statutory minimum wage. Under the scheme, one member of every rural poor family is

guaranteed 100 days of work at the minimum wage of 60 a day. All rural poor are eligible, not just those designated below the poverty line (BPL). One-third of the beneficiaries must be women. If five or more children accompany their mothers to any site, the implementing authority must appoint a woman to look after them on the site. Panchayats at district, intermediate and village levels are entrusted with the work of identifying and monitoring the project, together with a program officer. Social audits of the work are expected to be done at gram sabhas. Work will, as far as possible, be provided within a radius of 5 km. The work includes water harvesting, drought-proofing, and micro and macro irrigation works, renovation of traditional water bodies, flood control barriers and rural connectivity. But, The World Bank (2009) has described the National Rural Employment Guarantee (NREGA) scheme as a policy barrier hurting economic development and poverty alleviation. It is also noted that various schemes of the Indian government like NREGA, watershed programs and schemes for development of small and medium towns are acting as “policy barriers to internal mobility”. The internal mobility, the report argued, is necessary as “lifting people out of poverty requires shifting populations from villages to cities”. The World Bank has also insisted that the process of migration should be encouraged (World Bank, 2009). It is clear from the Report of World Bank that the process of urbanization from rural areas is also a development. It is obvious, based on Report of World Bank 2009 that the NREGA and other programs of rural development and eradication of poverty are highly focusing on rural settlements.

Farmers’ Debt Relief Scheme was intended to contribute to poverty reduction. The World Bank has also suggested that the debt relief is essential in 21 poor countries especially in Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) (The World Bank, 2006). But, in India, the debts were highly in the agriculture sector. Thus, The Government of India has recently (i.e. in February 2008) announced the scheme of Debt Relief for the small and marginal farmers. The scheme is targeted to benefit nearly 3 crores of small and marginal farmers and 1 crore ‘other farmers’ (Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 2008). The cost of the scheme of the Government of India is about ` 60,000 crore. Under the scheme, credits facilitated are provided by banks to the farmers for their operational cost of agriculture. The banks of credit facilitated are commercial banks, the regional rural banks and the cooperative credit societies. Marginal farmer is defined as one cultivating agricultural land up to 1 hectare or 2.5 acres. Small farmer is defined as cultivating between 1 hectare and 2 hectares i.e. less than 5 acres will get full debt waiver of their short term crop loans as well as all the overdue installments on the investment credit. The other farmers, i.e. owning more than 5 acres or more than 2.5 acres or more than 2 hectares, will get OTS relief. In the state of Andhra Pradesh, the worth of debt relief is 12000 crores.

.Conclusion:

Poverty alleviation programs constitute an important dimension of the public policy thrust to bring about rapid reduction in rural poverty. In recent poverty eradication phenomena, two major changes have occurred. Wage employment and credit-cum-subsidy self employment have been formulated and notified. Further, these programs are now targeted to enhance the income generation opportunities for poor families. A review of various developmental programs taken up since independence indicated the need for a new comprehensive program for the eradication of poverty in rural areas. Though a number of programs have been in operation yet, expected results were at for distant from its targeted objective. Moreover, most of the studies revealed that the Proaroms have in large elevent fented to include poorest of the probe fa.... . The studies also indicated that much of the programs have been corrupted by administrative mal practices. It was, therefore, proposed that such target oriented, especially

with pro-poor concept, and community based organization's involvement for the self-sufficiency and economically vibrant schemes has to come up.

Some of the field level evaluation studies on poverty alleviation programs explored the loopholes in implementation in terms of negligible assistance, lack of supervisory staff at field, absence of coordination with different authorities and communication problems, insufficiency of supervisory staff, wrong selection of beneficiaries, lack in timely funds released, lack of education and skill development initiatives among the poor families and lack of awareness on different schemes among people. The selection procedure of the beneficiaries is mostly biased and wrong. There are malpractices in the programs have emerged from the evaluation studies. Some revised programs are being implemented all over the country to empower and provide basic amenities such as employment, housing, education, rural infrastructure and health. But, according to various evaluation reports of the Planning Commission, and academic and independent researches most of the programs were not up to the mark in achieving the structured objectives.

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WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN PANCHAYATI RAJ – A CASE STUDY OF FOUR MANDALS IN EAST & WEST GODAVARI DISTRICTS, A.P.

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Gender equality is one of the prominent issues of the world today. Women are not in a position to feel equal with men in many spheres of life despite, inspite of the fact that they constitute half of the population. A predominantly liberal concept of democracy is a fair procedure for ensuring women participation in political decision making. There is a general opinion that democracy will fail in its objective if a vast number of citizens, i.e., women, lack equal opportunity to participate in the government decision - making process.

In the 19th century, women's movements were emerged to obtain their due share in every field of life, i.e., for education, employment, property and political rights. These movements enabled women to achieve admission into every human activity to an extent on par with men.

Almost all the countries in the world have made some legal and institutional arrangements for the upliftment of women to bring them out from their traditional bondages and to play an important role in the economic and political fields. Though there have been a continuous and voluminous efforts to bring women into forefront through governmental and non-governmental organizations, the position of women did not improve significantly. In spite of the fact that women are prime source of income in agrarian and rural economy, they experience discrimination in regard to being accepted as member of the deliberative or judicial bodies of local governments. When employed they are paid low wages despite doing work similar to men. The scholars observed that economic and political discrimination of women is an universal phenomenon. For instance, male domination in politics at the top is total in Japan while Scandinavian women in lead in terms of their political participation. However, the women in Japan take an active interest in civic matters implying that local politics are heavily female centered. The discrimination of women is relatively low in countries which contain the homogeneous population, higher income levels, and institutionalize support systems which can provide for greater leisure or freedom to women. In contrast, the Indian women are averse to sustained political goal for multiple reasons. Among others the importance attached to family life, fear of social marginalization, absence of strong supportive institutions emerged as the primary reasons for low participation of women in politics in India.

In India the women's representation in the legislatures is only 11 percent. In the Lok Sabha it ranges between 4 percent and 9 percent in the different elections. Even in U.S.A. and Britain, the participation of women in legislative bodies is only 20 percent and 22.2 percent respectively.

To make women to participate more in the politics, the Constitution of India guaranteed to all women equal political rights. It recognized the political rights of women, without any discrimination, distinction or qualification to participate in the decision-making process at all levels of Nation. After 60 years of tremendous strides in democracy and development, women's

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participation and role in public life has not made much progress. Many studies on women both in India and abroad indicate that the patriarchal nature of social organization is responsible for their inferior position. These studies also indicate that the low participation of women in politics is because of their greater attachment to their traditionally depicted role and not because they lack political awareness. Many scholars have highlighted the need for women to be involved more actively in decision - making at all levels of governance.

The level of participation of women in politics is generally depends upon the general position of women in the society. The socio-cultural practices in the society to a large extent determine the life of women in the society. Historically women were supported to carry forward the traditions, norms and the values of the society. The process of socialization that they undergo in their families does not prepare them for non-traditional roles.

During the Independence Movement the Indian women under the leadership of Dr. Annie Besant, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Dr. Muttu Laxmi reddy led movements for women suffrage and entry into legislatures. They were succeeded in their attempts partially.

Basing on Article (15 (3) of the Constitution, to make women to participate more in politics the Government of India made a special provision for women in the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts of 1992. Under these Acts 33 percent of seats in every tier of local bodies are reserved for women making democracy participative. In the 2013 Gram Panchayat elections,33% reservation facility, was enhanced to 50%.So women got their legitimate share in proportion to their population in the local body institutions. But at the central level and state level, women reservation bill did not get the approval of the parliament.

After enactment of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, “Andhra Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act 1994” was enacted by the Andhra Pradesh Government in 1994. After enactment this Act local body elections were conducted four times in Andhra Pradesh. In the July 2013 elections 33% reservation for women enhanced to 50%. There are 21,590 Gram Panchayaths in the State. Out of this 81,491 Gram Panchayaths were declared as general category, 3,958 were declared as SC category, 1,218 were declared as ST category and 6,986 were declared as BC category. Again out of the total number of Gram Panchayaths 50% of the Sarpanch Posts and 50% of Ward Member posts were reserved for women. In all the 50% posts (Sarpanches and ward members) reserved for women were filled by the women candidates including SC, ST, BC women through electoral process in the July 2013 Gram Panchayath elections. So first time according to their due share women entered into the positions of power in all local bodies. In some cases more than half of the seats were occupied by the women candidates, because of some women contested in the general category and won the elections.

This attracted me to take up the study on women leadership in Panchayath Raj about their recruitments, experiences and performances.

Study was conducted in four mandals of East & West Godavari Districts in Andhra Pradesh with the following objectives

- 1) To understand the sources of motivation of women aspiring larger role in politics;
- 2) For identifying the problems confronted by women while performing their public role, and

3) To assess the perceptions and level of awareness of women elected to form the local government.

The study has six hypotheses which are formulated on the basis of the review of literature besides consideration of contextual necessities. The necessity in this study arises out of the enhancement of reservation facility to women in the local bodies. The study gains significance as it is intended to analyze the sources of motivation and the sources of influence on women in public roles in a rural context.

Hypothesis of the Study:

The following form the hypothesis of the present study.

- 1) Reservation facility, spouse encouragement, family antecedents and political party patronage are sources to women to seek recruitment as a Member of Local Body.
- 2) Facility for reservation to contest in elections is a greater source of motivation than family and caste to women.
- 3) Lack of knowledge, spouse attitude and social norms are the hurdles for the effective functioning of women as representatives.
- 4) Spouse attitude is perceived as a factor capable of influencing relatively more in the performance of women as representatives than extrinsic factors.
- 5) Socio - economic status of the women influences relatively more than the educational status on the perceptions of the women in legislative roles.
- 6) Women representatives belonging to upper castes possess relatively more awareness than their counterparts belonging to reserved categories on issues of governance.

Participation of the women in the political process, especially at the local level, definitely can facilitate for the development of the society. The involvement of rural women in the developmental process is vital, for 'village' forms the basis for social and economic organization of India.

The study was conducted in Tanuku, Buttaigudem Mandals of West Godavari District, Ramachandrapuram and Kadiyam Mandals of East Godavari District in A.P. The sample for this study is hundred women, elected to the GramPanchayats in the select mandals of Andhra Pradesh. The sample constitutes over 25 percent of the population for this study. The data are collected through both primary and secondary sources. A questionnaire was prepared for this purpose and the data raised are content analyzed by following the categorizations made for the purpose.

The hundred representators who formed the sample are approached personally by the investigator and their profiles have been prepared separately for each of them. In other words all the case study techniques have been followed to raise the data and keeping in mind the smaller size of the sample, and the critical importance of the information gathered the data are analyzed in simple arithmetic percentages.

The study has resulted useful in more than one way. It could also provide for revivification of the many proportions relating to women currently in vogue, besides resulting in the following observations.

The hypothesis formed for the purpose of the study are found to be adequately supported by the data. Though the universe of the study is limited to the 4 districts in Andhra Pradesh of India, the observations largely provide extrapolation of the same to the other regions. Heterogeneity is inherent in the entire Indian territory for the society itself is

vertically stratified. As such the findings of this particular study are to a great extent in agreement with the observations of the scholars on women in India.

The observations of the present study are:

- 1) Institutional arrangement in the form of reservation policy is the prime source of motivation for women to seek entry into politics.
- 2) Institutional arrangement in the form of family as a support structure is crucial for women to contemplate active political participation.
- 3) Patronage from political parties is essential for an individual to seek legislative recruitment.
- 4) Spouse encouragement is a pre-condition for women to aspire for a public role.
- 5) Social norms are noticed to be the primary reason for women to fail as effective legislators.
- 6) Communication between women and other legislators during the deliberations is highly formal and nominal.
- 7) Majority of women are not conversant about either the structure or the functioning of the government in which they are members.
- 8) Though the majority of women in their public roles perceived the spouse role as sharing of their responsibilities, they are becoming proxies to their husbands in performing their public role. Without their husbands help, they are not in a position to perform their duties.
- 9) Women are influenced in their legislative role more by their personal, socio-economic status than their level of education.
- 10) Women belong to the higher social status strata possess relatively more political awareness than the women of lower social status strata.
- 11) Most of the women seem to be happy with their being the members of local government while being unconcerned about the business being transacted in the body.
- 12) Majority of women present themselves in public roles as representing either their spouses or families rather than their gender (women).
- 13) Lack of knowledge, tradition and financial dependence are reasons for the failure of women to act independently.
- 14) A majority of women who seek legislative recruitment in local governments belong to either middle or lower middle classes.
- 15) Women are relatively strong in their social and economic roles when compared to their political roles.
- 16) Character assassination and criminalization did not emerge as factors inhibiting the women's participation in civic matters.

The result of a survey indicates that nearly 80 percent of men and women favour active participation of women in politics and over 75 percent of men and women favored reservations for women in legislatures. Yet women are found to be marginalized even at the level of local government. An in-depth examination reveals that there is no direct correlation between literacy and their political performance. One of the many reasons the investigator identified for the failure of women to be able to perform their public role is their inability to establish a nexus with bureaucrats like men. Further it is also found that women perform such public roles which do not require their full-time.

Source:

Women leadership in Panchayathi Raj a study in select mandals of East and West Godavari Districts in Andhra Pradesh – UGC Minor Research Project 2014 by Dr. M. Jhansi

TOWARDS HOLISTIC PANCHAYATS-DEVOLUTION OF POWERS TO PANCHAYATS-FUNDS, FUNCTIONS AND FUNCTIONARIES

Dr. B. Naga Padmavathi & Smt. K.

Vani

Panchayat Raj in India has a long history going back into a millennial past but articulated during the Freedom Movement most conspicuously and perspicaciously by the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, specifically in “*A Gandian Constitution for Independent India*”, written by Shriman Narayan Agarwal, with a foreword by Gandhiji in which he assures the reader that the ideas set out on the book are, indeed, his own.

Gandhi advocated that India lives in her villages. Indian independence must begin at the bottom, thus making every village a republic or panchayat, enjoying full powers. He remarked that true democracy cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the centre. It has to be worked from below by the people of every village. These dreams lead to the inclusion of Article 40 in the Directive Principles of the State Policy of Constitution of India. Which says “The State shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government”. Almost after five decades of independence, in the year 1993, the Government of India took a revolutionary step by making Panchayati Raj Institutions a part of the Constitution, through 73rd amendment.

Panchayat’ denotes the institution of local government in rural India and Panchayati Raj institutions (PRI)s refers to the three tiers of Panchayats – at the level of the village, block (mandal) and district.

Mandate for Panchayat Raj

The mandate for Panchayat Raj institutions (PRI)s is enshrined in Part IX of the Constitution. The provisions of the Constitution are limited to:

To have a democratically-elected three-tier Panchayat system responsible to Gram Sabhas (Village assemblies) comprising the entire adult population of all habitations in a village-level panchayat.

- Reservations for women and historically disadvantaged sections of society (SC, ST).
- For STs, this was complemented by PESA – The Provisions of The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 – mandated by the Constitution to safeguard and promote the interests of the tribal communities living in their habitations in Fifth Scheduled areas.
- Guaranteeing regular, timely elections to the panchayats at all levels, organized by an independent, qualified, statutory State Election Commission and establishment of state finance Commission once every five years, that would determine the division of State revenues between the State and its Panchayats.

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In short projecting Panchayat Raj as a demonstration of faith in the people to manage their own affairs by securing to the people “Maximum Democracy and Maximum Devolution”, to quote late Prime Minister Sri Rajiv Gandhi it is a transfer of “power to the people” and a social revolution.

Devolution of Powers to Panchayats-Funds, Functions and Functionaries

However, the processes and content of the devolution of ***functions, finances and functionaries*** are vested entirely in state Legislatures. However, the spirit of the Constitution is clear that the States should devolve by law appropriate responsibilities to the panchayats to let them function as units of ‘local self-government’. It means that devolution of power should not only be by law, making the panchayats accountable to the citizen for its actions, but an appropriate support structure and methodology for exercising powers so devolved should be put in place and that the panchayats are able to discharge their responsibilities.

Devolution to local government essentially has three components – devolution of appropriate functions with authority to make related expenditure decisions, fiscal devolution in ensuring availability of funds with the lower tier of government to carry out the devolved functions, and administrative devolution of putting in place functionaries,. For operationalising these devolved functions there is also need to put in place many collateral measures, so that the lower tier of government can exercise the authority unhindered within the established legal and administrative framework. The 73rd and 74th amendments to the Indian Constitution concerning devolution to local governments are probably the most elaborate amendments so far;

Most states in India have neither devolved clearly the ***functions, funds and functionaries*** (except Kerala , Karnataka, Punjab, Tripura, West Bengal, and Rajasthan), nor put in place other collateral measures to the extent made by the Constitution. There could be several reasons for such failure of which the important ones are:-

1. Lack of political will to devolve power to lower level elected governments.
2. Lack of administrative will to bestow authority by the bureaucracy.
3. State’s inability to create required posts in panchayats and reluctance and even opposition by State government employees to work under the panchayats.
4. Departmental opposition to part with their budgetary allocation in favour of panchayats for carrying out functions which have been devolved to the panchayats, which is partly due to the compulsion of bearing the share of CSS (Central Sponsored Scheme) out of their own budget.

As a result of all these factors, devolution has been scanty in most States. Also, whatever ***functions*** have e been devolved, the same have not been done in most cases through supporting legislation. According to the Manisankar Ayyar’s Committee report of 2013 ***Towards Holistic Panchayat Raj***, there exists a cross-cutting commonality on the devolution to the village panchayats of certain activities relating only to some ‘matters’ listed in the 11th Schedule. Thus, 16 States of the country including Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Tripura, Tamilnadu, etc., readily transferred matters relating to social and farm forestry, drinking water, roads, culverts, markets and fairs etc.,

With respect to the Mandal Parishads many states transferred social welfare, some states devolved Minor Irrigation, water management and watershed development. States also generally not interested to devolve activities relating to the matters of technical training and vocational training, libraries etc.,

With respect to District Parishads many states interested only to devolve education and social welfare, primary health centers, dispensaries and family welfare. Only 6 states

including Kerala and Karnataka devolved the matters of public distribution system, technical training, and vocational education and rural electrification.

District Planning Committees (DPCs) are required to “consolidate” the draft district plan. This implies: (a) The District plan must emerge from plans prepared by each village, intermediate and district panchayat and municipality for the functions assigned to them. (b) When plans from all these levels reach the DPCs, they should “consolidate” these into a “draft” district development plan and forward them to State governments for finalization;

The situation in the States with regard to the constitution of District Planning Committees (DPCs) is uneven. Thus, Kerala’s “People’s planning movement” has attracted world-wide attention. But in some States, While DPCs have been constituted; they are yet to be made fully operational. In other States, district planning of a kind is operational but the DPCs have not been constituted in accordance with Constitutional provisions.

Further many states in the country not providing adequate **funds** to the panchayats to meet the tasks assigned to them, whatever funds that are provided have not always been on time. The 73rd amendment to the Constitution enlarged the functional domain of the CFC’s by requiring it to recommend ‘measures to augment the Consolidate Fund of a State to supplement the resources of Panchayats’. Accordingly, the 13th Finance Commission recommended a total share of 2.28 per cent of the Central divisible pool for local governments. These funds are transferred to the States for being passed of local governments for their own purposes. The 13th FC, however, has now set strict conditions to prevent these funds from being delayed or diverted also; the Commission has broken new ground by allocating for the first time a percentage of the Central revenues for local governments. However, conditionalities on better accounting measures and local revenue collection have been imposed in order to avail of topping up grants. There has been a recent tendency for States to impose conditions that restrict the use of these funds by panchayats. Further it is a mandate that states has to set up State Finance Commission (SFC) every 5 years. However, SFCs are not being set up by the states in time. Many states are also not acting on several of their recommendations. In some States, the state share of the CSS is made to be paid by the PRIs out of untied fund, which totally distorts the purpose of providing untied fund and takes away the discretion of the PRIs in expenditure decisions.

Regarding the Devolution of **Functionaries**- the most important weakness is the lack of adequate manpower for carrying out core functions of the panchayats. Most of the State governments have not created required number of posts and even the existing posts remain vacant. Local governments are still considered subordinate entities to states largely entrusted with agency functions, predominantly funded by tied revenue transfers from above and critically dependent upon deputed state government staff with little accountability to the panchayats for implementation of their schemes. Moreover panchayats are subordinated and bypassed by other state institutions, to which the bulk of local governance responsibilities are entrusted.

Such faulty design of devolution, practiced so far in most States, is the main reason for the weakness in the present panchayat system. Without correcting those systemic defects, the panchayats cannot be leveraged to improve delivery of local goods and services, comparable to a local government.

Priority Areas:

The priority areas for immediate concerted action towards holistic Panchayats are:

1. Conduct of regular and timely elections to panchayats should be the first priority of the state and central governments

2. Detailed Activity Maps to be prepared in each State as a prior exercise for devolution for the major areas of service delivery, such as health, education, nutrition, water supply, sanitation, various other civic services, employment generation, poverty alleviation and local economic development, livelihoods, agriculture and allied sectors, social security and disaster management etc. Activity mapping should also clearly state out where the function is a devolved core function, where the panchayats function as agencies and where they have a mediating role. The MoPR (Mapping of Panchayat Raj) should come out with incentives for the States to take up the process and facilitate the same by organizing professional support. The Himachal Pradesh Government rewards panchayats and related departments for properly implementing activities from the said map.

3. Based on the Activity Maps, the opening of a "Panchayat sector window" through the inclusion of an appropriate budget line in the budgets of line departments of the State government to ensure the flow of funds to the panchayat. Statutory funds should be transferred to each panchayat separately, without unnecessarily making block or district level allocations. This will ensure that each panchayat is treated as a separate and distinct entity and does not suffer because the slowest moving panchayat has yet to catch up with the rest. This will incentivise each panchayat to function efficiently, as it will be rewarded for its efficiency. That will also improve competition of functioning among the panchayats. Panchayat Raj Department of Rajasthan State devolving funds to her PRIs in these lines. With current capabilities of IT-enabling of panchayats, this is surely possible. Both non-programmatic funds entitlements (such as Central and State revenue shares) and programmatic funds should flow through these arrangements. Panchayats are also advised to improve their own resources.

4. In conformity with the devolution of Functions and Finances, the devolution of **Functionaries** to the level of panchayat to which any given activity has been devolved, a Panchayat Service Commission to be established in each State for recruitment of various cadres of panchayat employees, unless the State Public Service Commission is entrusted with that responsibility. The Commission that is in charge of recruitment of employees should examine performance based promotions. Panchayats must be allowed to secure the services of qualified technical personnel to undertake their developmental works. The State government may facilitate the process by accrediting selected firms/consultants or setting pre-qualification standards for such consultants as well as fees to be paid to them to avoid separate approval.

The phenomenon of panchayat representatives performing quasi executive tasks on behalf of the panchayat and recoupment of their expenses through local adjustments needs to be recognized and addressed in a systemic fashion. One way is to enhance the honoraria paid to members, particularly standing Committee chairpersons and others. For this purpose, studies need to be conducted in each state and by the Central government, to ascertain what the true costs of administering service delivery are, following which various options could be explored on how they could be met.

5. Capacity Building and Training/Gram Swaraj

While hands-on capacity building and training can come through greater empowerment of the panchayats, formal capacity building and training exercises are also important. Capacity building includes: Office space in a modular mode; Staffing commensurate with the responsibilities of the panchayats; Connectivity, especially cyber connectivity, to promote IT-enabled e-governances; rapid fund transfers and Village Knowledge Centres.

The priorities in training are: Shifting both financial and human resources for training to the satellite and distance-training mode, in addition to the inter face method. This has been successfully demonstrated at the *Karnataka State Institute for Rural Development, Mysore*, the *Yaswanth Rao Chavan State Academy of Development Administration Pune (YASHADA)* and *Kerala institute of local administration*. Subject-wise training through regular, organized interaction between departmental officers posted to the district with members of the relevant standing Committees of the Panchayats at all three levels. This has been successfully demonstrated at the *local government associations in Kerala*, and *SIRD, an Institute of training and Reaserch to PRIs representatives, Mohali, Punjab*.

Recalling Gandhiji's vision of empowering panchayats Dr. Manmohan Singh, former Prime Minister of India said "Panchayat Raj is the medium to transform rural India into 700 million opportunities. The key instrument in *Integrating economic reforms with institutional reforms in the countryside* is Gandhiji's farsighted goal of *Purna Swaraj* through *Gram Swaraj*".

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Gram Sabha: The Rusting Weapon

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Development of India depends on the development of its rural villages that is what Gandhiji said. "True democracy cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the centre. It has to be worked from below by the people of every village". It was the dream of our great Mahatma Gandhi. His dream started to become a reality by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA), which strongly recommended Grama Sabha. Grama Sabha is the assembly of all voters of a ward and a forum of direct democracy where every voter gets opportunity to participate in local governance. With the two fold objectives of participative planning and participative administration the Government of Kerala enacted The Kerala Panchayat Raj Act (KPRA) 1994 and stated the twin objectives as the introduction of the KPRA. Which devised 'Grama Sabha' with powers and responsibilities of participative planning, deciding, implementing and monitoring of developmental projects. It is observed that being a strong weapon for true decentralisation, Grama Sabha is not functioning up to the expectation due to so many reasons like lack of effective participation, political influences, coordination problems, policy issues etc. This paper throws light in to the functions, responsibilities of Grama Sabha and it searches the reasons of poor performance of Grama Sabha in Kerala and suggestions for the empowerment and effectiveness.

Features of Grama Sabha

As the third tier system of government, the PRIs got more powers but what is remarkable is the creation of fourth tier of governance, Grama Sabha. The Grama Sabha has been conceived as the basic body to ensure people's participation in local governance. Article 243 (A) empowers

Grama Sabha to exercise powers and perform functions at the village level as the Legislature of a state may, by law, provides. The amendments do not specify any functions to be performed by the Grama Sabha but it is left to the States to statutorily entrust the Grama Sabha with vast powers to function as a legal entity. Kerala is the pioneer, passed a Conformity Act which provides vast powers and functions to the Grama Sabha. Grama Sabha is an assembly of all voters of a ward. Ward member is the convener of Grama Sabha and Grama Panchayat President presides over the Grama Sabha function officially. One Grama Sabha must be held in every three months and quorum of Grama Sabha is 10% of the total voters in the ward. If the Grama Panchayat fails to implement the decision of the Grama Sabha, the Grama Panchayat has to explain the reason for it in the next Grama Sabha. That shows the power of Grama Sabha in local governance.

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Powers, Functions and Rights of Grama Sabha

The duty of fixing the roles and responsibilities of Grama Sabha is entrusted with the state governments by the constitution. Following the 73rd constitutional amendment, Kerala Government has made bold attempt to make decentralization a reality by providing various powers to Grama Sabha through the Conformity Act. The major functions are collection and compilation of data & details, formulate and prioritize local development schemes and projects, prepare and approve the list of beneficiaries, based on norms for all development schemes of Grama Panchayat (GP), Block Panchayat (BP) and District Panchayat (DP), assist the Grama Panchayat to implement development schemes effectively, do voluntary work and mobilize resources necessary for development projects, suggest location for public amenities like streetlight, water tap, public well and irrigation, identify problems and suggest remedial measures, disseminate information about sanitation, environment protection and pollution control and sensitise people against social evils, cultivate harmony among different sections of people and organize sports and arts festivals, observe and encourage the activities of Non Governmental Organizations, verify the eligibility of beneficiaries of social security pensions, subsidy etc., collect details about the estimate of development schemes, know the rationale about the decisions taken by the Grama Panchayat regarding the village, assist the employees of Grama Panchayat in sanitation work and do voluntary work for garbage disposal, assist in public health activities, especially in prevention of diseases and social welfare, and discuss audit reports placed before Grama Sabha and report to the Grama Panchayat the opinions, suggestions and recommendations.

Responsibilities of Grama Sabha

Just as the Grama Sabha has powers and rights it has to fulfill certain responsibilities too. The important responsibilities are disseminate information about development and welfare activities, participate in Programmes related to Health Development and Literacy and do campaigns, collect basic socio- economic data, report to the GP about development activities, adopt right steps to persuade people to pay taxes, repay loans, improve public sanitation and promote social harmony, mobilise local resources to enhance revenue of GP, monitor development schemes as voluntary organizations and create an information system to pass quick information in case of epidemics and natural disasters.

Issues and Problems of Grama Sabha

By analyzing the facts and figures and interactions with stake holders, it was identified that there are so many reasons and issues for the poor performance of Grama Sabha. The employees and the students fail to participate since Grama Sabha is conducted in the day time. And our education system is a failure in inculcating a character among it's' citizen to participate in the local governing system. The public lack confidence in politicians and in governance which leads to the limited participation in the function. The leadership quality of the Elected Representatives is a challenge which diminishes the quality of preparatory works that becomes one of the major reasons of Grama Sabha failures. Moreover, Elected Representatives reluctantly agree that Grama Sabha quorum is an adjustment that means even the signature of voters are in the minute book who has not attended the meeting(ie through waking attendance registers and left and right hand signing by supporters of ward member). Some Elected Representatives fear that if Grama Sabha is conducted systematically, many of the political agenda may not work. The hectic work in the Grama Panchayat Office leads the

officials to avoid doing preparatory works effectively. A great majority of Grama Sabha participants are females who are forced to participate because of their membership either in Kudumbasree or in MGNREGS.

Grama Sabha the Supreme Authority

If an elected member fails to convene three successive Grama Sabhas consecutively, the member will be disqualified. This clause itself shows the importance of Grama Sabha in Local Governance. The supremacy of Grama Sabha is revealed by S.3 (7) of the KPR Act, which states that the Village Panchayats, the BP and the DP shall give due considerations to the recommendations and suggestions, if any, of the Grama Sabha. The Grama Sabha has the right in pointing out the major developmental areas, issues and problems of the society etc. Again it has got the right to suggest developmental projects, monitor the implementation of such activities etc. The ultimate right of Grama Sabha in beneficiary selection for all the three tiers is specified by the State Government. In the case of PRIs, basically the Grama Sabha will identify the beneficiaries. Since the DP and BP cannot convene the Grama Sabha, they will get beneficiaries selected through the respective Grama Panchayat who will carry out selection process through the Grama Sabha and give the selected list to Block or District Panchayat for approval. This would mean that the number of beneficiaries to be selected by each Grama Panchayat would have to determine in advance by the District and Block Panchayats. The KPR Act states that if any circumstances, any decision of Grama Sabha could not be implemented, the President shall report the reason therefore, before the Grama Sabha.

It is the right of the people to have Grama Sabha, to express their needs and perception about the development and social security. The agenda can be expanded if the voters have any suggestions. There must be a majority support from the participants for Grama Sabha to take decisions. Immediately after the Grama Sabha, the major decisions taken must be read in the meeting for the people to listen to. It is the right of the Grama Sabha member to sign in the minute book. And the last year expenditure, next year budget, details of the projects must be presented in the Grama Sabha. (KPR 1994 sections 3 (6), 215 (15), and 254(36))

How Grama Sabha can be empowered?

If the Grama Sabhas are conducted systematically with the active participation of people many corruption problems can be reduced and the practice of good governance would be enhanced. The powers and rights of Grama Sabha show that it can be used as a weapon for good governance. But the aforementioned issues and problems make this weapon unutilized or underutilized effectively for the benefit of others than the public and is getting rusted. A team effort is required by the people, elected representatives and Grama Panchayat staff to empower Grama Sabha as envisaged by Gandhiji. More over some changes in the policies and capacity building activities will also contribute to it.

The political parties should consider public interest instead of political interest. Even the selection of candidate for the election is very important. The ward member candidate must have some minimum qualities of a leader like communication, coordination etc and work for the 'Probono publico'(ie for the benefit of people). And these parties should show dignity by not influencing Ward

member's decisions or not directing to take unethical decision, if he is balanced, transparent and maintain equity.

As a social worker, the elected representatives should make attempts to study about their Ward and Grama Panchayat. He should identify all types of resources available locally with the support of local leaders. The Grama Sabha meetings should be informed about the resources and problems at the time of planning. All the Grama Sabha members have to be informed in advance about the date, time and venue of the meeting. The venue must be a convenient place for all the members to come together. Finally, the prime responsibility of ward member is to convene Grama Sabha effectively. So he must use all the possible resources for it. If he is able to conduct a grama sabha effectively half of his work is over and he will always be in the heart of the poor people and become a social leader. Because the people enjoys the real freedom as they expected to receive during the dawn of August 15, 1947.

Nowadays Kerala government has started thinking about a new bill called Right to service bill which provide a minimum service to all the citizens. Introduction of this bill indirectly says about the negative attitude of the staff. So the government servants should develop their attitude to support the people in need. They should give importance for providing support to the elected representatives for conducting Grama Sabha effectively. He should serve the people not the Government.

Some policy level changes are required to empower Grama Sabha. Our education system should be modified to inculcate positive attitude among the students to contribute for their nation and native people. The Grama Sabha time can be a flexible time even after 6.00 p.m. which will invite more participation from the students and employees. The role of training is not a new thing to capacitate elected representatives, officials and general public. So, well scheduled and structured trainings will support the knowledge level all which definitely reduces the stigma among the aforementioned groups.

All the voters of a ward whose names are in the electoral poll are members of Grama Sabha. So it is the responsibility of citizens to participate in the Grama Sabha. It is observed that only less than 15% of people are participating in the Grama Sabha, and the participants are in a way regular "customers". Unfortunately, others do not give much and /or ignorant about importance to this constitutional responsibility. Otherwise we can say that they are not motivated enough to participate in the Grama Sabha. As the CAA suggests, the four grama sabhas in a year, ie first for planning, second for beneficiary selection, third for monitoring and fourth for the social audit, are the official venues of the people for participating in the Local Governance. They will get real exposure to each and every aspects of all the developmental projects carried out by the Local Governments. Through this citizens can directly participate in the administration process. The Grama Sabha decisions do not have validity if there is no quorum. That means at least 10% of the number of voters of its area must be present in the Sabha. It is the responsibility of the Ward Member to convene a Grama Sabha within 15 days, if there are 10% voters from the ward give a written submission for the same. That shows the people's right to conduct a Grama Sabha if they require. Not only voting but to actively participate and involve in the Local Governance is the right and responsibility of each citizens.

Conclusion

We all have the responsibility to strengthen our Grama Sabha by active participation because strengthening villages was the dream of Gandhiji whom we call as father of our nation. His dream started to become a reality when the 73rd constitutional amendment came in to force. But it is still in the infancy stage due to the inactive Grama Sabhas. If we fail to use a well defined and well structured system like Grama Sabha, the thoughts on good governance will be a distant dream to us. So our Grama Sabha must be empowered with people's participation. It is the foundation stone of Panchayati raj system. An effective functioning Grama Sabha can control the local governance effectively. The people themselves should understand their powers in governance. It is the people who have the ultimate power and not with the elected representatives. The elected representatives are entrusted to look after the "swachatha" (peaceful life) of the people according to people's discretion and aspiration. The elected representatives are like the Bharatha in Ramayana, to preserve the culture, dignity and improve wealth of panchayat and at the same time a positive, inclusive and equitable development in the local bodies for the people. Bharatha lead a simple life during his tenure, ruled the ayodya on behalf of Rama, increased the wealth and prosperity. The prosperity, happiness of the people during his tenure was much more and even that can given if Rama was there. The elected representatives, officials, and social workers, who are works for the same objective and stand in different sides of the task can think Baratha and act for the 'Probono publico' by reading the mind of public through grama sabha. Grama Sabha can be used as an effective weapon for good governance and welfare of people provided the people must be empowered and participation must be increased.

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ROLE OF DALIT WOMEN IN PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA

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"In the patriarchal system, there are lots of struggles for women to win the election. And with in the system, Dalit Women have to struggle more than other women. It is very difficult for them to win the election because nobody believes that they have the ability to carry out panchayat works. Every one plays politics with them and against them just because they-dominant castes and men-never want Dalit Women to control the Panchayat administration-Men never accept Women's leadership and there is need for specific attention to this by making proper use of the reservation policy as Babasaheb's blessings to us. Dalit Women have to reap the benefits of this opportunity by actively engaging themselves in creating models of leadership.---Lakshmiben, Village Panchayat President, Vadodara District, Gujarat".

Women's participation in main stream political activity has important implications for the broader arena of Governance in any country. Direct political participation of Dalit Women in local Governance is a central human right in itself and enable the realization of a host of other human rights. Political voice and decision making power concerning basic services, economic development and social justice are critical factors in challenging and transforming structural caste – class – gender discrimination and enabling Dalit Women to realize their fundamental rights. Political participation also demands accountability to guarantee and respect these women's equal political voice and development. These requires a transformation of power relationship both within institutions of governance and in the Women's social environment.

Recent legal and policy reforms in India to ensure the representation of marginalized social groups in decentralized governance, including Dalits and specifically Dalit Women, through constitutionally mandated reservations in Panchayat Raj Institutions. They demand analysis to determine, that the way Dalit Women are enabled to claim their right to political participation in local governance, and the extent to which this participation is an effective tool for empowerment and realization of human rights for excluded social groups.

PRIs in India – A Back Drop:

During British Rule in India, in 19th century the local self government was introduced first in town and later in villages. In 1869, the British Institutionalize these local bodies into Quasi – Official committees make them fragile and ineffective. There were attempts to revive local governments by few British Viceroy's such as Lord Rippon. He led the foundation of modern local government through his resolution in 1882. There were several legislations passed thereafter to democratize the local institutions.

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The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee in 1959 observed lack of people's participation and suggested a set of institutional arrangement. The three - tier system was introduced to organize and manage the rural development activities and to make participation meaningful and effective. The committee – the status of women in year 1974 strongly recommended the establishment of statutory women's panchayat at village level. Recommendations were proposed for the transitional measure to break the traditional attitudes in the rural society.

Ashok Mehta Committee set up again to revive the Panchayat Raj in the 1977 during the Janata Government at the centre. It recommended the creation of two – tier system, Zilla Parishad at district level and Mandal Panchayat for cluster of villages.

Both the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee and Ashok Mehta Committee gave less emphasis on women's participation. The former provided for the co-option of two women members in the constitution of panchayat, one from general category and one from SC/ST. Only two women were co-opted / nominated (selected unanimously) for their reserved seats along side the male members in the group of 15 to 19 members. Co-option or nomination of women was not democratic and served as a drawback to Dalit Women, if they got elected would mostly be the employees of the dominant caste members and their economic dependency would hinder their political to be assertive.

The later phase of reviving decentralized government arrived with 73rd Constitutional Amendment. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act was enacted on 24th April, 1992 provided an opportunity for involving women, SC and STs in mainstream political, social and economic decision making process. This amendment provided 33% reservation for women. Article 243 D of the Constitution provided reservation for SCs and STs in all tiers and all levels of Panchayat in proportion to their population in their region.

In panchayats across the country, Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) constitute 42.3%, SCs-13.7% while STs constitute 14.6% of all ERs. Further, among the EWRs, almost one third belong to the deprived sections I.e., SCs and STs. The practical impact of this revolutionary constitutional provision would only be evident when these EWRs and SC and St. ERs, are fully empowered and made aware of their rights and duties.

Key Issues and Challenges:

The key issues and challenges regarding women SCs and STs are:

- These ERs face socio-cultural exclusion and discrimination and therefore, have greater difficulty in performing their roles.
- *Often, ERs from marginalized groups have low self esteem and confidence level.
- ERs from marginalized groups tend to be inexperienced and often have no previous exposure to political and administrative functioning.
- Women ERs are bogged down because of the triple burden of roles and responsibilities-house work role, rural economy role and their public elected representative role.
- EWRs are often not able to travel for training exposure.
- ERs from marginalized groups often lack exposure to formal education, legal literacy and general awareness.

- The proxy participation syndrome is still continuing whereby these ERs are forced to continue to function as dummy candidates, due to pressures of prevailing dominant role players.
- These marginalized section ERs also victims of oppression; violence verbal, non-verbal, physical, emotional and even sexual abuse; continuing exclusion even in the public domain of panchayats-exemplified in instances of being stopped from hoisting the National Flag, being stopped from occupying the chairperson's seat, being offered tea/water in different utensils, being hushed into silence when they try to make a point in Panchayat meetings, not being allowed to conduct the Gram Sabha, suggestions being made by them not recorded in meeting resolutions, inequity in fund allocation to Panchayats headed by these sections.
- There is lack of specifically designed focused training campaigns and lack of hand-holding support beyond training for the marginalized categories of ERs in the early part of their tenure.
- There is a lack of support services for EWRs. Although many states have increased reservation of seats for women to 50% in PRIs, setting up of child care centers and the Grievance Redressal Committee for lodging complaints of sexual harassment (as per Supreme Court guidelines) lag behind.
- In the Schedule 5 areas, Gram Sabhas have been given special powers through the Panchayats Extension Scheduled Areas Act, 1996 with respect to land acquisition, control of minor water bodies, issue of license and permits for mining of minor minerals, management of minor forest produce, control of intoxicants and liquor etc., The ERs and Gram Sabhas of this region need to be enabled to undertake this task.

Recommendations :

- Devolve greater functions funds and functionaries to Panchayat, institute quotas of Dalit in the local and district police forces and establish a specific office in each district acting as a support mechanism for Dalit.
- Give Gram Sabhas a greater power to monitor the functioning of Panchayat and decide on budgets and allocations of funds and other resources.
- Develop national perspective plans with explicit short and long term goals for the overall development of Dalit Women within fixed time bound targets and allocate separate funding for these plans.
- Enforced land reforms.
- Establish small fund to provide limited basic financial support for election costs.
- Establish a minimum salary system for all Panchayat President posts and members' post at the higher tiers.
- Government official in charge of the Panchayati Raj should follow the work progress and check the accounts.
- District collectors should organize monthly meetings with all the village panchayat president.
- Organization of training programs for women.
- Implementation of strict government rules to eradicate the presence of proxy candidates.
- Every 5 years, evaluate the performance of the Panchayat institutions.
- Trainings for Dalit Women, form and strengthen the actual networks of Dalit Women Panchayat.
- Widespread social education campaign through media.

There are major weaknesses in the current interpretations and implementation of reservation in Panchayat Raj which reduce the ability of Panchayat to fulfill core objectives of equitable development and social justice. So, reforms must recognize that the political participation of Dalit Women can't be viewed in isolation. Creative ways must be explored, with Dalit Women and non Dalit Women, Dalit men, to capitalize on the success stories of Dalit Women's political leadership. Efforts must lead to supportive environment for these women's political participation in order to transform access and control to and over resources and benefits in the society, promote human rights culture that itself demands a responsible governance and equality for all.

However, Dalit low status in the society does not change. They are respected as president but not as Dalit women.

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EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN PANCHAYAT

Lt.U.Lakshmi Sundari Bai

Introduction:

The term Panchayat means an assembly of five elders elected by villagers. Panchayat Raj is a system and process of governance. Democracy means power springing from the people. Panchayat Raj was not a territorial government but rather an approach to administration guided by and visited in the people themselves. Aristotle said that this is the best possible system of government and administration.

Self government, Self management ,mutual co-operation and sharing equality, freedom, brotherhood all could be practiced and developed far better if man lived in small communities. This is being to be realised by forward looking thinkers even in the west.

There was a saying that India is like a village, so India will be developed if the development occurs at village level. There are two major responsibilities, which the institution of democracy must exercise. First is financial discipline, second is protecting and safe guarding the weaker sections, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, minorities, women and other disadvantaged sections of society. If anyone wants to climb higher, he should reduce the burden from his shoulder. So, central should some responsibilities at Panchayat level. Democracy will not be a success unless it was built on the foundation from below. Development is obtained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.

Now my point is about women representatives. Most of the women representatives will work as proxy candidates under the supervision of their guardian example under the guidance of her husband. Though our society is male dominated but change will take place slowly after some time. Previously grampradhan are from higher family or from near and dear. Now this is totally changed. All community people are participating in the elections and concern authorities are giving priority according to their strengths and weaknesses.

If the family members of the women representatives co-operates then only she will achieve the things whatever she wants in the village. Every person in the village wants that pradhan who would work for the well-being of all and not for a particular group of people in the village.

According to my point of view elected candidates should be educated and she will move freely with higher officials and interact with Government authorities. Not only that but also she will be aware of things in our constitution. I believe that women can work equally to men.

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In every village there are so many problems like unemployment, electricity problems, irrigation and planning. Every grampradhan should make effort to solve those problems as early as possible.

Conclusion:

True Democracy cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the centre, it is worked from below by the people of every village.

Women Empowerment in Panchayat Raj Institutions

J. Madan Mohan

Importance of Women Participation

Women's participation may be used both for support by an agency and as a control device by the law-makers. Participation may be direct or indirect, formal or informal; it may be political, social or administrative in nature. Women's participation in Panchayat Raj institutions may take many forms. It refers to all those activities which show the women's involvement in the processes and administration, that is, participation in policy formulation and programme planning, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes meant for development target groups. In developing societies the traditional definition of people's participation often becomes irrelevant due to lack of time, initiative, and resources of the citizen who fails to show the necessary enthusiasm or cooperation towards governmental programmes meant for their benefit. The state not only plays the key role in attempts at socio-economic transformation and modernization but also in promoting, what is called institutional participation. Government aid the government sought to create an institutional infrastructure to promote popular participation. Panchayat Raj and community development programmes were introduced mainly so solicit women participation in the development administration of the government. The community development programme was a method of soliciting community participation to assist the government authorities in improving the social, economic and cultural life of the women in the rural areas.

Constitutional Provisions and Policies for Women

Before coming to the real picture of women's participation in the Panchayat activities, it is essential to have a focus on the constitutional provisions which have been provided them for their development. Immediately after the framing of the Indian Constitution, certain provisions have been made in the Constitution in order to make them equal with their male counterparts. The Preamble of Indian Constitution recognizes the principles of social, economic and political justice to all its citizens and also equality of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all.

The Fundamental Rights as guaranteed by the Constitution (Part III, Articles 12-35) tries to remove inequalities which Indian women had suffered a lot. In this regard, Article 14 promises equality before the law and equal protection by the laws. Article 15 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race caste, sex or place of birth and also provides that the state may make special provisions for women and children. Article 16 guarantees equality of opportunity in public employment. Article 23 prohibits traffic in human beings as well as forced labor.

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Besides these important provisions in the Fundamental Rights, some guidelines are also given in the Directive Principles of State Policy (Part-IV, Articles. 36-51) which are non-justiciable. Article 51(e) (Fundamental Duties, Part IVA 42nd Amendment Act, 1976) directs the state to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounces practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

Besides these provisions, some seats are reserved for women in legislative bodies starting from grass root institutions to the Union Parliament. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts (1992) facilitating women participation in Panchayat Raj system are as follows.

- i) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct elections in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat [Article 243D(3)].
- ii) Not less than one-third of the total number of offices of chairperson in the Panchayats at each level to be reserved for women [Article 243D (4)].
- iii) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes of the total number seats to be filled by direct election in every municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by to different constituencies in a municipality [Article 243(3)].
- iv) Reservation of offices of chairpersons in Municipalities for the Scheduled Castes scheduled tribes and the women in such a manner as the legislature of a state may by law provide [Article 243T(4)].

The 84th and 85th Amendment to the Constitution will also expect one-third of the total number of seats in the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies to be reserved for women including those from the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. All the Five Year Plans have given importance for the development of women, with a major objective of raising their economic and social status.

Despite all such constitutional provisions, there is no satisfactory development in their social status. Because they are not yet behaving as active citizens and now they are living in a very parochial traditional culture. In order to study the political behavior of women, an attempt has been made to study their electoral behavior which is the only indices of the political behavior of women as a whole. By studying the electoral participation of women of Hindol Block, we can know to what extent their political development has been taken place since independence.

Women and Panchayat Raj

The entrance of elected women representatives (EWRs) into the grassroots polity through elections to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in massive numbers is a relatively new political phenomenon in India. Article 243 D introduced through the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution reads as under :- (1) Seats shall be reserved for – (a) the Scheduled Castes; and (b) the Scheduled Tribes, in every Panchayat and the number of seats so reserved shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in that Panchayat as the population of the Scheduled Castes in that Panchayat area or of the Scheduled Tribes in that Panchayat area bears to the total population of that area and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat. (2) Not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to Scheduled Castes or, as the case, may be, the Scheduled Tribes. (3) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the

Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat. (4) The offices of the Chairpersons in the Panchayats at the village or any other level shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide: Provided that the number of offices of Chairpersons reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the Panchayats at each level in any State shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of such offices in the Panchayats at each level as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the State or of the Scheduled Tribes in the State bears to the total population of the State. Provided further that not less than one-third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women.

Education and Women Empowerment

The first and foremost priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grass root problem. According to Mahatma Gandhi, "If you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate an entire family." Our predominant patriarchal system doesn't provide enough chances for women to have higher education even if they wish. Girls should be motivated to take up higher education. Universal education for all below 14 years should be strictly implemented. Gender sensitive curricula should be framed at all stages of primary education to address sex-stereotyping menace. It is also necessary to sensitize the other sex towards women. It is important to usher changes in the societal attitudes and perceptions with regard to the role of women in different spheres of life. The education and empowerment of women throughout the world cannot fail to result in a more caring, tolerant, just and peaceful life for all.

Panchayat Raj Institutions and Women Empowerment

The report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India recommended statutory status for all women's Panchayats with clearly demarcated functions and resources and active links with Gram Panchayats. However, it was apprehended that all women panchayats may also lead to marginalization of gender issues on women's concerns and would not get reflected in these bodies. Therefore, it was thought that collective empowerment through representation in democratic process would give them voice and feeling of solidarity. New interests groups and issue-oriented groups will emerge giving rise to new local women leadership actively participating in the decision-making and mobilization. This became a reality with the enforcement of 73rd Constitution Amendment Act and large number of women joined election fray as candidate as grassroots level.

Problems and Challenges:

There are also challenges and problems for women panchayat members. Effective participation demands skill knowledge and attitude which is at a large extent conspicuously absent in majority of women. The need for systematic training and orientation is therefore necessary to empower the women members to exercise their authority and to access the resources available to transform the existing conditions of existence to a better one.

Poor performance of women panchayat members has gained a wider academic attention in the country. The studies carried on participation of women in Panchayats so far have addressed broadly three issues. Firstly, the inability of women Panchayat members, presidents and vice-presidents in carrying out their functions in the Panchayats. Under this kind of studies it is reported that because of illiteracy and lack of experience women Panchayat leaders are unable to discharge their duties and exercise their power in an efficient manner. Thus they become easy preys in the hands of the men folk (husbands, fathers, father-in-law etc,) who pretend that they themselves are the rightful occupiers of these offices and many of them carry visiting cards calling themselves "sarpanchapati" (Tandon, 2004).

Secondly the oppositions and problems posed by the male dominated society to the women Panchayat members have been addressed. It has been reported by several studies that the patriarchic social order comes in the way of women's' effective working as Panchayat leaders. When some women leaders become more assertive, the men folk abuses by calling them as brazen and shameless (Jain, 1996). Thirdly the lack of involvement of women in Panchayat Raj institutions has become another issue of the focus.

It is observed that women Panchayat leaders consider their positions in Panchayats as ornamental in nature and they feel that maintaining family pride and culture is of paramount importance to them. Such women Panchayat leaders do not mingle with rural women folk and try to address their problems. They ritually attend the Panchayat meetings and fail to contribute to the process of governance (Banerjee, 1998). It is observed that most of the members of Panchayat from reserved constituencies are illiterates and inexperienced and are controlled either by the relatives or the vested interests, so the very of purpose of reservation introduced is defeated. Banerjee (1998) observes that women from the lower socio-economic order have been emerging as effective leaders of Panchayats. In fact, her study shows that women from the well off sections of the society lacks initiative and are dummy representatives who are controlled by their family members. This raises an important issue where in the understanding that social standing facilitating political participation is not found evidence.

Conclusion:

Reservation provided for political empowerment of women and weaker sections is much appreciated. It gave social justice and promoting equality to these sections of the society. It also raised the status of rural women. But it is noted that there are many problems and challenges, which have become obstacles for the women's active political participation in panchayats. Hence, to overcome these problems and challenges, there is need for education and orientation of women panchayat members.

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GRAMA SWARAJ

G.MARY KRUPA BAI

THE CONCEPT OF GRAMA SWARAJ:-

The concept of Grama Swaraj is very ancient .The world Grama Swaraj includes the progress of zilla parishad,mandal parishad ,and also Grama panchayat .The Result of Grama Swaraj is around development of a village.Then the village appears beautiful,progressive and scientific and technological unit.

VILLAGE A MODERN SENARAI:-

Not just smart cities there is a need to make smart towns and smart villages too.

India many people lives in villages but some people in towns.so we have to show more concentration on villages.every village must include human/social/economic/environment/literary development along with good governance.

GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY ABOUT VILLAGE:-

According to gandhiji:The development of our country depends upon the development of our villages.our villages are basic units of our country.When every villages go forward for development then only country will be in a position to reach heights.Every village must maintain cleanliness,attraction,and self sufficient.village governance must be depend upon the principle of Ahimsa.The leaders of the village should prepare the list of the citizens in a record.By rotation they will participate in the progress of the village.

The governance of the village should be maintained by the 5 members.In the village administration men and women should participate.All the members should have some Qualifications like education,age etc .Every village should try to produce its food,clothing and other facilities with the help of modern technology.Every village should have play ground,land for cultivation,drainage system,electricity,zim etc.

In the concept of education ,every boy and girl should enroll in the school .Compulsary free primary education should be maintained.Arts should be developed in all dimensions,like literarture,music,etc.Then only the empowerment of villages will appear on the surface of the Indian territory.

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MERITS OF GRAMA SWARAJ:-

1.POLITICAL DECENTRALIZATION:-

In the modern scenario democratic governance must be divided into different no of units. In this series gramapanchayat is last unit. The people of gramapanchayat would be protected by different schemes which are implemented by gramapanchayat.

2. SIGNIFICANCE TO COMMON MEN:-

In the concept of gramaswaraj significance will be given to common men

3.INCREASES POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE:-

GRAMA SWARAJ leads to awareness towards political knowledge to common people.

4.ENHANCES PATRIOTISM AND INTEGRITY:-

Gramaswaraj leads to awareness towards political knowledge to common people.

MODERN APPROACH TOWARDS GRAMA SWARAJ:-

To achieve some objectives to reach some democratic goals every village or Grama panchayat must have some aims.

Those are here under:-

1.Awareness towards local level development

2.Local potential to achieve comprehensive development

3.Voluntary organizations,co-operatives,academic and research institution.

4.Focusing to a life cycle approach.

5.If a village is a tourist location it must concentrate on restaurants and hotels,transportation services like cabs,buses,etc and selling the unique products made in the village,pharmacies and hospital services in a mobile ,van etc.

6.Good Governance should be reached to people by following 73rd 74th amendments.

7.Every Gramapanchayat must have

a.Internet centre.

b.Digital library.

c.Playground

d.Adult education centre.

e.Primary health centre.

f.academic institutions etc..

CONCLUSION:-

In my opinion along with greenery every village musy have all comforts and facilities like roads,transports,organizations,academic institutions,net centres and so on..

Then there is no difference between town and Grama panchayat or village.Every comfort available same as in the city and in the Grama panchayat.In those atmosphere people wants to live either in city or in the villlagepositively or interestingly.

Then the village will be transformed as comfortable territory or area or city or town.At the same time “The Grama Swaraj”will appeared as a result of Good Governance.

Empowerment of Women through Panchayati Raj System

D.JYOTHI

INTRODUCTION

Women constitute half of the humanity .Besides bearing and rearing of future citizens ,they play significant role in every walk of life. Yet they suffer from the secondary social status and their participation in the development process is marginalized .In India as per 2011 census ,women account for 586 million and represent 48.46% of the total population .In North east also women Represent 48.86% of the total population. Thus without betterment of women's socio economic condition and their effective participation, the development of the country cannot be ensured effectively. The women are both the agent and the target of development process

DISCUSSION

Since independence a number of policy and programmes have been launched to ameliorate the condition of Indian women .It should be noted that for longtime the approach has been primarily government *Empowerment of Women through Panchayati Raj System* centered with few voluntary initiative .There has been noticeable shift in the government approach from welfareism in 1950s and 1960s and developmentalism in 1970s and 1980s to finally empowerment centered in 1990s.From the first five year plan to fifth plan many programmes were undertaken with a distinct emphasis of welfare of women . There was a visible shift from the 6th plan onwards which adopted a multi disciplinary approach with focus on three core areas of development – health ,education and employment .The 7th plan continued the development approach with emphasis on raising the economic and social status of women and bringing them into the mainstreaming of national development .The 8th plan focus on human development and tried to ensure that women become equal partner in the process of development. It was the ninth plan approach that clearly focus on the empowerment of women in changed circumstances

ABOUT PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM

Panchayati Raj is regarded as a real democratic political apparatus which bring the masses into active political participation and also would establish a genuine political control from below, from the vast majority of the weaker ,poor section of rural India. After Independence of India Panchayati Raj was first introduced in Assam in 1948 through a legislative Act entitled 'The Assam Rural Panchayati Act 1948'. But until the 73rd amendment to the constitution of India in 1992 Panchayati Raj did not function regularly in Assam and also in the other states of North east India .The 73rd Constitution amendment act has made an effort to give some special power to women in all the three tiers of Panchayati Raj.

LECTURER IN BOTANY, SCIM GDC,TANUKU,W.G.

The empowerment is specially a political process, which require involvement and participation of women in the decision making process in the matter of their vital interest. It is in this background that the establishment of new Panchayati Raj Institution by 73rd amendments (1993) assumes significance. The new provision incorporated in Article 243 of the constitution gives binding constitutional recognition to PRI for the first time. The salient features of new PRIs are time bound election by an independents state election commission ,devolution of financial power and resources on the recommendation of states finance commission and bestowing power to prepare and execute plan for socio economic development. However the most significant features of new PRIs is the provision contained in article 243D of the constitution which reads ,not less than one third(including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to schedule caste and schedule tribe) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in Panchayats. In brief the 1/3 of total member and chairperson of Panchayats at each level shall be women. Besides women may contest election from unreserved seats.

With the enhancement of constitutional power and authority of Panchayats, the provision for 1/3rd reservation of women is a revolutionary steps in Indian context. This step elevates women from merely beneficiaries of development to the decision makers in the development process. The new provision addresses to the four core element of empowerment : a) access to education ,B) Inclusion and participation in decision making process with respect to development. C) sense of accountability in respect to their duties and roles, D) Generation of local organized capacity to seek their own betterment. The provision of 1/3rd reservation for women in PRIs has enable women to participate in local government decision making process. It has enabled then to gain administrative and political training at local level. It has made them aware ,conscious and confident. They have gained the opportunity to address their problem through their own efforts. The women related issues are bound to gain centre stages in the deliberation of Panchayats . the growing number of women in Panchayats indicates the emergence of new social groups at local level which is more conscious and articulate. Taking into account the figure at national level ,out of 475 Zila Panchayats ,158 are headed by women .Out of total 51000 members of Panchayats Samities at block level 17000 are women members . The information received from the data provided to the 14th Lok Sabha for Committee of Empowerment of women ,reveals that their actual number has exceeded the mandatory provision of 33% seats .For example, in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh ,Manipur ,Sikkim and Tripura the total women members were 38.9%,38.5%,36.5%,38.2%, and 34.6 % respectively. The work participation rate has increased from 22.3 % in 1991 to 25.7 % in 2001 at all India level.

CONCLUSION

In Indian Constitution, there are provisions for equal rights for all citizens irrespective of their social, economic and gender status. However such provisions exist only in pen and paper for millions of economically and socially disadvantage people especially in case of Women. There fore the role of PRIs is significant in the empowerment of women in the following ways 1) by creating a positive environment for women development in social and economic sphere and enabling them to realize the full potential 2) by providing access and opportunities to women for equal participation in decision making with respect to planning and implementation of socio-economic development program at local level.3) by gradually changing social attitude toward women through new practice and behavior .By strengthening collaboration with civil society and Panchayats in women related activities

.Since access to political opportunities and participation in political decision making process are important components of capability and autonomy in exploration of women's talent and efficiency which are necessary for all around development of the country. Therefore, to achieve the women emposwerment, advancement can be facilitated with the co-ordination of different sections of the society such as male gentry, religious heads, political leaders who should come forward and shun their interpersonal interest even ego to understand and appreciate that the women are equally as important segments of society as men.

Functioning of Gram Sabha-Reality

P V V Satyanarayana

Introduction:

The Gram Sabha (GS) is the cornerstone of the entire scheme of democratic decentralization in India initiated through the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution. Hence, the success or failure of the Panchayati Raj system largely depends on how powerful and effective the GS is at the decentralized level to fulfill the desires and inspirations of the people. Recognizing the critical role of the GS in village economy Gandhi had said that true democracy could not be worked by some persons sitting at the top. It had to be worked from below by the people of every village. Later on, endorsing the view of Gandhi, Jay Prakash Narain had said: "To me Gram Sabha signified village democracy. Let us not have only representative government from the village up to Delhi. In one place, at least let there be direct government, direct democracy. The relationship between Panchayat and Gram Sabha should be that of Cabinet and Assembly". It is due to the importance of this institution at local level that the Year 1999-2000 has been declared as 'Year of Gram Sabha' by the Government of India. Article 243(B) of the Constitution defines the GS as a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of the Panchayat at the village level. With regard to its powers and authority, Article 243 (A) of the Constitution says that the GS may exercise such powers and perform such functions of the village level as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide. It is in the light of this that State legislatures have endowed certain powers to this corporate body relating to the development of the village. A study of the State Panchayat Acts reveals that the GS is to perform numerous functions like discussing the report on socio-economic development programmes implemented by the Gram Panchayat (GP) in the previous financial year, examine the annual statement of the accounts and audit report as well as annual report of administration of the GP in the last financial year; examine the budget of the GP for the next financial year, identification of the beneficiaries of various anti-poverty and rural development programmes; scrutinize on-going and completed schemes and works of the GP, undertake programmes of adult education and family welfare in the village mobilisation of voluntary labour and contributions in kind or cash or both for community welfare programmes and promotion and unity and harmony among all sections of society in the village. This list of functions indicates that the GS has the power only to discuss, debate, examine and scrutinize. There is no binding on the part of the Gram Panchayat to implement its directions and decisions of the GS. If the institution of the GS has to be made functional as it ought to be, it must be endowed with the power to implement schemes. However, provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act 1996, Extension Act for short, has not only extended development, planning and audit functions to the GS but also endowed it with the management and control of natural resources and the adjudication of justice in accordance with traditions and customs.

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Functions of Grama Sabha:

Grama Sabha is the basic foundation of the grass root level democratic institution and constitutionary mandated body would perform following 12 functions. 1. To examine annual statements of accounts, audit report, audit note and to seek clarification from the Panchayat. 2. To discuss report on the administration of the preceding year. 3. To review programme for the year, any new programme and review all kinds of works under taken by the Gram Panchayat. 4. To consider proposals for fresh taxation or for enhancement of existing taxation. 5. To approve the selection of schemes, beneficiaries location, identification and implementation of various development programmes. 6. To mobilize voluntary labour and contribution of kind and cash. 7. To undertake programmes for adult education and family welfare with in the village. 8. To promote unity and harmony among all the sections of the rural community. 9. To seek clarifications from the Mukhia and members of the Grama Panchayat about schemes, income and expenditure. 10. To consider the budget prepared by the Gram Panchayat and future development programmes and plans. 11. To maintain a complete register for all development works undertaken by Gram Panchayat or any other department. 12. To approve village plan of action.

However, there is no unanimity among the states in implementing the function devolved. Most of the states are not serious in implementing the functions to achieve sustainable economic development in the villages. The constitutional right empowered to Gram Sabha has miserably failed in bringing transformation among the rural poor. The grave reality is that in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Uttaranchal villages are not aware of the meetings of Grama Sabha and its functions. Most of the Panchayats have failed to execute the decisions taken of the Grama Sabha. However the recent experience reveals that there is a growing awareness among the rural people about the significance of Grama Sabha functions. For example the states like Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Sikkim have successfully implementing the decisions of Grama Sabha while in Assam, West Bengal, Uttara Padesh the functions of Grama Sabha are only confined to ratification of budget and audit report, review programme of the work undertaken by the Panchayats and seeking clarification from the Mukhia about the schemes income and expenditure. The GSs have functioned better in the southern States than in States elsewhere in the country. This is so because GSs in the southern States are endowed with meaningful functions. These States have another advantage in that they have better socio-economic conditions, higher literacy, effective land reforms, relatively better position of vulnerable sections including women and impact of social reform movements in this part of the country. The example of Kerala is worth mentioning. Discussions were held at local level comprising groups of 25-30 people and working groups were constituted at the local level comprising the GS members on various issues of local importance. Thousands of persons were identified as facilitators for these groups.

Grama Sabha Meetings – A Myth: One of the most important recommendations made by the 73rd Constitution Amendment that the Grama Panchayat should invariable conduct Grama Sabha meetings regularly and elicit the opinion of the voters about the priority of development works and in turn implement them to achieve sustainable development. It is unfortunate that a majority of state governments could not show any seriousness and have failed to conduct Grama Sabha meetings which are mandatory. Unless the people of the village participate and ventilate their opinion in a democratic way Panchayatari Raj Institutions cannot be strengthened. The operational functions reveal that there is diversity in the operationalisation of the concept of Grama Sabha in different states. States like Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal only two meetings held annually.

But in states like Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chandigarh, Goa, Kerala, Orissa and Tamil Nadu the functions of Grama Sabha is much better with four to six meetings held in a year. It is a paradoxical truth that Madhya Pradesh government has paved the way for the better governance at the grass root level by conducting 16 meetings held annually. This has ultimately paved the way for the practice of good governance at the grass roots and where the concept of economic development and social justice has become the core of all operations. However, the collective wisdom of Grama Sabha guides the Panchayat Raj Institutions in their planning and execution of developmental functions. Social auditing is an integral part of Grama Sabha which ensures transparency in administration. However, the Tamil Nadu government issued instructions to conduct Grama Sabha on 26th January, 15th August, 1st May and 2nd October without fail.

Grama Sabha Committees: Constituting Grama Sabha committees to supervise the operational aspects of Gram Panchayat as one of the vital concept of decentralized administration. The observation reveals that most of the state governments are not serious towards formation of Grama Sabha committees. Few states like Bihar, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Rajasthan and Tripura have formulated vigilance committees to ensure transparency at the grass root democracy. Though Grama Sabha is empowered to participate in decision making process of the Panchayat meetings, none of the state government formulated Grama Sabha with development committees at the village level. In order to ensure sustainable development of each individual citizen in the village. Hence, it is necessary to formulate following 18 committees for the total transformation of the Panchayat administration in rural India.

Grama Sabha Needs Legal Knowledge: In a vast country like India Grama Sabha needs basic legal knowledge to educate the local people on Panchayati raj administration in general and Gram Panchayat in particular. Grama Sabha becomes alive to the legal issues and develop legal knowledge with the help of constant “Legal Literacy Campaign(LLC)” to attain maturity with greater sustainability of development initiatives. In recent times efforts are made to create legal awareness among the rural people, the Madhya Pradesh government launched a novel method of spreading legal knowledge to the village habitants including SC & STs of the Scheduled Tribes Act 2006 which empowers Grama Sabha on Information Act. A small booklet in tribal dialects published and distributed in all the tribal areas in Madhya Pradesh. Added to this innovative audio materials on the provisions of the act were developed and distributed among 8000 tribal villages to create awareness about functions and responsibilities of Grama Sabha. The right to information act has made specific provisions on National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Panchayati Raj guidelines, Food Security, Forest Environment Act, Child Labour Eradication Act, Employment of Rural Women and Controlling Social Evils in rural society. The Right to Information Act (2005) is a bold step towards creating transparent system of governance through Grama Sabha. The constitution of India has provided Grama Sabha a body consisting of voters of Panchayat to which Gram Panchayat is accountable and answerable. The body being a forum of village level planning and a venue of social audit has a crucial role to play in developing rural infrastructure.

Need for Effective Peoples Participation: The goal of inclusive growth as envisaged by the government cannot be achieved without the effective participation of local people and the Panchayati Raj Institutions and these institutions should be considered as an integral part of the governance of the country. In this context several suggestions are made by the experts and voluntary organizations towards effective people’s participation. 1. Grama Panchayat should be made responsible to conduct Grama Sabha meetings twice in a year under the direct supervision of Mandal Development officials and the Revenue officials. 2. The exact

date of conducting Grama Sabha can be left to the discretion of the village Panchayat and its members. 3. Beneficiaries of various schemes should be identified and approved only in the Grama Sabha meetings. All the benefits of various schemes should be distributed in the Grama Sabha only, so that benefits would go to right persons only. 4. Information regarding all government activities in connection with the village Panchayat should take place through Grama Sabha. This would create interest among the people to participate in the meetings. 5. A film show explaining the public policies and programmes under taken by the government in the field of Agriculture, Rural Health, Education Minimum Needs Programme, Right to Information, Drinking Water to all the local public, Public Distribution System would attract the people towards Grama Sabha meetings. 6. A collective participation of the villagers along with Grama Panchayat ward members would go a long way in solving the developmental issues in the village in turn this would help in achieving integrated development in the village Panchayat. 7. Print and electronic Media should play an important role in providing adequate information about the growing importance of Grama Sabha and create social awareness among the people. 8. The salient features of Grama Sabha and the various activities to be constituted during Grama Sabha meetings and agenda has to be informed to the villagers well in advance. 9. Ward members/public representatives must disseminate the information about the Gram Panchayat function to the local people in their respective wards and they should motivate them to participate in the Grama Sabha. 10. Ward wise Grama Sabha would enable every voter to participate in the deliberations. The village Mukhia and ward member should apprise the ward people about the government programmes sanctioned to the village.

Shortcomings: But in most of the States the people are apathetic towards this body. It has been noticed that meetings of the GS end in a mere formality. Decisions which were supposed to be taken by the GS were taken by the local elite, thereby rendering this body redundant. Meetings were conducted without any consideration of quorum. The absence of women and weaker sections of rural society was another feature of the GS. Hence, the entire exercise could not deliver the expected results. The reason for poor attendance is due to the fact that provisions relating to the GS contain nothing of substance which could attract the masses towards it. The people, particularly the poor, did not want to lose their daily wages for the sake of attending the GS meetings. If meetings of the GS were held to identify beneficiaries for various anti-poverty and related programmes, there was a good attendance. In fact, no one attends the meetings of the GS unless the benefits are apparent to them. Apart from giving the GSs only a ritualistic role, the problem is compounded by having the meetings of the Sabha at a time of the day when the women and weaker sections are busy at home or in earning their wages. This renders the GS meetings meaningless. The role of the GS is in bringing transparency in its own functioning in ensuring equitable distribution of the benefits, in creating community assets where these are needed and bring about social cohesion which is the most important factor in the success of the GPs. In order to make the GS a powerful, vibrant and pulsating institution we must make it as a fulcrum of the entire scheme of democratic decentralization. The institution of the GS is very important as it gives an opportunity to each and every voter of the GP at the local level to take part in decision-making of decentralized governance, planning and development.

Conclusion: Thus, by making the Gram Sabha effective we can reduce the gap between the desired impact and actual impact of several programmes of the government involving crores of Rupees. By strengthening the institution of Gram Sabha we can bring the gains of our democracy and economic prosperity spreads evenly across the country.

EMPOWERMENT OF PANCHAYATIRAJ-73rd AMENDMENT

K.PARVATHIDEVI

FULL PAPER PRESENTATION:-

The national level plan for improving the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) is chalked out in the Roadmap for Panchayati Raj (2011-2017). The Roadmap logically delineates the issues and specific action plans within the larger governance framework for creating an effective Panchayati Raj structure. It highlights key aspects for empowerment, enablement and accountability of the PRIs for better governance and faster development, includes devolution of functions, funds and functionaries as envisaged in the Constitution, Capacity Building of the Panchayats and Functionaries, decentralized planning, effective implementation of Panchayats (Extention to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), empowered elected village councils in the Sixth Scheduled Areas and changes in the constitutional and legal framework. This national Roadmap is enabled and assisted by the Government by the provision of funds under several schemes, the most important of which are

- The Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF) provides untied grants to the Panchayats in the backward regions in order to reduce development deficits of the country, with the requirement that the District Plans for utilization of the grant be prepared by the involvement of the Gram Sabhas.

- The Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Yojana (RGSY) which aims at capacity building and training of the elected representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions as well as the Functionaries. The Central Government also provides funds to the State Governments under the Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF) to redress regional imbalances in development of backward districts in the country. The strategy aims at promoting the performance and capacity of Panchayats, in planning, decision, making, implementation and monitoring. In addition to the BRGF, the following schemes for empowerment of Panchayats are being implemented:
- Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Yojana: Funds are released to States for training and capacity building of Panchayati Raj Institutions in districts uncovered by the BRGF.

- Rural Business Hubs: This Scheme aims to assist the Panchayats to empower rural labour productivity by providing forward backward linkages with technical assistance in Public-Private-Partnership.

- Panchayat Manila`Evam Yuva Shakti Abhiyan:. It aims to enable women and youth Panchayat leaders to come together to articulate their problems as women Panchayat Leaders.
- E-Panchayat: For computerizing the databases, accounts and other functions of the Gram Panchayats for accountability and transparency.

- Panchayat Empowerment & Accountability Incentive Scheme: To recognize and incentivize the efforts of Panchayats with respect to transparency, accountability and efficiency and of States with respect to devolution of funds, functions and functionaries to Panchayats.

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PRIs as a model for participatory local development in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala

***Panchayati Raj* in Andhra Pradesh**

Legislative framework for the establishment of *Panchayati Raj*

The Andhra Pradesh *Panchayat Raj* Act, framed in the light of the Constitution's 73rd Amendment, came into effect in May 1994, setting up a three-tier PRI structure with a *Zilla Parishad* at the district, *Mandal Praja Parishad* at the intermediate and *Gram Panchayat* at the village level. It also provides for the constitution of village *Gram Sabhas* made up of all registered voters in the village.

The state government has satisfactorily conducted elections to constitute the PRIs and has devolved functions, powers, and resources to these bodies.

Election, tenure and composition of members at the three *Panchayati Raj* levels

The PRIs have a five-year term. Members are to be directly elected on the basis of Wards of the *Gram Panchayat* and Territorial Constituencies in the case of *Mandal Parishad* and *Zilla Parishad*, with reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population.

One-third of the total number of directly elected seats in each of these bodies is reserved for the backward classes and another one-third for women. The *Mandal* and *Zilla Parishad* have one or two members co-opted from the minority communities. The Head of the *Gram Panchayat* is elected directly by the electorate in the village whereas the *Mandal Parishad* President and the *Zilla Parishad* Chairperson are elected from among the directly elected members of these bodies. One-third of the top PRI posts are reserved for Scheduled Castes/Tribes and another one-third for women.

There is an organic linkage among the three PRI tiers with the elected heads of the lower levels being permanent invitees to the meetings of the next higher tier. Thus, all *Gram Panchayat* Heads in a *Mandal* participate in *Mandal Parishad* meetings and *Mandal Parishad* Presidents within a district attend the *Zilla Parishad* meetings. The District Collector (top district administration official) is also a permanent invitee to the meetings of the *Mandal* and *Zilla Parishad* Standing Committees. Permanent invitees can join the discussions but without the right to vote.

Powers, functions and resources at each *Panchayati Raj* level

Ten out of 29 subjects in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution of India have been transferred to *Gram Panchayats*. These include minor irrigation, water management, watershed development, drinking water, roads, culverts and bridges.

The *Gram Sabha* is expected to meet at least twice a year to consider matters placed before it by the *Gram Panchayat*. These generally include the annual statement of accounts and the audit report on the administration of the preceding year; programmes of works for the current year; proposals for fresh taxation or for increasing existing taxes; and selection of schemes,

beneficiaries and locations. While implementing programmes, the *Gram Panchayat* gives due consideration to suggestions made during the *Gram Sabha* meetings.

There is provision for seven Standing Committees at the *Zilla Parishad* level, dealing with planning and finance, rural development, agriculture, education and medical services, women's welfare, social welfare, communications, rural water supply and power. Each Standing Committee has the *Zilla Parishad* Chairman as ex-officio member and others nominated by him or her according to prescribed rules. The Standing Committee is the decision-making body in its respective field, subject to the ratification of the general body of the *Zilla Parishad*.

Development areas under direct responsibility of each *Panchayati Raj* level

Gram Panchayat

- Implementing land reform measures, including consolidation of land holdings and cooperative management of community lands.
- Implementing programmes related to agriculture, animal husbandry, cottage industry, pre-primary and primary education, health and sanitation, women, children, destitute people and people with disabilities.
- Resource planning by preparing an inventory of human and natural resources and other assets at the village level.
- Preparing and prioritizing plans/programmes to harness these resources to meet local needs and aspirations.
- Disseminating technology to increase farm and related production; expanding services like health, veterinary and sanitation services in their jurisdiction.

Mandal Parishad

- Co-ordinating rural development activities within their jurisdiction and consolidating *panchayat* plans into a *Mandal Parishad* plan.

Zilla Parishad

- Organizing data collection and consolidation of *Mandal Parishad* plans, allocation of funds and approval of *Mandal Parishads* budgets.

Mobilization of resources and responsibilities at each *Panchayati Raj* level

Gram Panchayat

Only the *Gram Panchayat* can levy taxes. This includes a house tax, a tax on the produce sold in the villages (*Kolagaram* or *Katarusum*) a tax on agricultural land and a land cess at the rate of two *paise* to a rupee (2 percent) on the annual rental value of occupied land.

It can also charge fees such as for the use of land and for the occupation of public buildings such as shelter homes, and duty on land in the form of a surcharge at a rate not exceeding twenty-five *paise* to the rupee (25 percent). The state government also shares with local governments the revenue collected under certain items by way of land/local cess, surcharges

on stamp duty, taxes on minor minerals and entertainment taxes. The government also provides a variety of grants to PRIs.

Mandal Parishad

The main sources of income are funds relating to institutions and schemes transferred by the government, or heads of departments funds relating to different development programmes. Other sources include funds or aid from central, state and other national bodies promoting *khadi*, silk, coir and handicraft; contributions from *Gram Panchayat/Zilla Parishad*; shares of land revenue; and annual grants at the rate of five rupees per person residing in the *Mandal*. A *Mandal Parishad's* own resources account for only five percent of the total income.

Zilla Parishad

It derives 5 percent of its income from rents on buildings and commercial complexes, market/industrial fees, etc. The *Zilla Parishad (ZP)* is paid a per capita grant of two rupees per person residing in its jurisdiction. An important grant is for salaries of *ZP* staff and school teachers, which accounts for 50 percent of the receipts.

The *Janmabhoomi* programme (See Training module on social mobilization.)

The programme shows how the administrative machinery can be made more responsive to local needs and to facilitate participation by rural poor in local governance.

Chapter - III

RURAL LOCAL BODIES

73rd Amendment to the Constitution: 3.1

The Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992 accorded the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) a constitutional status. The main features of the 73rd Amendment Act are the following:

1. Constitution of a three tier structure of Panchayats in every state (at village, intermediate and district levels) having a population of twenty lakhs (Article 243 B).
2. Reservation of seats for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and women (Article 243 D).
3. Fixed tenure for Panchayat bodies (Article 243E).
4. Transfer of powers, authority and responsibilities to Panchayats, including 29 subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule (Article 243 G).
5. Powers to impose taxes (Article 243 H). 3.2 Article 243 I of the Constitution provides that the Governor of a State shall within one year from the commencement of the Constitution (Seventy third Amendment) Act, 1992, and thereafter at the expiration of every fifth year, constitute a Finance Commission to review the financial position of the Panchayats and to make recommendations to the Governor.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF PANCHAYATI RAJ

V.K.J.PRASUNA

Post-independence period

Panchayat raj had to go through various stages. The First Five Year Plan failed to bring about active participation and involvement of the people in the Plan processes, which included Plan formulation implementation and monitoring. The Second Five Year Plan attempted to cover the entire countryside with National Extensive Service Blocks through the institutions of Block Development Officers, Assistant Development Officers, Village Level Workers, in addition to nominated representatives of village panchayats of that area and some other popular organisations like co-operative societies. But the plan failed to satisfactorily accomplish decentralisation. Hence, committees were constituted by various authorities to advise the Centre on different aspects of decentralisation.

The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957)

In 1957, Balwant Rai Mehta Committee studied the Community Development Projects and the National Extension Service and assessed the extent to which the movement had succeeded in utilising local initiatives and in creating institutions to ensure continuity in the process of improving economic and social conditions in rural areas. The Committee held that community development would only be deep and enduring when the community was involved in the planning, decision-making and implementation process.^[8] The suggestions were for as follows:an early establishment of elected local bodies and devolution to them of necessary resources, power and authority,

- that the basic unit of democratic decentralisation was at the block/samiti level since the area of jurisdiction of the local body should neither be too large nor too small. The block was large enough for efficiency and economy of administration, and small enough for sustaining a sense of involvement in the citizens,
- such body must not be constrained by too much control by the government or government agencies,
- the body must be constituted for five years by indirect elections from the village panchayats,
- its functions should cover the development of agriculture in all its aspects, the promotion of local industries and others
- services such as drinking water, road building, etc., and the higher level body, Zilla Parishad, would play an advisory role.The PRI structure did not develop the requisite democratic momentum and failed to cater to the needs of rural development. There are various reasons for such an outcome which include political and bureaucratic resistance at the state level to share power and resources with local level institutions, domination of local elites over the major share of the benefits of welfare schemes, lack of capability at the local level and lack of political will.

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It was decided to appoint a high-level committee under the chairmanship of Ashok Mehta to examine and suggest measures to strengthen PRIs. The Committee had to evolve an effective decentralised system of development for PRIs. They made the following recommendations:^[10]

- the district is a viable administrative unit for which planning, co-ordination and resource allocation are feasible and technical expertise available,
- PRIs as a two-tier system, with Mandal Panchayat at the base and Zilla Parishad at the top,
- the PRIs are capable of planning for themselves with the resources available to them,
- district planning should take care of the urban-rural continuum,
- representation of SCs and STs in the election to PRIs on the basis of their population,
- four-year term of PRIs,
- participation of political parties in elections,
- any financial devolution should be committed to accepting

that much of the developmental functions at the district level would be played by the panchayats.

The states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal passed new legislation based on this report. However, the flux in politics at the state level did not allow these institutions to develop their own political dynamics.

G.V.K. Rao Committee (1985)

The G.V.K. Rao Committee was appointed by Planning Commission^[11] to once again look at various aspects of PRIs. The Committee was of the opinion that a total view of rural development must be taken in which PRIs must play a central role in handling people's problems. It recommended the following:^[12]

- PRIs have to be activated and provided with all the required support to become effective organisations,
- PRIs at district level and below should be assigned the work of planning, implementation and monitoring of rural development programmes, and
- the block development office should be the spinal cord of the rural development process.

L.M.Singhvi Committee (1986)

L.M. Singhvi Committee studied panchayati raj. The Gram Sabha was considered as the base of a decentralised democracy, and PRIs viewed as institutions of self-governance which would actually facilitate the participation of the people in the process of planning and development. It recommended:^[13]

- local self-government should be constitutionally recognised, protected and preserved by the inclusion of new chapter in the Constitution,
- non-involvement of political parties in Panchayat elections.

The suggestion of giving panchayats constitutional status was opposed by the Sarkaria Commission, but the idea, however, gained momentum in the late 1980s especially because

of the endorsement by the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who introduced the 64th Constitutional Amendment Bill in 1989. The 64th Amendment Bill was prepared and introduced in the lower house of Parliament. But it got defeated in the Rajya Sabha as non-convincing. He lost the general elections too. In 1989, the National Front introduced the 74th Constitutional Amendment Bill, which could not become an Act because of the dissolution of the Ninth Lok Sabha. All these various suggestions and recommendations and means of strengthening PRIs were considered while formulating the new Constitutional Amendment Act.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act

The idea which produced the 73rd Amendment ^[14] was not a response to pressure from the grassroots, but to an increasing recognition that the institutional initiatives of the preceding decade had not delivered, that the extent of rural poverty was still much too large and thus the existing structure of government needed to be reformed. It is interesting to note that this idea evolved from the Centre and the state governments. It was a political drive to see PRIs as a solution to the governmental crises that India was experiencing. The Constitutional (73rd Amendment) Act, passed in 1992 by the Narasimha Rao government, came into force on April 24, 1993. It was meant to provide constitutional sanction to establish "democracy at the grassroots level as it is at the state level or national level". Its main features are as follows:

- The Gram Shabha or village assembly as a deliberative body to decentralised governance has been envisaged as the foundation of the Panchayati Raj System. 73rd Amendment of the Constitution empowered the Gram Sabhas to conduct social audits in addition to its other functions.
- A uniform three-tier structure of panchayats at village (Gram Panchayat — GP), intermediate or block (Panchayat Samiti — PS) and district (Zilla Parishad — ZP) levels.
- All the seats in a panchayat at every level are to be filled by elections from respective territorial constituencies.
- Not less than one-third of the total seats for membership as well as office of chairpersons of each tier have to be reserved for women.
- Reservation for weaker castes and tribes (SCs and STs) have to be provided at all levels in proportion to their population in the panchayats. To supervise, direct and control the regular and smooth elections to panchayats, a State Election Commission has The Act has ensured constitution of a State Finance Commission in every State/UT, for every five years, to suggest measures to strengthen finances of panchayati raj institutions. To promote bottom-up-planning, the District Planning Committee (DPC) in every district has been accorded constitutional status.
- An indicative list of 29 items has been given in Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution. Panchayats are expected to play an effective role in planning and implementation of works related to these 29 items.

Transfer of Responsibilities, Functions and Resources of Panchayats

M.RAMBABU

Introduction:

The 73rd Amendment Act (1992) of the Constitution, which created a uniform three-tier system of rural governments at the district, block and village levels, provides for transfer of responsibilities and tax powers from the state government to these rural bodies. The responsibilities include preparation and implementation of plans for economic development and social justice relating to an indicative list of 29 subjects given in Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution. Under Article 243-G, the Constitution has given authority to state governments to endow panchayats with necessary powers to carry out their functions. States are empowered under Article 243-H to authorize panchayats to levy, collect and appropriate taxes, duties, tolls and fees apart from giving them grants-in-aid from the Consolidated Fund of the State. Another provision, that of Article 243-I, provides for the constitution of a State Finance Commission (SFC) every five years to review the financial position of panchayats and to recommend ways of

- Implementing the provisions of Article 243-H so as to improve the financial position of the latter. The Gram Sabha, the general assembly of villagers, has a key role in effective functioning of panchayats through, among other things, discussion of the Annual Financial Statement of gram panchayats. The main components of fiscal decentralization comprise expenditures, revenues, transfers to local governments and sub-national borrowing .
- **Objectives of the study:** The main objectives of this paper are
- 1. To review the current status of functions transferred to PRIs in the wake of 73rd Amendment,
- 2. To examine whether the resources transferred to them are adequate to perform these functions and fulfill their responsibilities
- 3. To find out the Devolution of Resources and Financial Autonomy of Panchayats of major states.
- **Methodology:** Secondary sources of data were used for these study magazines, books, journals and internet sources also used for this purpose.
- **Transfer of Responsibilities, Functions and Functionaries:**
- The 73rd Amendment merely provides an illustrative or indicative list of functions that are suitable for devolution to panchayats. Unlike the division of subjects and financial relationship between the central and state governments provided by the Constitution, no such definite demarcation of responsibilities and financial relationship exists between the state and local bodies. In order to prevent rigidity and conflict with the interests of the state government, the

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National Commission on Urbanisation did not approve specification of a “local list” in line with the central, state and concurrent lists. However, despite this lacuna, some states have proceeded with devolution of functions. All States/UTs, except Jammu and Kashmir, Uttaranchal and National Capital Territory of Delhi have passed legislation in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. According to Indian Express (2002), in villages of Kerala, Karnataka, and parts

- of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chattisgarh and Bengal, “panchayats are running schools, inspecting dispensaries, engaging in group farming, harvesting rain and even setting up power plants”. But the pace of the devolution of power in most other states is slow where they are not yet sharing funds, functions and functionaries with rural governments. Only in Karnataka and Kerala have all the 29 subjects been transferred to panchayats. 18 of the funds, functions and functionaries have been transferred in Maharashtra, 12 in Bengal and 10 in both Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh.
- While many state governments have devolved several subjects to different levels to PRIs, they have not given appropriate functional responsibilities to newly established levels of rural local bodies where they did not exist before or not given appropriate guidelines to the existing ones for delivering their functions. For example, functions are specified as subjects rather than as activities. A Task Force under the Chairmanship of Additional Secretary and Financial Advisor of the Ministry of Rural Development and with secretaries in-charge of the Panchayat Raj of Assam, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal as members, recommended completion of the process of devolution of powers to panchayats by March 2002. The responsibilities and functions carried out by PRIs at different levels show a distinct pattern across states. Gram Panchayats. Seemsto be the most active in most states. In general, while the GPs carry out major functions (including some obligatory) such as public facilities, health, minor construction, minor irrigation, village roads etc., Panchayat Samitis (PSs at the block-level) and Zilla Parishads in most states are allotted supervisory functions or act mainly as executing agents for the state government. While the PSs, in general, are highly dependent on state grants, most of their expenses are on salaries. Thus, not only have the smaller states been allowed to drop this level of government, but the 87th Amendment Bill 1999 was based on lack of substantive functions to be performed by the elected members of PSs and ZPs. Apart from transfer of functions and powers, states are expected to transfer staff and more revenue raising sources to rural governments for effective fiscal decentralization. Although some states (Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan) have transferred the functionaries, most others have not transferred the required staff to the PRIs to carry out their additional functional responsibilities. Often, senior staff of PRIs is drawn on deputation from various state departments, who are regulated by the state government rules and their sudden transfers severely affect the functioning of the PRIs.
- **Sources of Funds:**
- The Amendments left important matters such as implementation, service delivery (including local capacity building) and transfer of responsibilities and powers to rural local bodies at the discretion of the state legislatures. Consequently, while expenditure responsibilities of local bodies are extensively enhanced, there is no law to ensure a corresponding assignment of funds to match the additional responsibilities. The decisions as to which taxes, duties, tolls and fees should be assigned to local governments and which should be shared by the State with them continue to be with the state legislatures. An appropriately designed transfer system is needed to balance

spending needs with local resources. The SFCs are required to recommend financial support from the state and principles for determination of taxes, tolls and fees that could be assigned to or appropriated by the local bodies. At present, not much fiscal power is vested in the hand of the panchayats. Their finances are drawn largely from tax assignment, tax sharing and grants-in-aid from the state and the centre while the share of own tax and non-tax revenue is very small. The non-tax sources include user charges on public facilities, and on the use of common resources in the form of forests, water bodies, quarried materials and minor minerals; and taxes on private property. In addition funds flow from the central government on the basis of the recommendations of the Central (National) Finance Commission and the Planning Commission. An evaluation of PRIs' sources of income including their tax powers and the authority to borrow

- Shows that they differ substantially across states as between the fiscal size and sources of revenue available to different levels of PRIs and their administrative set-up. Most powers to levy various kinds of taxes and duties in rural areas are enjoyed by gram panchayats (GPs) whereas the first and second tiers, i.e., zilla parishads (ZPs) and panchayat samitis (PSs) are in general not entrusted with taxing powers. When these two tiers do levy these charges, they are often collected at the village level and then passed on to the higher levels of rural bodies. However, PRIs hesitate to levy and collect taxes.

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- **Tax Assignment of Gram Panchayats:**

- Land tax (agricultural and non-agricultural), House building tax, Vehicle tax, Water, drainage and sanitation taxes, Pilgrim tax, Tax on profession, trade, and callings, Tax on fairs and other entertainments, Tax on advertisement, Octroi on animals or goods or both brought for sale, Lump sum levy of factories in lieu of taxes, Special tax for construction and public works.

- **Fees and charges levied for provision of public facilities:**

- Water rate, Lighting fee, Street cleaning fee, Conservancy fee, Drainage fee, Sanitary fee for public latrines; and pilgrimage fee (sanitation tax/fee)

- **Fees for use of common resources:**

- Fee for the use of panchayat shelter, User charges for hospitals and schools, Fee for use of common resources like grazing land etc. Fee on markets and weekly bazaars Fee on animals sold

- **New powers recommended by SFCs:**

- House tax, Tax on pumps and tractors, Tax on highway services, Tax on village produce sold in regulated markets, Tax on telephones and cable T.V. (Non-agricultural) profession tax

- **Table 1. Weights in State Finance Commission Formulae for Devolution to PRIs**

Indicator	Karnataka	Kerala	Madhya Pradesh	Rajasthan	Uttara Pradesh
Population	33.33	75	75	40	80
Area	33.33		25		20
Poverty				50	
Illiteracy rate	11.11				
Population of SC/ST		5			
Population of non-DDP/ non-DPAP/ non-TAD blocks				10	

Persons per bed in govt. hospitals	11.11				
Road length/ sq km	11.12				
Financial need		15			
Tax effort		5			
Total	100	100	100	100	100

- Note: The formulae are from the First State Finance Commissions. Source: Jha(2000)
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- Grants-in-aid comprise an important element of inter-governmental transfers. One of the Objectives of providing grants is to enable the local bodies to manage functions entrusted to them which could not otherwise be undertaken because of their limited taxable capacity. Furthermore, grants are given to them to undertake functions which are funded by the state government. Grants are also given to encourage local bodies to increase their income. Specific purpose, conditional or tied grants come attached with conditions to spend the funds for specified purposes. External funds with no commitment to raise internal funds face the moral hazard problem of making local governments irresponsible and corrupt.

• **Table 2. Relative Shares of Local Governments in State Devolution (%)**

State	Applicable	Urban	Total	Rural ZP	PS	GP
Andhrapradesh	on SFC recommendation	16	84	57		43
Andhrapradesh	before SFC (1994-95)	6	94			
Karnataka	on SFC recommendation	15	85	40	35	25
Karnataka	before SFC (1995-96)	8	92	35	49	13
Kerala	on SFC recommendation	14	86	17	17	66
Kerala	before SFC (1996-97)				20	80
Rajasthan	on SFC recommendation	23	77	15	25	60
Rajasthan	before SFC					
UP	on SFC recommendation	70	30		20	80
UP	before SFC					

- Note: SFC refers to the First State Finance Commission Source: Jha (2000)
- Rural governments are not empowered to raise loans on their own except loans from the state government while they must keep their expenditure strictly within their income sources so that a situation of deficit budget does not arise. This requirement results in postponement/ avoidance of certain essential expenses, particularly capital, and makes the PRIs even more dependent on the state government.
- **Devolution of Resources and Financial Autonomy of Panchayats:** PRIs need additional resources and financial autonomy to fulfill their new functional obligations. But the record on transfer of funds to panchayats for the subjects devolved upon them is not encouraging. Many of the powers given to local bodies are delegated

powers and most state governments have retained substantial financial and administrative power which suppresses the autonomy of PRIs. Major areas of rural development expenditure and funds associated with them are kept out of the purview of the locally elected bodies. The earlier “bureaucratic practice” of budgeting for local expenditure has not changed so that even after budget approval, funds are often not made available to rural governments because of cash constraints in a state. In practice, financial autonomy means release of funds without any technical clearance or conditionalities attached. For example, panchayats in Kerala and Punjab can spend up to Rs 1 lakh and in Madhya Pradesh up to Rs. 3 lakh to take up work without any outside clearance (Tehelka 2002). But in most other states, lower levels of village governments require clearance from the next higher level to spend allocated funds. It is not surprising then to find that the PRIs in most states are restricted in spending their funds. In many cases there is neither a sufficient devolution of resources nor adequate revenue raising power with PRIs, which reinforces their dependence on higher level bodies rather than their empowerment. In Karnataka, e.g., gram panchayats have neither the access to funds from state nor the power to make their own decisions about their requirements while the higher level rural governments fix the priorities and spend the funds. A large fraction of PRI spending is on staff salaries financed from grants from higher level governments implying thereby a low degree of expenditure autonomy. In 1999-00 general administration, most of which goes on salaries, and expenditure on (tied) development grants constituted more than 80% of total spending of PRIs in most states. Most of the remaining expenditure was towards obligatory services leaving less than 2% for services at the discretion of the panchayats.

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- **Funds from the State and the Centre:**
- Apart from its own revenue generation, additional funds can accrue to a local body from grants, Levy of new taxes and assignment/ sharing of specific existing or new state taxes. Intergovernmental transfers should be based on the rationales of correcting vertical and horizontal imbalances, externalities (inter-jurisdictional spillovers), enhancing national objectives at the sub-national level and paying for national programs implemented by sub-national governments. One of the objectives of tax devolution is to equalize the level of public services across regions. Equalization transfers for correcting horizontal imbalances require measures of “need” and “capacity”, explicit equalization mechanisms, sectoral strategies to guide local expenditures, incentives for local budget management and a sound local financial management system. A standard procedure or equalization formula for tax devolution is to calculate the difference between average taxable capacity and actual taxable capacity. For local governments with taxable capacity below the average taxable capacity per capita, this difference is multiplied by population to arrive at the amount to be devolved so as to ‘equalize’ provision of services. In most cases the need and capacity are likely to vary with the size of the population served. It is a normal practice for the Finance Commissions to equalize the devolution across panchayats. But, it is highly unequal with respect to population. For example, using data from Andhra Pradesh to illustrate, the average size of a GP in terms of total expenditure varies across districts from as low as Rs.21, 000 to as high as Rs.3 lakhs (Table 8). Designing a devolution mechanism may thus be more equalizing on a per capita basis. Take another example, that of special purpose grants given to equalize capacities of local governments. Figure 1 presents the provision for financial recordkeeping to PRIs by the 11th Finance Commission. Again, it is not equalized on a per capita basis even

though panchayats dealing with larger populations would need to maintain larger records.

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- **Conclusion**
- We note that the financial needs of panchayats far outweigh the resources at their disposal especially with discretionary use. In order to have more effective rural governments, it is important to have clear and explicit assignment of expenditure and revenue functions. One way to increase local revenues is through higher tax authority and the power to PRIs for more frequent revision of their tax rates. But, even before this is done, local tax collections can be improved by improving their administrative capacity, using the correct method of valuation of tax base, charging differential rates for commercial and residential property, imposition of taxes on an ad-valorem basis and cutting out exemptions. To improve the financial position of PRIs, McCarten and Vyasulu (2003) suggest enlarging the share of untied grants in transfers, adopting an equalization formula for allocation of grants; increasing own and assigned sources of tax revenue and offering matching grants to induce own tax effort. They also suggest transferring a fixed percentage of all state taxes to provide stability to local governments and flexibility to state governments. It is also necessary that transfer allocations are available to local government on a timely basis. GOI (2001) makes several recommendations to improve the financial situation of PRIs. These include: linking devolution of Central Finance Commission funds to states to transfer of administrative and financial powers to PRIs; strengthening revenue raising powers of PRIs to reduce their excessive dependence on state and central governments; improving accountability of local bodies, simplifying rules and procedures and strengthening financial management and audit procedures. Local bodies do not have accounting systems or balance sheets. An emphasis on prevention of misuse of funds has prevented local accountability. Once panchayat budget procedure is improved and discretionary funds enhanced, auditing of their accounts would become inevitable. At present, this is not a normal practice. However, some efforts are being made in this direction. For example, the Left Front plans to assign the audit of all the gram panchayat accounts to the Comptroller and Auditor General to ensure transparency (Times News Network 2003). At present, only the zilla parishad accounts are audited by the CAG. There is a wide variation across states and over time in policies followed and the type of information that is available. In particular, there is a systematic lack of uniformity and content in financial data. This can be rectified by setting up of a special cell in the Finance Department to track and monitor annual receipts and expenditure and to compile and computerize a database on basic economic indicators of local bodies. Some states have set up their second State Finance Commissions (SFCs) but many are still in the stages of implementation of the recommendation of their first SFCs. At the end of the first five-year tenure of PRIs, GOI (2001) carried out a status review of, among other things, recommendations of SFCs; devolution of funds, functions and functionaries for the 29 subjects; and performance of PRIs in mobilization of revenues and undertaking public programmes in the core services of water supply, street lighting, sanitation and roads. They found limited progress in most of the indicators. For example, too many tiers resulted either in ineffectiveness or excessive control. A major lesson drawn up by GOI (2002) based on results of the first round of devolution in the wake of the 73rd /74th Amendment is that the village tier has the highest potential for direct democracy and participation and hence, states should be enabled to abolish either the district or the block level tier of the panchayats. GOI suggests withholding of Finance Commission and other

development funds to states unless effective powers are transferred to PRIs. Successful implementation of rural programmes depends also on an effective delivery system. An important element of expenditure reform therefore relates to effective monitoring of these programmes to assess not only the physical but also the financial progress in implementation to ensure that benefits reach the target groups. To improve public satisfaction, GOI (2002) recommends shifting focus from maximization of the quantity of development funding or increase in the social sector expenditure to maximization of development outcomes and effectiveness of public service delivery through a change in work culture, better policies and sound delivery mechanisms. Inadequacy of staff has seriously affected the functioning of the PRIs whose expenditure needs are rising due to requirement for additional administrative, trained and technical staff for schools, water supply, communications, accounts, tax collection, sweeping, drain cleaning etc. Staff costs can be reduced by attrition, maintaining core professional staff and drawing local expertise. To summarize, steps required to make PRIs financially stronger to meet their needs include a carrots and stick approach. They need better tax collection authority and capacity, more untied grants and help with improving accounting and record keeping. But at the same time they also need to work towards expenditure reform and vitalized service delivery. Linking Central Finance Commission transfers to more effective fiscal decentralization by states would add to the gains.

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GANDHIAN PERSEPCTIVE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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In the Indian context rural development may be defined as maximising production in agriculture and allied activities in the rural areas including development of rural industries with emphasis on village and cottage industries. It attaches importance to the generation of maximum possible employment opportunities in rural areas, especially for the weaker sections of the community so as to enable them to improve their standard of living. Provision of certain basic amenities like drinking water, electricity, especially for the productive purpose, link roads connecting villages to market centres and facilities for health and education etc. figure prominently in the scheme of rural development.

Theoretically, Gandhian approach to rural development may be labeled as 'idealist'. It attaches supreme importance to moral values and gives primacy to moral values over material conditions. The Gandhians believe that the source of moral values in general lies in religion and Hindu scriptures like the Upanishads and the Gita, in particular. The concept of 'Rama Rajya' is the basis of Gandhiji's idea of an ideal social order. Gandhi defined Rama Rajya as "sovereignty of the people based on moral authority". He did not view Rama as a king, and people as his subjects. In the Gandhian scheme, 'Rama' stood for God or one's own 'inner voice' Gandhi believed in a democratic social order in which people are supreme. Their supremacy is, however, not absolute. It is subject to moral values.

Ideal Village:

The village is the basic unit of the Gandhian ideal social order. Gandhi succinctly pointed out, "If the village perishes India will perish too.... We have to make a choice between India of the villages that is as ancient as her and India of the cities which are a creation of foreign domination". Gandhi's ideal village belongs to the Pre-British period, when Indian villages were supposed to constitute the federation of self-governing autonomous republics. According to Gandhiji, this federation will be brought about not by coercion or compulsion but by the voluntary offer of every village republic to join such a federation. The work of the central authority will only be to coordinate the work of different village republics and to supervise and manage things of common interest, as education, basic industries, health, currency, banking etc.

The central authority will have no power to enforce its decisions on village republics except the moral pressure or power of persuasion. The economic system and transport system introduced by the British have destroyed the "republican' character of the villages. Gandhi, however, admitted that in olden times tyranny and oppression were in fact practiced by feudal chiefs. But, "odds were even". Today the odds are heavy. It is most demoralizing." In this way in the Gandhian scheme of things the ancient 'republic', an Indian village without tyranny and exploitation serves as a model unit.

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Decentralization:

Gandhi firmly believes that village republics can be built only through decentralization of social and political power. In such a system decision-making power will be vested in the Village Panchayat rather than in the State and the national capital. The representatives would be elected by all adults for a fixed period of five years. The elected representatives would constitute a council, called the Panchayat.

The Panchayat exercises legislative, executive and judicial functions. It would look after education, health and sanitation of the village. It would be the Panchayats responsibility to protect and uplift 'untouchables' and other poor people. Resources for Gandhian Approach to managing village affairs would be raised from the villages. All the conflicts and disputes would be resolved within the village. And as far as possible not a single case is to be referred to courts outside the village. The Panchayat would play its role in propagating the importance of moral and spiritual values among the ruralites for bringing about rural reconstruction.

Self-sufficiency:

Such a decentralized polity implies a decentralized economy. It can be attained only through self-sufficiency at the village level. The village should be self-sufficient as far as its basic needs – food, clothing, and other necessities – are concerned. The village has to import certain things which it cannot produce in the village.

The village should produce food-crops and cotton in order to meet its requirements. Some lands should also be earmarked for cattle and for a playground for adults and children. If some land is still available, it should be used for growing useful cash crops like tobacco, opium, etc. to enable the village to get in exchange things which it does not produce. Village economy should be planned with a view to providing full employment to all the adults of the village. Each man should be guaranteed employment to enable him to meet his basic needs in the village itself so that he is not forced to migrate to towns. In the ultimate analysis full employment should be linked with equality.

Industrialization:

Gandhiji maintained that industrialization would help only a few and will lead to concentration of economic power. Industrialization leads to passive or active exploitation of the villages. It encourages competition. Large scale production requires marketing. Marketing means profit-seeking through an exploitative mechanism. Moreover, industrialization replaces manpower and hence it adds to unemployment. In a country like India, where millions of labourers in the villages do not get work for even six months in a year, industrialization will not only increase unemployment but force labourers to migrate to urban areas. This will ruin villages.

In order to avoid such a catastrophe, village and cottage industries should be revived. They provide employment to meet the needs of the villagers and facilitate village self-sufficiency. Gandhians are not against machine per se if it meets two aims: self-sufficiency and full employment. According to Gandhi, there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools that they could make and could afford to use. Only they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others.

Trusteeship:

Gandhiji was not against the institution of private property. But he wanted to restrict the right of private property to what was necessary to yield an honourable livelihood. For the excess he prescribed the principle of trusteeship. Gandhiji emphasized the principle of trusteeship in social and economic affairs. He firmly believed that all social property should be held in trust. The capitalists would take care not only of themselves but also of others. Some of their surplus wealth would be used for the rest of the society.

The poor workers, under trusteeship, would consider the capitalists as their benefactors; and would repose faith in their noble intentions. Gandhiji felt that if such a trusteeship were established, the welfare of the workers would increase and the clash between the workers and employers would be avoided. Trusteeship would help considerably “in realizing a state of equality on earth.” Gandhiji firmly believed that land should not be owned by any individual. Land belongs to God. Hence, individual ownership of land should be shunned. For that a landowner should be persuaded to become a trustee of his land. He should be convinced that the land he owns does not belong to him. Land belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community. They are merely trustees. By persuasion the heart of landowners should be changed and they should be induced to donate their land voluntarily.

If the land owners do not oblige and continue to exploit the poor workers, the latter should organize non-violent, non-cooperation, civil disobedience struggles against them. Gandhiji rightly held the view that “no person can amass wealth without the cooperation, willing or forced, of the people concerned”. If this knowledge were to penetrate and spread amongst the poor, they would become strong and learn how to free themselves from the crushing inequalities which have pushed them to the verge of starvation. But the oppressed should not take recourse to violent methods. In the Gandhian scheme of things, the principle of cooperation, love and service is most important and violence has no place in it. Violence is against “moral values” and civilized society is inconceivable in the absence of moral values.

Gandhiji’s concept of development is oriented to the uplift of the common man. He preferred village habitats to megalopolises and Swadeshi craft to imported technology for the economic wellbeing of the common man. He stressed the need for cottage industries in place of gigantic industries and advocated for a decentralized economy instead of a centralized one. He realized the need for integrated rural development and believed that education, health and vocation should be properly integrated. He emphasized the need for education and training which he called ‘Naitalim’ (New training) for rural reconstruction.

In my conclusion, Gandhian approach to rural development strives to reconstruct village republics which would be non-violent, self-governed and self-sufficient so far as the basic necessities of ruralites are concerned. Apart from creating a new socio-economic order, it Endeavour’s to transform man; otherwise the changes in the socio-economic order will be short-lived.

GANDHIJI'S VIEWS ON ENVIRONMENT

Mr.D.D.N.Prasad

Gandhiji's entire life and deeds, indeed is an environmental bequest for whole mankind. This is not because he wrote big volumes of books on environment, led a people's movement to oppose the construction of large scale-dam project or spent his life-time for cleaning Ganga or whatsoever; rather because he was a true practitioner of environmentally sustainable development in the real sense, by his personal life-style, he has adopted in his day-to-day life. Here is a being, which is in harmony and peace with environment and himself, although his all life was spent locked in an unequal battle with the mighty British Empire. His strength came to him on account of his spirituality and practice of non-violence and truth. In wider sense, these are the critical elements for the success of practicing sustainable development in true spirit. In brief, his whole life was his message and a lesson on "protecting and conserving Environment along with the development process," not only for Indians, but also for the whole world to follow at large.

Gandhiji felt "industrialization is going to be a curse for mankind. It cannot provide jobs for its millions of citizen and in addition it would be creating pollution problems, whereas, developing thousands of cottage and village industries would provide an outlet for the creative facilities and resourcefulness of the people. It would also usefully employ many persons, who are in need of employment, which in return in fact would add to the national wealth too. The big industries can never overtake the unemployed millions. Their aim is primarily to make money for the few owners. Dead machinery must not be pitched against the millions of living machines. If we compare between the Gandhian model of bottom up rural development and Nehruvian model of top-down industrial development; we can visualize that Gandhian models lead to an economy of permanence and based largely on renewable, where damage to the environment is minimum and manageable, while the latter is based largely on non-renewable and causes environmental pollution. And de-pollution is far more expensive. Moreover in reality what we find today even after 68 years of independence is the rich have become richer and the poor have become poorer.

Gandhiji's theory of economic equality went hand in hand with his theory of equal distribution of wealth. The real implication of equal distribution is that each man shall have the means to supply all his natural needs and nothing more beyond this. To bring this ideal into being, the entire social order has to be reconstructed. We must always bear the goal in mind and work continuously to achieve it. Gandhiji has suggested the practical way and means, how to bring this theory of equal distribution into reality. One should reduce one's want to a minimum, bearing the poverty of others in mind. His earnings should be free of dishonesty; there should be no desire for speculative earnings. Gandhiji was of the firm belief that work, and culture, should not be separated. Really there is enough hands and feet, God has given everyone the capacity to work and earn more than his daily bread. No labour is too mean for one who wants to earn an honest penny. To be honest to oneself is to be like pro in protecting nature.

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Gandhiji abandoned the luxurious life, which he could have easily afforded and identified himself with less polluting poor people. This is because perhaps- one of the basic and profound tenants of Gandhian environmentalism, is that – "the earth provides enough to satisfy everyone's need; but not for anyone's greed." Here is a statement that makes Gandhi a prophet not of the past but also of the future. The statement related to the most basic and fundamental question as to what is enough for need based comfortable life style. If we take more than we need, we are actually taking from others. We are also taking from the future and destroying environment. Gandhiji opted for voluntary simplicity so as to end over-consumption ie consuming more than our need, because ultimately that would be at the expenses of earth's resources. According to Mr. Mustafa Jolba, former Executive Director (UNEP) – "unless we begin to use natural resources rationally and fairly, the world would face an environmental catastrophe as complete and irreversible as any nuclear holocaust." Gandhiji felt, we can use the bounties of nature; but not with an element of greed. He was a vegetarian and had compassion for all forms of life. In fact, he advocated – "man has no power to create life, therefore has no right to kill any life also." Gandhiji also believed that – Non-violence and compassion are not to be practiced only towards living beings, but also towards inanimate materials. Overuse of the latter, motivated by greed and the desire to undue profit at the expense of bio-sphere, is also violence, since it deprives others of the use of such materials."

Gandhi addressed himself to the problems of sanitation and told— "Sanitation should occupy the foremost place." A Latin proverb says that – a healthy mind is possible only in a healthy body. He also said – Ahmadabad cannot evade the responsibility of sanitation by pleading poverty. Anyone who fouls the air by spitting about carelessly, throwing refuse or rubbish otherwise dirtying the grounds; sins against man and nature. Man's body is the temple of god. Anyone who fouls the air that enters that temple desecrates it, his taking the name of lord Ram is in vain...

Gandhiji's environmentalism, was based on various ethical principles such as : non-violence, practicing and preventing truth, shunning the use of materials obtained by illegitimate means, celibacy- as a means of population control, neither coveting or amassing materials and wealth beyond one's need, sanitation of body, mind and surrounding, contentment with available resources austerity, introspection and meditation and even fasting for self purification and any dereliction of duties towards nature including human beings. In this process he controlled himself by himself, because, being a yogi, he had complete control over his body and mind. He did not preach anything anything that he did not practice himself. Other principles followed by him were emancipation and empowerment of women, and the welfare of poorer sections of the society. These principles, those Gandhiji adopted ultimately gave him an internationally acclaimed acceptance of a great pacifist, a democrat, a defender of rights and privileges of downtrodden and of women and last but not the least, a social and economic environment.

Once the great Nobel Prize winning Scientist, Sir Albert Einstein spoke on Gandhiji – "Generations to come, will scarcely believe that, such a person as this ever in flesh and blood, walked upon this earth". The moral influence which Gandhi has experienced upon the thinking of the people of the world, may be for more durable than it would appear likely in our present age... The best way to pay the proper homage to this immortal should today, is to adopt his basic principles and policies towards life through practicing the self-reliance and self governance; which ultimately would help to achieve environmentally sustainable development, enabling us to return a "Greener Globe" to our future generation, in fact from whom we have borrowed this planet.

PANCHAYATI RAJ IN ANDHRA PRADESH, KARNATAKA AND WEST BENGAL: A COMPARISON

Jagadevi D. Ganamukhi

INTRODUCTION:

Panchayati Raj (Rule of Village Committee) system, a three-tier system in the state with elected bodies at the Village, Taluk and District levels. It ensures greater participation of people and more effective implementation of rural development programmes. There will be a Grama Panchayat for a village or group of villages, a Tahsil level and the Zilla Panchayat at the district level. India has a chequered history of Panchayati Raj starting from a self-sufficient and self-governing village communities that survived the rise and fall of empires in the past to the modern institutions of governance at the third tier provided with Constitutional support.

The main responsibility of the Panchayati Raj Institutions is to accelerate the pace of development and involve all people in this process so that the felt needs of the people and their development aspirations are fulfilled. The decentralized planning is a multi-level planning process. It will have to start from lower level (Gram Panchayat), intermediate level (Mandal Parishad) and higher level (Zilla Parishad). Panchayati Raj Institutions are expected to play an important role in planning and implementing various developmental programmes.

States other than Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu did not make any worthwhile efforts to restore elected local bodies in rural areas. The love for grassroot democracy on the part of states introducing major reforms has also been questioned on the ground that the then ruling parties were motivated by a vested interest in accommodating local political elites in the power structure with a view to broaden and strengthen their power base. The restoration of democracy at the local level was definitely helpful in broadening the political base of the then ruling parties at the grassroots level in the respective states. Equally important is the argument that the ruling parties in other states were free to follow the same strategy. But did not.

There are, however, striking differences among the panchayati raj models of Karnataka, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh. These differences relate mainly to the extent of power devolved to PRIs, and financial and administrative autonomy. In Karnataka, all functions and functionaries of the development departments at the district and town levels and transferred to panchayati raj institutions. All governmental registered societies and corporations dealing with the implementation of specific Centrally sponsored schemes in the anti-poverty fields. District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), for example, were merged with the Zilla Parishad. Even West Bengal had not gone this far having kept the DRDAs outside the scope of PRIs. In this state, there is a separate chairman for the DRDA. The success of the centralisation experiment in West Bengal, especially the introduction of the scheme of formulation of village plans prepared by villagers themselves and the village-based district planning process is attributed to the commitment of the state government towards decentralisation. In fact, it has been widely acknowledged that the involvement of panchayat

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samitis has substantially helped to boost the performance levels in the sphere of land reforms and in various areas of development in West Bengal. The panchayat raj bodies in Andhra Pradesh are far behind in this regard. The powers given to them are not adequate. Their developmental role was dwarfed by the Development Board. The existence of the Development Board with a Minister presiding over it has the effect of depressing the role of the PRIs (Panchayat Raj Institutions) in the state.

There can be no genuineness about decentralisation unless there is assured devolution of funds to the Zilla Parishad and Mandal panchayats. The state budget of Karnataka is split into two providing a separate budget for panchayat raj bodies. The state legislature's action in this regard enables the statutory and automatic transfer of over Rs. 900 crore annually, both on plan and non-plan accounts, to the Zilla Parishad and Mandal panchayats. There is no provision for statutory allocation of funds among local bodies, let alone the machinery, in Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. In the latter, there are allegations that at present the financial devolution from the state government to the PRIs is done arbitrarily and on partisan lines. PRIs, which are in the good books of the ruling party, are being favoured at the cost of others. The chairmen of the zilla praja parishads belonging to the opposition party have protested several times against the indifferent attitude of the government towards PRIs in general and the ZPPs (Zilla Praja Parishad) held by the opposition party in particular.

Autonomy is the life-line for any local government to succeed in its responsibility. Without operational autonomy, the local echelons cannot function freely. The extent of autonomy statutorily conferred on the PRIs is noteworthy in Karnataka. No government official can suspend a resolution of Zilla Parishad or Mandal Panchayat. There is no provision enabling the Divisional Commissioner or, for that matter, any other government official to exercise control over these bodies. The plans and budgets formulated by the Mandal cannot be altered by the Zilla parishad or the state government. Similarly, the district plans of the Zilla parishads cannot be touched by the state government. There is no apex body above the Zilla Parishad, such as a District planning Board or a district planning and development council. The coordination of the functionaries at the district level is sought to be achieved by the Karnataka experiment under the aegis of the Zilla parishad rather than the legendary district collector.

Despite the fact that the revitalisation of panchayat raj in Andhra Pradesh is not as radical or promising as in Karnataka and West Bengal, the reforms in the state should be given credit for three things. Firstly, the new measure has paved the way for creating a smaller unit of administration facilitating better access to people at least in geographical terms. In Karnataka, there is no representative or executive body at the village level, whereas in West Bengal, a group of 10 to 20 villages with an average population of about 15,000 to 20,000 constitute the gram panchayat, which is too large to enable people's participation at the village level. In Andhra Pradesh, the Gram Panchayats have been retained without any alterations under the new dispensation. Moreover, the size of the middle tier has been reduced to one-fourth or one-third. Secondly, the increased percentage of reservations to SCs (scheduled castes) and STs (scheduled tribes) and introduction of reservations to backward classes have facilitated the sharing of powers and status by those at the lower strata of the society. Thirdly, direct election to the positions of sarpanch of gram panchayat, president of MPP (Mandal Praja Parishad) and chairman of ZPP had been introduced in the state. Election by direct method to the key position in PRIs is a step in the direction of greater democratisation. This mode of election to these positions. Indeed, the Ashok Mehta Committee had also favoured direct election to the position of chairman of mandal panchayat.

The presence of two apex bodies at the district level is also expected to be a source of some rivalry and friction even though the top echelon is expected to play only an advisory role in matters of development. It was feared that it would only have the overall effect of undermining the position of Zilla Paja Parishad Chairman. There is another threat to the powers of ZPP arising out of the powers of DPDM (District Planning and Development Mandals) which are not mentioned in the Act. It is doubtful whether the Zpp can exercise the powers permitted by the Act. Fears were also expressed that the government may empower the DPDM, so as to enable it to act as a super-Zilla Parishad.

It needs reiteration that despite some weakness, especially in the Andhra pattern, the reforms in Rural local government in the three states constitute a landmark in the furtherance of democratisation which is embedded with far-reaching implications. Following the rationale offered by the Ashoka Mehta Committee and votaries of federalism, most of the political parties claim that decentralised institutional pattern, being close to the people, will usher in the benefits of rapid economic development. It is argued that ministerial and parliamentary remoteness from the process of interaction between administrative organs and citizens, particularly of the rural areas, could be corrected by a process of devolution of power to the lower levels. Such a process could also serve as an upward pressure so that the higher tiers function more purposefully by concentrating on national or state level issues rather than preoccupying themselves with the identification of local needs. There is a striking similarity in the western predilection for the virtues of self-government in a small city or town, as the Greek city states and in contemporary united states and the romantic view of the functioning of gram sabhas in primary communities or villages in India. In both the philosophical traditions, the strongest possible case is made out for the virtues of the self-governing local communities. The Mehta Team's approach also typifies this perspective.

CONCLUSION:

The ups and downs through which panchayati raj had gone through indicate that the multitude of goals - democratisation, economic development, social upliftment, decentralisation, etc. - cannot be attained *ipso facto*. This is no less true of the reforms brought out recently by some states in India. The move by the previous governments of Congress I and Janata Dal at the Centre, gave a new lease of life to panchayati raj and accorded to it a central space in the country's political process. The succeeding government may also contemplate to bring some measures to strengthen these institutions. It is, however, important to recognise, before any move for reform, that if decentralisation is to succeed, it has to be carried out as an integral part of the broader federal polity involving devolution of resources to the states and a drastic curtailment of the powers and authority of the centre. The real issue is not "Power to the people," but an appropriate distribution of power at various levels. Level jumping in this scheme will be a source for an inchoate polity. Unless the states have adequate power and functions and are in a position to distribute them further to the grassroot institutions, any attempt to reform the panchayati raj system will meet the fate of previous attempts.

A comprehensive and clear-headed approach in this regard entails a philosophy besides clarity about the objectives and a clear demarcation of functions so as to avoid ambiguity and overlapping. It is also necessary to spell out the role of bureaucracy and establish channels of accountability. Such an approach would render credibility to the reform attempts and avoid the charge of making half-hearted moves. The prevailing statutory and administrative arrangements in Karnataka, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh and to a lesser extent in Maharashtra and Gujarat, offer

some illustrations for evolving a national level model for panchayati raj reforms. In smaller states like Goa and Pondicherry, the need for a district level body may be dispensed with.

There are a multiplicity of agencies dealing with rural development at the district level. The PRIs are only remotely connected with them, and in many states the rural development agencies are independent of the PRIs. Moreover, under the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, funds directly flow from the center to the panchayats. The state Government and the upper layers of the PRIs are kept out from this dispensation. This creates an anomalous situation and shows lack of an integrated perspective towards the federal polity as well as panchayati raj.

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ICT for Rural Local Government in India

JESUS I.C.N.RAJU

In a geographically and culturally diverse country like India , a system of accountable, efficient and transparent local government is indispensable for development and public service delivery at the grassroots level of society. Majority of the population lives in rural areas and out of the rural inhabitants around a quarter are conspicuously below the poverty line (BPL) and under extreme deprivation. Even after more than six decades of independence, many rural areas still lack basic infrastructure such as roads, water, electricity, hospitals, schools and so on.

India has established one of the largest systems of local governance of the world through the 73rd Constitutional amendment in 1993. It has adopted a decentralized strategy based on the principles of subsidiarity with a more active and area-based approach to rural development. Rural local governments (henceforth referred to as *Panchayats*) have been given a wide range of powers and duties related to rural development, implementation of anti-poverty programs, job creation, rural marketing, social and political empowerment of weaker sections of the society, and so on. Panchayats are also instrumental in mobilizing the dwellers and other agencies for designing and implementing rural development initiatives that are more adapted to local needs. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in rural areas signify India 's experiment with direct democracy at the grassroots level. The landmark 73rd Constitutional amendment has brought a paradigm shift in the system of local governance. PRIs have become the nodal agencies for inclusive development in rural areas.

After a more than a decade and half, there is a growing realization that the system of Panchayati Raj needs to be re-energized and strengthened to address persistent development challenges more effectively and also to be responsive to emerging problems such as climate change, water scarcity, natural disasters, etc. Globalization and the information revolution have changed the nature of local polity through increasing competition and awareness among the villagers. The technology that is most transformative in today's society is Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Information and Communication Technology does not impact physical objects directly; instead, it moves and processes information. ICTs enable decisions to be taken, assemble data, store information, and pass messages around efficiently. Because ICT's focus is on information, it has a different layer of significance in society. ICTs produce content or information that has meaning, or at least an interpretation, and can inform all sorts of decisions. Therefore, ICTs have the potential to transform the system of governance.

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Realizing the transformative potential of ICT, the Government of India and various state governments have initiated the process of applying ICT measures to reform rural local governance for improving the delivery of public services through greater transparency and accountability

I.C.T FOR Panchayats:

Technically speaking, ePanchayat system is web-based and n-tiered; and functions like an *Application Service Provider* enabling Panchayat level digital services for all stakeholders. The stakeholders are citizens, elected representatives, Gram Panchayat officials, the governments and the knowledge workers. But it should not be merely perceived as an ICT enabled system of governance that provides public services on demand. It promotes virtues of good governance and deepens democratic values in society. It creates an environment in which people feel empowered, establishes a system that ensures people can easily avail their fundamental rights to information, and broadens the scope of local government.

The process of e-governance has already been started and Government of India has decided to open all places common services centers across the country under NeGP in order to make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, and ensure efficiency, transparency and reliability of such services at affordable costs to realise the basic needs of the common man. Now the Government of India has initiated the process to equip all Gram Panchayats with computers, or provide access to computers with broadband connectivity. All Panchayats at all levels need to be equipped with computing hardware and connectivity over the next three years. The approach would be to first use the kiosks being set up under the NeGP's Common Services Centres initiative. For the remaining Panchayats, it is proposed to engage independent service providers who would be selected on the basis of a bidding process. It has been also planned to equip all Panchayats with necessary software and skills to handle e-Governance for better delivery of services to citizens.

Several state governments have also taken initiatives to set up the ePanchayats to facilitate the development process and provide easy access to information to citizens. States such as Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Himanchal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Haryana and Goa have set up Panchayat portals to provide information regarding development schemes such as National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, organizational/departmental set up, developmental policies, annual reports, notification, evaluation reports of development programmes, status of development schemes, revenues etc. The common feature of the portals is that they give information in local languages like Telugu, Hindi, Gujarati, Kannada, etc. and about issues concerning the local people. These portals also act as a platform for users to know whom they have to approach for the processing of their applications and resolution of grievances. These portals are generally intra-linked with other state government departments that make them more service oriented.

The I.T.C.T Importance of ePanchayats:

The system of ePanchayat can provide tangible benefits to people of rural India in many ways:

Efficient Public Service Delivery: ePanchayats will be able to provide many people-centric services easily and efficiently under one roof. Birth and death registration and issue of certificates, payment of property tax, water tax and other utility services, grant of licenses, grant of building permissions, grievance handling and other services can be provided at minimal cost and with minimal delays. e-PRI will not only make the process of services delivery more efficient but also minimize malpractices and corruption.

Monitoring Development Programmes: Monitoring and evaluation of development programmes is another area where usage of ICT is essential. Online connectivity of each district with central ministries and departments would make transmission of data easy and most importantly, timely. It would also help to create a database of all development programmes being implemented in a particular district.

Financial Management: Through the 73rd amendment, the Government of India has devolved financial resources to Panchayati Raj Institutions to a considerable extent. Recent trends show that demand for more financial resources is growing. Panchayats are allowed to levy, collect and appropriate taxes, duties, tolls and fees in accordance with state laws to generate their own revenues. Therefore, a proper system of financial management is required at the grassroots level to ensure transparency and accountability. The Comptroller and Auditor General has prescribed simple formats for preparation of budgets and accounts by PRIs. These are proposed for adoption by PRIs. An application “PriaSoft” developed by the National Informatics Center will be deployed in e-PRIs. This would also help Panchayats in collection of revenues and enable tracking of the expenditure by funding agencies.

Facilitating Planning at the Grassroots level: Article 243G of the Constitution of India provides the provision for decentralized planning. Panchayats would have a major role to play in the process of planning at the grassroots level of society. To facilitate the process of planning Panchayats should be provided with relevant data. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has developed an application “PLANplus”, which is used in many backward regions of the country. It has also been planned to enable Panchayats with GIS tools to facilitate planning at the grassroots level. Therefore, e-PRI would certainly strengthen the process of planning at the grassroots level.

Information Dissemination: Easy access to information about the internal functioning of Panchayats and other services would be another distinguishing feature of the e-Panchayati Raj system. Internal functioning of Panchayats such as agenda of meetings, decisions taken and voting records can be kept and made accessible to citizens. Information regarding development programmes and beneficiaries of the programmes such as the BPL, pensioners and Census data can be provided. Information dissemination would certainly bring transparency in the development process. As reported in the Indian Express, the old age pension scam which has recently surfaced in several districts of Uttar Pradesh highlights the story of empowerment of ordinary villagers through information technology. It will also speed up knowledge and information across all tiers of Panchayats and other governmental departments.

People Participation: People participation, particularly participation of weaker sections and women in the development process is essential for equitable and inclusive development. Information dissemination and awareness generation can help to increase the interest of isolated and disadvantaged sections of society in the development process. ePanchayats make information available to all without any bureaucratic hurdle and help them become aware about services and schemes for development. This would certainly help to bring them in the mainstream of development.

Addressing New Development Challenges: New emerging challenges, such as climate change, water scarcity and natural disasters are posing serious threats to humanity. Since Panchayats are the institutions that are closest to the people, they can easily inform people in case of emergency. Thus, they must be made capable of performing such duties. People also need to be informed about the process of adaptation, mitigation, water conservation, and so on, so they can cope with upcoming and potential threats of climate change.

Problems and Prospects

Establishment of the ePanchayat in every village across the country is an elaborate process. ICT intervention should not be understood in isolation. ICTs function in a socio-cultural, political, and economic milieu. Their efficacy is contingent on the various forces and realities that coalesce to shape the environment into which they are introduced. To equip every Panchayat with a computer and to provide it with Internet connectivity would not be an easy task, if we look at the current status of Internet connectivity and other prerequisites for ICT enabled system of governance in rural areas. A workable system of ePanchayats warrants financial resources, computer applications, skilled human resource and political will.

The primary technological factors that can impede the reach of ePanchayats are the lack of infrastructure and trained human resources. Despite India being called the Information Technology capital of the world, its computer and Internet penetration (at 2.7 per cent and 4.9 per cent, respectively) are among the lowest in the world. Teledensity in rural areas is around 14 per cent. Slow progress in rolling out common services centers would delay process of ePanchayats. 100,000 common services center were to be opened up in rural areas by March 2009, but only 50,008 have been rolled out until now. Some states, namely Bihar, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Sikkim and Haryana have already operationalized more than 75 per cent of common services centers while others such as Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, and Uttarakhand lag far behind in the process.

If we think about other prerequisites for meaningful and workable ICT intervention, the issue of electricity comes first. More than half of the rural households are still not connected with electricity. Human resource is another challenge which can be a factor not only at the implementation level but also at the user level. Most Gram (village) Panchayat representatives and villagers are not computer-literate; even a simple computer application would be difficult to handle for them. Content creation in local language is another challenge. English is still an alien language in rural areas. The local population needs information in their local language and computer applications should also be in local language and simple. To a great extent, deployment of ICT in rural areas is still a top-down and supply driven approach. Application of ICT is a political issue because it

has the potential to transform the socio-political dynamics of national and local polity. Therefore, its deployment largely depends on how the political elite of the nation take it.

Despite the genuine problems of infrastructure and other prerequisites for ePanchayats in rural India , prospects do not seem all that grim. Governments at both the central and state levels have the vision and strategies to bridge the digital divide and provide supporting infrastructure in rural areas to enhance the capacity of Panchayats. Under the Bharat Niram programme, the Government of India has emphasized connectivity and other basic facilities. The Ministry of Power has introduced a scheme that aims at providing electricity in all villages and habitations within four years, thereby providing access to electricity to all rural households. It has been also proposed to achieve a rural tele-density of 25 per cent by means of 200 million rural connections by the end of the Eleventh Five Year Plan. The Eleventh Five Year Plan has also targeted providing broadband connectivity for all secondary and higher secondary schools, all public health care centers and Gram Panchayats. The cost of hardware and software could be higher in the first phase of installation, but it will come down substantially once the system is deployed.

To sum up, ePanchayats are the need of the hour as people in rural areas are still deprived of basic facilities for a decent life. Common wisdom says that poverty and deprivation exist not only due to lack of resources but also persist because of inefficient and malfunctioning institutions. In the emerging knowledge society and information revolution, Panchayats should not be left in isolation. They should be provided with adequate technological resources in order to be able to play a meaningful role in the course of development.

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INDIRAMMA Housing scheme in panchayats

JESUS o. jaya kumari

Governments have been implementing many programmes over the Years for development of infrastructure and on individual welfare. Since there is always a universal aspiration of all the people to be part of this developmental process, the impact of the programmes implemented so far is not quite visible due to the scattered nature of the distribution of the resources. While sanctioning programmes and welfare measures all the genuine requirements of the villages/towns are not being considered, resulting in avoidable dissatisfaction among the public. Keeping the above in view, Andhra Pradesh Government have taken a decision to take up development of model villages and towns with an intention to saturate certain identified basic needs of the people and the village/town Infrastructure In an integrated and focused manner . This new model of development is named as "**INDIRAMMA**" (Integrated Novel Development in Rural Areas & Model Municipal Areas) to fulfill the dreams of our former Prime Minister, **Smt. Indira Gandhi.**)

Concept

INDIRAMMA is the flagship programme of Government of AP to deliver a package of 9 services like housing, pensions, drinking water, roads, elementary education, electricity, ICDS, health and sanitation to the rural and urban poor The programme is implemented in 1/3rd area of the State

Each year so as to achieve complete coverage of the State within 3 years. Housing is the most important component of INDIRAMMA, since it is a permanent, life-long asset. As per the census data, there were 47 lakh rural households and 13 lakh urban households without a permanent house in

the State in 2006. The aim of Government is to ensure that all these households should be given a permanent house within 3 years. For this purpose, 1/3rd area of the State was taken up for coverage each year. Allotment of houses was done for all eligible poor households irrespective of the political affiliations. In case, a house site is needed, the same would be acquired and given at the cost of Government. The programme called for increasing the annual physical targets almost 10 times from the average levels. The budgetary allocations in the State annual budget have been raised to Rs. 5,000 Cr each year during the programme implementation period. Even with these allocations, it was difficult to meet the demands imposed by the programme and therefore linkages were established with the financial institutions and the self-help groups to supplement the efforts of the government in implementing the programme. In the Rule of late Dr Late Y.S.Raja sekher Reddy. was implemented and improve the INDIRAMMA housing scheme . And provided to so many poor people in Andhra Pradesh . But Now the INDIRAMMA housing scheme name was changed into N.T. R. housing scheme . we expected to be improved The N.T.R. Housing scheme in a success manner.

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INDIRAMMA Phase I (2006-2007)

The Phase I of INDIRAMMA programme was started in 2006 (the actual construction has begun only by December 2006) in 8,026 GramPanchayats and 1,317 municipal wards.

The programme implementation may be summarised as follows:

- 1) Identification of the beneficiaries by multi-departmental teams which visited each and every household in March 2006. Sanctions were made in the name of the woman of the household
- 2) Implementation by the beneficiary herself – no middlemen /no contractor
- 3) Transparency in selection –
- 4) Names read out in Gram Sabha
- 5) List of beneficiaries placed on the web site

Systems for execution:

- 1) Mandal level technical teams constituted with 5 members – (one Assistant Engineer, 4 outsourced work inspectors)
- 2) 3 Senior officers kept in charge of the programme in each Mandal
- 3) Weekly payment system to avoid delays
- 4) Village Information Agencies for close association with the village level functionaries
- 5) Disbursements through Banks or Village Organisation of Self Help Groups.
- 6) Supply of nearly 35 lakh MTs of cement at subsidised prices by the cement companies (responding to an appeal issued by the State Govt)
- 7) Training of 38,000 rural youth in masonry
- 8) Establishment of 700 building centres to produce Fal-G bricks and eco- friendly building material required for the houses.

Physical progress:

22 lakh houses have been sanctioned at a cost of Rs. 5,444 Cr. As on 23rd Jan. 2009, 13.50 lakh houses have been completed.

INDIRAMMA Phase II (2007-08)

8,037 Gram Panchayat and 1,487 Municipal wards have been taken up for coverage under the Phase II programme. Under the Phase II programme, sanction has been given for 22.92 lakh houses at a total cost of Rs. 6418 crores in rural areas and 2.79 lakh houses have

been sanctioned in the urban areas with a project cost of Rs. 1,117.31 crores. Till 23rd Jan. 2009, 6.97 lakh houses have been completed.

INDIRAMMA Phase III

The last phase of villages and wards are being covered under the Phase III programme. The identification process has been completed. The improvements made under this phase are – sanction of the house at the door step of the beneficiary by completing the entire documentation process in the village itself. The programme named Intinta INDIRAMMA has cut down the delays in sanction and the related bills. Till 2nd Jan. 2009, 20.61 lakh beneficiaries are found eligible during Intintive INDIRAMMA and the online data entry is in progress. As on 23rd Jan. 2009, 2.83 lakh houses are at basement level.

ONLINE payment system

For a programme as decentralised as housing, a tight monitoring system was required to arrest irregularities. The programme is running in about 60,000 habitations across the State and without an IT enabled system, there was no way to control the programme. With the help of Centre for Good Governance (CGG) an online system for payments and monitoring has been devised as per the following details:

- 1) The data base of all the 45 lakh beneficiaries who are identified through a transparent process are entered and maintained in a central server and made available to the public through the website.
- 2) Whenever payment is to be made, the Housing cell would log-in to the website and promote the beneficiary from the previous stage to the next stage by a user-friendly system. On such promotion, Payment Release Order will be generated by the central server which can be printed at the mandal level and sent to bank.
- 3) The schedule of payments are determined and controlled through a central server which ensures delivery of envisaged payments on reaching a stage of construction.
- 4) All payments are made through an online payment system directly to the accounts of the beneficiaries.
- 5) Nearly Rs. 15 Cr per day are disbursed to the beneficiaries using this online system which makes it one of the biggest e-governance initiatives in the country.
- 6) The MIS is completely automated and the progress in each village can be seen on a real time basis based on the payments made for achieving a stage in construction.

House sites for poor:

8,50,000 house sites have been provided to the poor in 2 year period - either by allotting government land or by acquiring private land. Apart from this, another 7,50,000 poor have been given rights over their lands. Each year Rs. 500 Cr have been spent on the land acquisition for the house sites.

OBJECTIVES

Andhra Pradesh is the first State in the Country, to establish an exclusive organization, APSHCL, to pursue on the following objectives:

- To formulate, promote and execute Housing Schemes for the benefit of people in general and particularly the Weaker Sections or persons living in Rural and Urban areas and to those who are affected or likely to be affected by natural calamities such as Cyclone and Tidal Waves.
- To undertake or regulate construction of houses and create or cause to be created other infrastructural facilities for the said housing scheme.
- To take up research and development activities in the field of construction and material management and to associate and collaborate with Government, individuals, organizations and associations how in the field of building construction, land development, environmental improvement and such other activities as are useful healthy commodities.
- Mobilizes loans from various Financial Institutions for implementation of Housing Programme.
- Plays the role of facilitator in the construction of houses by providing technical and financial assistance.
- Propagates Cost Effective and Eco-Friendly Construction (CEEF) materials and technologies in construction of houses.
- Imparts training for skill up gradation through Nirmithi Kendras.
- Encourages insitu production of alternative construction materials. Recovers loans from beneficiaries in monthly installments by motivation.

CONTRIBUTION OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Shivaputrappa G. Kambli

Introduction:

Panchayats have been the backbone of the Indian villages since the beginning of the recorded history. Mahatma Gandhi in 1946 had aptly remarked that the Indian independence must begin at the bottom and every village ought to be a Republic or panchayat having powers. Gandhiji's dream has been translated into reality with the introduction of the three-tier Panchayati Raj system to enlist people's participation in rural reconstruction in the 21st century village panchayats in India will be in the forefront of rural development towards this end, panchayats are to be given more powers finance and training panchayats growth, social development and facilitate good governance as well as sound micro-economic management.

Of all the institutions of the modern and independent India, Panchayati Raj institutions are oldest and original institution. They remained an integral part of self-sufficient village administration in ancient India. The British found it convenient for their objective even in its dismal days. They used it to collect revenue and consolidate their authority.

After independence, inspired by Gandhi's vision of "Ram Rajya" and realizing the practical significance of Panchayats, the leadership tried to revive the institution. They regarded it as the self-governing institution at the local level to ensure the effective participation of people in the process of growth and development. However, the history of Panchayati Raj system has not been uniform. It has witnessed many twists and turns, ups and downs.

Methodology of the study:

The present study is mainly based on secondary data. The sources of data have been collected from books, journals, magazines and websites.

Structure of Panchayati Raj Institutions:

As said before, the structure of Panchayati Raj (PR) varies from state to state. Some states have three-tier structure (Gram Panchayat at the village level, Panchayat Samiti at block level and Zilla Parishad at district level), whereas some have two-tier structure (Gram Panchayat at village level and Panchayat Samiti at block level). A few states have only single-tier structure at the village level.

In Rajasthan, the Panchayati Raj model is of three levels, viz., Gram Panchayats (village level), Panchayat Samitis (block level) and Zilla Parishads (district level). The chairperson of Gram Panchayat is known as Sarpanch, of Panchayat Samiti, Pradhan and of Zilla Parishad, Zilla Pramukh. Their nomenclature, composition and tenure vary from state to state. The structure and functions of the PRIs in terms of Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad are spelt out as under:

Zilla Parishad:

It is the apex body of the PR system located at the district level. It is also known as District Development Council in some states (such as Tamil Nadu).

It is composed of:

- (i) Chairpersons/Presidents of Panchayat Samitis within its jurisdiction;
- (ii) MPs, MLAs, and MLCs of the area;
- (iii) Members representing women, SCs and STs are co-opted if they are not otherwise members;
- (iv) Representatives of co-operative societies, municipalities of the area; and
- (v) Some persons having experience in the field of administration, public life or rural development are also co-opted.

The membership of the Zilla Parishad remains in the range of 40 to 60 persons. The elected head of Zilla Parishad is known as Zilla Pramukh (President). He is elected either directly or indirectly from amongst the members of the Zilla Parishad. Zilla Pramukh works through committees which look after specific works like education, planning and finance. The main sources of income of the Zilla Parishads are grants-in-aid from the state government, share in the land revenue and other taxes like the cess.

Constitutional Provisions and Major Landmarks in the Development of Panchayati Raj Institutions:

1. Article 40 provides that "The state shall take steps to organise village Panchayats and to endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government."
2. In 1952 Community Development Programmes were started (first in Rajasthan) to bring people within the ambit of planning.
3. In 1957 Balwant Rai Mehta Committee was appointed to review the working of Community Development Programme. Its recommendations had far reaching consequences for the Panchayati Raj institution
 - (i) Democratic decentralization
 - (ii) Democratically elected bodies at three levels (village, block and district)
 - (iii) Planning and development tasks to be assigned to local bodies.
4. In 1977 Ashoka Mehta Committee was constituted with members belonging to different political parties. It was first ever committee exclusively for PR bodies.
 - (i) Preferred two tier systems: Zila Parishad and Mandal Panchayat
 - (ii) Participation of political parties in the elections.
 - (iii) While Zila Parishad would be policy making, Mandal Panchayat would be implementing agency.
 - (iv) Entrusted compulsory power of taxation.
 - 64th Constitutional Amendment Bill (1989) introduced by Rajiv Gandhi Government
 - 74th Constitutional Amendment Bill (1990) introduced by V.P. Singh Government
 - 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (1992)

The 73rd Amendment Act passed in 1992 and implemented in 1993 marked a new era in the history of PR institutions. It added a new Part IX consisting of 16 Articles and Eleventh schedule to the Indian Constitution. By this amendment, Constitutional status has been conferred on PR bodies.

The 73rd Amendment Act (1992) marked a thumping point in the history of PR bodies. It showed that nation as whole, favoured the mechanism of democratic decentralization. However, very soon some of the dormant issues came to the forefront and continued to

hamper its functioning. Moreover certain ambiguities in the act also became clear. Chief Features

5. The key features of this Act are as follows:

1. Uniform three tier Panchayati Raj system at the village, intermediate and district levels. However, States with a population of less than 20 lakhs are given the option to avoid intermediate level Panchayat.
2. Gram Sabha has been hailed as foundation stone of the Panchayat System.
3. State legislatures by law may make provisions for the composition of the Panchayats.
4. Elections to all the three tiers and to the Chairperson of village Panchayat shall be direct.
5. The Chairperson of a Panchayat and other members of Panchayat shall have the right to vote in the meetings of Panchayat.
6. The Chairperson of Panchayat at the village level shall be elected in such a manner as the legislature of a state may by law, provide. The Chairperson of a Panchayat at the intermediate level or district level shall be elected by and amongst, the elected members thereof.
7. Reservation of seats for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in proportion to their population. Out of the total seats reserved for the SCs and STs Not less than one-third seats to be reserved for Women belonging to SCs and STs.
8. One-third of seats at all the three levels and also the Chairperson elected to three levels, to be reserved for women. It includes the number of seats reserved for SC and ST women.
9. The State Legislature may by law make provision for reservation of seats for backward classes.
10. State Legislatures may, by law, make provisions which enable the Panchayats to function as an institution of self government. It includes power of taxation.
11. There is a provision of a Finance Commission for reviewing financial position of the Panchayats. It has to be constituted every fifth year. The details are to be determined by State Legislature.
12. There is a provision of State Election Commission constituted by Governor. Subject to the provisions of any law made by the State Legislature, the conditions of service and tenure of office of the State Election Commissioner shall be such as the Governor may by rule determine. State Election Commissioner can be removed only in a like manner and on like ground as a Judge of a High Court.
13. The Governor can supersede the Panchayats by dissolving them. But, the election must be held within six months of dissolution. The Panchayats so elected shall remain in operation only for the remaining period of tenure.
14. The courts cannot interfere in the electoral matter of Panchayats. The validity of an election can be challenged only through an election petition presented to such authority and in such manner as provided by any law made by the legislature of a state.
15. **Following areas are provided immunity from Part IX**
 - A. Scheduled areas and Tribal areas
 - B. States of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram
 - C. Hill areas in State of Manipur for which District Councils exist
 - D. Darjeeling district of West Bengal Contribution of Panchayati Raj in Rural Development

Weakness and failure of Panchayat Raj:

Despite weaknesses and failure PR bodies had given following contribution in rural development-

1. Aroused public awareness in the area of governance.
2. Influenced participation of people in administrative tasks.
3. Prepared ground for emergence of a new leadership.
4. Made the exercise of planning more effective Panchayats after 73rd Amendment Act (1992) Conclusion

To sum, the history of Panchayats have witnessed many ups and downs. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment changed its course by assigning a constitutional status. A wide range of powers have been entrusted to Panchayat to fulfill the objective of democratic decentralization. It has much success to its credits. The Panchayats are no longer upper class, rich male's destinations.

They are neither an instrument of maintaining status quo. They have drawn millions of females and weaker sections of the society into political arena. They have aroused a feeling of common destiny. People have realized that Panchayats remain the basic tool to address their ill plight and translate their dream into reality.

Nevertheless, the vested interests are not ready to adjust to changes. Most often, Panchayats become a venue for drama. Ruthless violence during elections has feared the general people to an extent that they seldom participate in elections. Compulsory education in the spirit of constitution and effective socialization through media, civil society groups and intellectuals will have to play major role in this direction.

The above structure and functions of all the PR bodies have been changing over the years. It has aroused a spirit of self-help and popular participation to some extent among the rural people. The process of decision-making has come close to the rural people. It has also helped in the emergence of a new democratic leadership at the local level. But, the competitive elections have politicized the environment of all villages.

This spirit has even entered into the family circles also. It is alleged that panchayat elections have given birth to caste politics (casteism), communal politics (communalism) and groupism and factionalism in the villages.

It is also alleged that due to panchayat elections, a 'cold war' atmosphere prevails among various sections of the village people. Some studies made on the PR system revealed that functional tensions are on the increase and this can be seen during elections and panchayat meetings.

The so-called harmonious relations of the villages have almost vanished. People did not extend full cooperation from the core of their heart to the panchayats and as a result developmental activity has slowed down. Theoretically, the decisions had to be taken by the non-officials at all the three tiers of the PR system, but in practice, it was the government officials who used to take the decisions.

The non-officials (Panch or Sarpanch) being illiterate and uneducated could not wield their power. Most of the benefits of development programmes initiated by PRIs were cornered by the high castes and big peasants. The poor segments of society remained neglected as before. There was a great lack of coordination among the three tiers.

Conclusion:

Thus, to conclude, it can be stated that the devolution of power to the people without requisite development of character, training and capacity had been found to be a curse in the functioning of democratic institutions in our country and there were apprehensions that this new step in democratic decentralization, designed to be blessing, would turn out to be a curse to the people in the villages. The success of the step more than anything else depended on the quality of elected representative—Panchas and Sarpanchas—of these institutions.

No institutional change can bring about climatic change or strengthen the roots of democracy in this country, if it is divorced of the spirit behind it. In the absence of this basic change, which is a sine qua non to all other changes, we doubt, if institutional changes alone will take the country very far.

In the beginning, responsibility for the planned development of the country through CDP and cooperative institutions was imposed on the people who were expected to discharge them in PRIs who were mostly uneducated and untrained mass of people.

But there is a great change now in this condition. Obviously, such a step, though basic and pregnant with great possibilities to strengthen the roots of democracy, was fraught with grave risks, disappointments and failures in its traditional phase.

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Problems faced by women functionaries in panchayati raj institutions

G. priyanka

INTRODUCTION:

As per provisions contained in Article 243 D of the constitution, 1/3rd of the seats of Panchayati Raj Institution (PRIs) and 1/3rd offices of the chairpersons at all level of PRIs covered by part ix of the constitution are reserved for women. 73rd constitutional Amendment Act 1992-A is a big leap for political empowerment of women. The Act gave specific constitutional mandate to the state governments for the establishment of three tier structure for local self –governance. One of the land mark feature of the 73rd constitutional Amendment is that not less than one-third of the total number of offices of the chairpersons and members of various PRIs has to be reserved for women.

The following states have made legal provision for 50% reservation for women among members and surpanches: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Jarkhand, Kerala, Maharastra, Odisha, Rajastan, Tripura and Uttrakhand.

Objectives

1. social and economic disadvantages
2. mostly illiterate
3. male domination
4. must build up self confidence for women.
5. The traditional institutions have not given space for women
6. Interference of government official and other influence persons in their jurisdiction.

ROLE OF WOMEN: since the passing of 73rd constitutional Amendment Act, the major change that took place in context of women functionaries of PRIs was political Representation of women increased through reservations. The words women and challenges are almost synonymous terms. This is because the Indian society is not very open for women. Women face challenges both at the political and social levels. The goal of devolving power to women through decentralization of powers by enactment of the 73rd constitutional Amendment Act has achieved certain objectives. despite gender imbalance and bias in the institution of local –self government at the grass root

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level, the influence of women's participation in leadership activities lead to 1. women are talk about to human rights 2. get educated about their powers and responsibilities as Panchayat Leaders. 3. Build their capacity for further work. 4. creat plans for villages to meet basic needs. 5. enabeles women to organize against the evil of drinking alcohol and even mobilized public opinion for a policy of prohibitions. Some women representatives asked for girl child education.

Women Illiterate: The reason for low political participation of women were that they were not independent voters or representatives majority of them were illiterate they made their choice as per suggestions of male members of the family. Education is the most important in women life. Because she's develops capabilities and the confidence to make decision in ones life. Education will make rural women more comfortable and skilled in interaction and assertive in promoting their interests.

MALE DOMINATION: This is a male dominated society. We see men dominating women in every sphere mainly in the villages. The male dominance in Governance in India is a history in itself, and it is just a matter of time when merit take precedence, and the inherent biases diminish. So many women surpanches, work under the husband control.

About one million women entered in the first election of panchayat's after 73rd constitutional Amendment Act. About 40% of the elected women, represented the marginalized sections. However, about 70% women representative were illiterate and most of them had no previous political experience. But the apprehension that they will be manipulated by men has been largely disapproved. The entry of women has deep impact on Gender equality. We can say that women have to go a long way to make on impact on the rural power structure. But they have certainly made their presence felt in the power struggle once dominated by men.

ELIMINATE MALE DOMINATION:

1. Ensuring that only elected members attend Grama Panchayat formally.
2. Monthly meeting must be conducted between women representatives and administrators for education of women members.
3. Special effort to raise self-confidence of women representatives.
4. Government must conduct Training Programmes about how to run panchayats and provide Information about rules and regulations of administration of Grama Panchayats.
5. Government have to conduct legal literacy camps for all village women.
6. Government must encourage Girl child education and give employment opportunities for women.

7. Government must concentrate to improve rural literacy rate and control dropouts.

CONCLUSION: 73rd constitutional amendment opened gates of opportunities in different fronts for women's. The policy of political empowerment of women aims at eliciting their active participation in decision making process in these institutions. Unanimously women are an oppressed class due to male dominance. But women as a nation we must change this situation for achievement of the goal of Rural Development.

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April 24 1993 is a red –letter day in the history of Panchayati Raj in India as on this day the constitution 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 came into force to provide constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj institutions.

73rd Amendment

The salient features of the Act are:

To provide 3tier system of Panchayati Raj for all States having population of over 20 lakhs.

To hold Panchayat elections regularly every 5 years.

To provide reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women.

To appoint State Finance Commission to make recommendation as regards the financial powers of the Panchayats.

To constitute District Planning committee to prepare draft development plan for the district as a whole.

Definition -In this Part, unless the context otherwise requires:- a) "district" means a district in a State; b) "Gram Sabha" means a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of Panchayat at the village level; c) "Intermediate level" means a level between the village and district levels specified by the Governor of a State by public notification to be the intermediate level for the purposes of this Part; d) "Panchayat" means an institution (by whatever name called) of self-government constituted under article 243B, for the rural areas; e) "Panchayat area" means the territorial area of a Panchayat; f) "population" means the population as ascertained at the last preceding census of which the relevant figures have been published; g) "village" means a village specified by the Governor by public notification to be a village for the purposes of this Part and includes a group of villages so specified. 243-A.Grama Sabha - A Gram Sabha may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide. 243-B.Constitution of Panchayats -(1) There shall be constituted in every State, Panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels in accordance with the provisions of this Part. Notwithstanding anything in clause (1), Panchayats at the intermediate level may not be constituted in a State having a population not exceeding twenty lakhs. 243-C.Composition of Panchayats -(1) Subject to the provisions of this Part, the Legislature of a State may, by law, making provisions with respect to the composition of Panchayats : * Inserted vide Constitution

73rd Amendment Act, 1992 and came into force on 22.04.1993. Provided that the ratio between the population of the territorial area of a Panchayat at any level and the number of seats in such Panchayat to be filled by election shall, so far as practicable, be the same throughout the State. (2) All the seats in a Panchayat shall be filled by persons chosen by direct election from territorial constituencies in the Panchayat area and, for this purpose, each Panchayat area shall be divided into territorial constituencies in such manner that the ratio between the population of each constituency and the number of seats allotted to it shall, so far as practicable, be the same throughout the Panchayat area. (3) The Legislature of a State may, by law, provide for the representation - a) of the Chairpersons of the Panchayats at the village level, in the Panchayats at the intermediate level or, in the case of a state not having Panchayats at the intermediate level, in the Panchayats at the district level; b) of the Chairpersons of the Panchayats at the intermediate level, in the Panchayats at the district level; c) of the members of the House of the People and the members of the Legislative Assembly of the State representing constituencies which comprise wholly or partly a Panchayat area at a level other than the village level, in such Panchayat; d) of the members of the Council of States and the members of the Legislative Council of the State, where they are registered as electors within - (i) a Panchayat area at the intermediate level, in Panchayat at the intermediate level; (ii) a Panchayat area at the district level, in Panchayat at the district level. (4) The Chairperson of a Panchayat and other members of a Panchayat whether or not chosen by direct election from territorial constituencies in the Panchayat area shall have the right to vote in the meetings of the Panchayats. (5) The Chairperson of - a) a Panchayat at the village level shall be elected in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide; and b) a Panchayat at the intermediate level or district level shall be elected by, and from amongst, the elected members thereof. 243-D. Reservation of seats - (1) Seats shall be reserved for a) the Scheduled Castes; and b) the Scheduled Tribes, in every Panchayat and the number of seats so reserved shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in that Panchayat as the population of the Scheduled Castes in that Panchayat area or of the Scheduled Tribes in that Panchayat bears to the total population of that area and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat. (2) Not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled Tribes. (3) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat. (4) The offices of the Chairpersons in the Panchayats at the village or any other level shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide:

the Panchayat Raj Institutions were in existence in various forms in various States, these institutions did not acquire the status and dignity of viable and responsive people's bodies due to a number of reasons including absence of regular elections, prolonged supercession, insufficient representation of weaker sections like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Women, inadequate devolution of powers and lack of financial resources. In the light of the experience gained and the short-comings that had been observed, the 73rd amendment of the Constitution was enacted in 1992, to enshrine in the Constitution certain basic and essential features of Panchayat Raj Institutions to impart certainty, continuity and strength to them. A number of fundamental changes were brought about in the Panchayat Raj System by virtue of

this Act. Pursuant to this, the Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act 1994 was enacted and it came into force with effect from 22.04.1994.

a) Introduction of a three tier system – at the Village, Intermediate (Block) and District levels. [There are 12,618 Village Panchayats, 385 Panchayat Unions (coterminous with Blocks) and 29 District,Panchayats,in Tamil,Nadu].

b) Mandatory conduct of Local Body elections every five years and conduct of elections before the expiry of the duration of the Local Body or before the expiry of a period of 6 months from the,date,of,its,dissolution.

c) Introduction of reservation of seats(i.e. ward members) and offices (i.e. Chairpersons/Presidents) for Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population in every Local Body with provision for rotation of the reserved seats and offices.

d) Introduction of reservation of one third of total number of seats and offices for women with provision for rotation.

e) Constitution of a State Election Commission as an independent body to conduct elections to both,rural,and urban,Local,Bodies,regularly.

f) Establishment of a quinquennial State Finance Commission to recommend devolution of resources from the State Government to the rural and urban Local Bodies.

g) Constitution of a District Planning Committee to consolidate the plans prepared by the rural and urban Local Bodies in the district with a view to prepare a comprehensive development plan for,the,district.

h) Introduction of the concept of ‘Grama Sabha’ comprising all registered voters in a Village Panchayat.

Milestones in Decentralisation

1882	The Resolution on Local Self-Government.
	The Royal Commission on Decentralisation.
1948	Constitutional debates on Gram Swaraj, ‘Self-rule’
1950	Enactment of Madras Villages Panchayat Act 1950 in Tamil Nadu.
1957	Balwantrai Mehta Commission – an early attempt to implement the Panchayat structure at district and block (Samithi) levels.
1958	Enactment of Madras Village Panchayat Act 1958 in Tamil Nadu.
1963	K. Santhanam Committee – recommended limited revenue raising powers for Panchayats and the establishment of State Panchayati Raj Finance Corporations.

1978	Ashok Mehta Committee – appointed to address the weaknesses of PRIs, concluded that a resistant bureaucracy, lack of political will, ambiguity about the role of PRIs, had undermined previous attempts at decentralization, recommended that the District serve as the administrative unit in the PRI structure.
1985	G.V.K. Rao Committee – appointed to address weaknesses of PRIs, recommended that the block development office (BDO) should assume broad powers for planning, implementing and monitoring rural development programmes.
1986	L.M. Singhvi Committee – recommended that local self-government should be constitutionally enshrined, and that the Gram Sabha (the Village assembly) should be the base of decentralized democracy in India.
1992	The 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution – PRIs at district, block and village levels are granted permanent continuous nature. The Gram Sabha is recognized as a formal democratic body at the village level.
1994	Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1994 enacted on 22.04.1994.
1996	1st ordinary Local Body Elections in Tamil Nadu.
1997	The First High Level Committee under the Chairmanship of Thiru.L.C. Jain, the then Member of State Planning Commission submitted its recommendations on devolution of powers and functions to rural Local Bodies in April, 1997.
1999	The Second High Level Committee under the Chairmanship of the then Hon'ble Rural Development and Local Administration Minister, Thiru.Ko.Si.Mani, submitted its report on devolution of powers and functions to Rural Local Bodies on 11.01.1999.
2000	2nd ordinary Local Body Elections in Tamil Nadu.
2006	3rd ordinary Local Body Elections in Tamil Nadu.
2007	The Third High Level Committee headed by Thiru M.K.Stalin, Hon'ble Minister for RD&LA was constituted to examine the scope for further devolution of powers and functions to rural and urban Local Bodies.

Panchayati raj has 3 levels: Gram panchayat (village level), Mandal Parishad or block samiti or panchayat samiti (block level) and Zila parishad (district level)

The term "panchayati raj" is an ancient concept that has been adopted by the people of Bharat for their local administration of a village. *Raj* means "rule". Mahatma Gandhi advocated *Panchayati Raj*, a decentralized form of Government where each village is responsible for its own affairs, as the foundation of India's political system. The term for such a vision was *Gram Swaraj* ("village self-governance"). The leader of the panchayat was generally called the mukhiya or sarpanch, an elected position.

Various Committees on Panchayati Raj :

1. Balwant Rai Mehta : Estd 1957
2. V.T. Krishnamachari : 1960
3. Takhatmal Jain Study Group: 1966
4. Ashok Mehta Committee: 1977
5. G.v.k rao committee: 1985
6. Sarkaria Commission: 1986
7. Dr.L.M.Singhvi Committee:1986

Recommendations of Balwant Rai Mehta Committee

The panchayat raj system was first adopted by the state of Rajasthan in Nagor district on 2nd Oct 1959. The second state was Andhra Pradesh, while Maharashtra was the Ninth state. 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 the Indian Constitution, with the 73rd amendment in 1992 to accommodate the idea. The Amendment Act of 1992 contains provision for devolution of powers and responsibilities to the panchayats, both for the preparation of economic development plans and social justice, as well as for implementation in relation to 29 subjects listed in the eleventh schedule of the constitution.

The panchayats receive funds from three sources:

1. Local body grants, as recommended by the Central Finance Commission
2. Funds for implementation of centrally sponsored schemes
3. Funds released by the state governments on the recommendations of the State Finance Commissions

In the history of Panchayati Raj, in India, on 24 April 1993, the Constitutional (73rd Amendment) Act 1992 came into force to provide constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj institutions. This act was extended to Panchayats in the tribal areas of eight states, namely Andhra, Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal, Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan starting 24 December 1996.

The 3-tier system of Panchayati Raj consists of:

1. Village-level Panchayats
2. Block-level Panchayats
3. District-level Panchayats.

Powers and responsibilities are delegated to panchayats at the appropriate level:

Block panchayat

is a local government body at the tehsil or taluka level in India. This body works for the villages of the tehsil or taluka that together are called a Development Block. The panchayat samiti is the link between the gram panchayat and the district administration. There are a number of variations of this institution in different states. It is known as Mandal Praja Parishad in Andhra Pradesh, Taluka panchayat in Gujarat, Mandal Panchayat in Karnataka, Panchayat Samiti in Maharashtra etc. In general, the block panchayat is a form of the Panchayati raj but at a higher level.

Constituency

The constituency is composed of ex-official members (all sarpanchas of the panchayat samiti area, the MPs and MLAs of the area and the SDO of the subdivision), co-opt members (representatives of SC/ST and women), associate members (a farmer of the area, a representative of the cooperative societies and one of the marketing services), and some elected members.

The samiti is elected for 5 years and is headed by the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman.

Departments

The common departments in the Samiti are as follows:

1. General administration
2. Finance
3. Public work
4. Agriculture
5. Health
6. Education
7. Social welfare
8. Information technology,
9. Water Supply Dept.
10. Animal Husbandry and others.

Reservation for women in PRIs in India[\[edit\]](#)

The Union Cabinet of the Government of India, on 27 August 2009, approved 50% reservation for women in PRIs (Panchayati Raj Institutions). The Indian states which have already implemented 50% reservation for women in PRIs are Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.^[4] As of 25 November 2011, the states of Andhra Pradesh, Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharastra, Orissa, Rajasthan and Tripura also reserve 50% of their posts for women.

"ELEVENTH SCHEDUL (Article 243G)

1. Agriculture, including agricultural extension.
2. Land improvement, implementation of land reforms, land consolidation and soil conservation.
3. Minor irrigation, water management and watershed development.
4. Animal husbandry, dairying and poultry.
5. Fisheries.
6. Social forestry and farm forestry.
7. Minor forest produce.
8. Small scale industries, including food processing industries.
9. Khadi, village and cottage industries.
10. Rural housing.
11. Drinking water.
12. Fuel and fodder.
13. Roads, culverts, bridges, ferries, waterways and other means of communication.
14. Rural electrification, including distribution of electricity.
15. Non-conventional energy sources.
16. Poverty alleviation programme.
17. Education, including primary and secondary schools.
18. Technical training and vocational education.
19. Adult and non-formal education.
20. Libraries.
21. Cultural activities.
22. Markets and fairs.
23. Health and sanitation, including hospitals, primary health centers and dispensaries.

24. Family welfare.
25. Women and child development.
26. Social welfare, including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded.
27. Welfare of the weaker sections, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.
28. Public distribution system.
29. Maintenance of community assets."

PANCHAYAT RAJ IN KOLLERU VILLAGES- A CASE STUDY OF MANDAVALLI MANADAL

M.Sri Devi

The election in kolleru villages, be it the panchayat election or the general election, will never go beyond the confines of the caste panchayats, an age –old practice in the predominant Vaddi Community living on fishing in the water body for generations. The so-called unity already enforced by the caste elders with in the community will avoid the contest and obviously pave the way for Unanimous election in most of the – Kolleru Villages.

The Vaddis,warriors by nature, were said to have descended from Cuttack in Odisha during the period of Gajapati Kings to wage a war against the local king of Kollitikota the 14th -15th century and settled in Kolleru in later period.

The word the panchayat runs the write in the community. The people who defy the diktat have to face harsh punishments, which include social boycott, ferial of incomes generating from the common properties such as fishponds and welfare schemes of the government to be delivered to the beneficiaries only through the caste elders, etc.The tradition habit that 25-30 families in each village have several of such masteries to be headed by “Pedda Vaddi” for the village as a whole.

The Current 2014 panchayat election is unlikely to witness contest in more than 40% of gram panchayats due to the presence of caste panchayats.Information regarding the unanimous elections in kolleru village already started trickling in right from the day one the nomination phase has begun.

Divergent views are expressed over the merits and the demerits of the practice of caste panchayats.The Vaddi leaders claim that the caste unity archived through the panchayats helps in setting an agenda of a common interest like development of village for the political parties to persue.There are 122 gram panchayats under the seven mandals in West Godavari and two mandals in the Krishna District. The paper tries to explain Mandavalli Mandal Panchayat Raj leaders’ performance.

Present study carried out in the following Objectives.

1. To know the socio economic profile of Women panchayat raj leaders
2. To study before and after status of Women panchayat raj members
3. To find out the impact of panchayat Raj reservations in Empowering Women.

Methodology

The present study was under taken in Mandvalli Mandal of Krishna District,Andhra Pradesh. The study is based on primary data ,it was collected by using well prepared interview schedule thus to women despondence were selected for the study ,universal population of 29.

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Random sampling as used for the selection of this mandal.

The researcher has been about the descriptive research design for the purpose of study.

50% age group of despondence is 31-35 years. followed by 30% are between the age group is 40-45

Education:

The education levels are responce some are aspecilly 60% are taken primary education(ie 1st to 5th)followed by secondary education (6th to 10th) One respondent have the M.Sc degree.

All respondents are married and all belongs to the Hindhu religion.

Findings:

Based on the study the following are the findings

1. More than 90% are not known about the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. And AP Panchayat Raj Act
2. In Majority Panchayats Caste Influence still Continue in Panchayat Raj Institutions.(Caste Panchayat's particularly Vaddi Caste.
3. In Majority Panchayats family members influence in the functioning of Gram Panchayats is continue (Particularly Surpanch's)
4. Grama Sabha was functioning properly, But the decisions are taken on the caste lines.
5. Majority Respondents wants to allocate more funds to Gram Panchayats ,and more than 90% are not actively participate in Mandal Meetings.
- 6.60% respondents accepted the MLAs and MPs involvements in PRIs.that 40% wants MLAs and Mps should be kept out from the panchayat raj Institutions
7. Majority member elected independently with out any Indirect support from the political parties.
8. All respondents request the government the provide more funds to PRIs.

A Paper on Panchayati Raj And Rural Development in India.

Dr. M.Lakshmi Pathi.

Abstract

The Paper presenter would like to focus in this paper is that the Evolution of Panchayati Raj System in India and Rural Development is post independent era.

India is rightly regarded as the land of Villages. In a country where eighty percent of population dwells in over five lakh seventy - five thousand villages, the importance of rural local government, popularly known as Panchayati Raj in India, Looks self - evident and beyond any doubt or dispute. Indeed, thoughts on rural local government are but part of the larger concern for social and economic amelioration of the people, a task to which the country is irrevocable committed.

Panchayats have been amongst the oldest political institutions

of India, and the very use of this term as a deeply nostalgic association tending to take the mind to the distant and dim past. But in the form in which it is constituted and made to function today is a modern innovation. One need not very much go into the past and may, instead, start with the inauguration, on 2nd October 1952, in the country, of the Community Development Programme. This date was deliberately chosen to synchronise the programme with the birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, to whom nothing was dearer than rural amelioration. One cannot overestimate the significance of community development which was designed to be an ever - widening programme eventually to cover the whole countryside.

In 1957, the team for the study of community projects and national extension service, popularly known as the Balvantrai Mehta committee after the name of its chairman, published its report recommending a three-tiered system of rural local government, called Panchayati Raj in India.

The related developments in relations with rural development in India will be discusses at length in this paper.

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND SMART VILLAGE IN INDIA

1. V. Raj Laxmi 2. GVS Ravindra Babu

In the words of father of our nation Mahatma Gandhi, "Future of India lies in its village". Gandhiji rightly observed the potential of Indian villages and said that "If the village is perished then India will be perished too". The Philosophy of Panchayat Raj is deeply steeped in the tradition and culture of rural India. It provides for a system of self –government at the village level but it did not have a constitutional status till 1992. It was Rajiv Gandhi government in 1989, which made an attempt to confer constitutional status to Panchayat Raj at the national level. In 1993, Panchayat Raj was incorporated into the constitution by 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts. But the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) did not work successfully as it was expected in the development of rural areas with particular reference to agriculture, as it is the basis of livelihood for most rural families. Seventy percent of the Indian population still lives in the rural areas and agriculture is still providing employment to half of Indian population.

Most of rural populations in India are very poor and dependent on agricultural practices that have benefited little from modern technology. They live in isolated and often inhospitable places, with little access to the resources they need to improve their agriculture. Many lead their lives barely at subsistence level.

Smart village is an absolutely new and innovative concept, which aims to harness the benefits of information technology for the rural folks. The chief minister of A.P. Mr. N. Chandra Babu Naidu in 2015 unveiled a draft of Smart Village/Smart ward towards Smart A.P. There should be strong leadership in villages to monitor implementation of several central and state government schemes like access to toilets, providing safe drinking water, health, nutrition, environment protection, waste management, bank accounts for all households, telecom and internet etc.

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WOMEN IN PANCHAYATS

Dr.G.J.Sujnana Raju

ABSTRACT

“India is poor because the villages of India are poor. India will be rich if the villages of the India are rich. Panchayats should be given greater power, for we want the villagers to have a greater measure of real swaraj (self-government) in their own villages” (Jawaharlal Nehru, First Prime Minister of India).

Anno Domini 1993 saw history in the making. After a protracted exercise, in 1993 Presidential assent was accorded to the 73rd constitutional amendment bill which *inter alia* ensured the entry of women into rural local self governing units i.e. the panchayats, both as members and as functionaries. This was considered a gigantic step towards empowerment of women. The 73rd constitutional amendment spelt a sea change in the arena of women’s representation in PRI. It brought in a total departure from the erstwhile system of token nomination co-option of one or two women in panchayats as advised by B.R.Mehtha Committee (1957) and Ashok Mehta Committee (1978). Further, it also partially complied with the recommendation of the Committee on the status of Women which, way back in 1974 mentioned that earnest efforts should be taken for ‘establishment of statutory women’s panchayats at the village level with autonomy and resources of their own for the management and administration of welfare and development programmes for women and children, as a transition measure, to break through the traditional attitudes that inhibit most women from articulating their problems and participating actively in the existing local bodies’. (Panchayat Raj Report,2001.).

On August 27,2009 the Indian Cabinet approved a proposal for enhancing the reservation of directly elected seats for women from one third to fifty per cent in all the tiers through an amendment of Article 243(D)(3) of the Constitution. Article 243(D) (3) enumerates that ‘Not less than one third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a panchayat’. Along with this, rotational reservation of at least one third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons at all levels of panchayat was ensured through Article 243(D) (4). This amendment replaced this phrase of ‘not less than one third, with words, not less than half’. Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, hill areas of Manipur and tribal areas of Assam and Tripura will remain outside the ambit of the amendment.

WOMEN-PANCHAYAT-ELECTIVES AT THE INTERFACE OF STATE AND VILLAGE POLITICS:

K.Vijaya Kumari

I. Introduction:

Researching the modern(Indian) state and had been avoided for very long by disciplines coming from a qualitative paradigm. For one, the state was seen as too difficult to conceptualize, second it was understood as not being “researchable” with ethnographic methods. Only from the mid-1980s onwards, in particular after Evans, Rueschemeyer and Skocpol’s (1985) influential book “Bring the State Back In”, the interest from the previously rater skeptical disciplines in “the state”, or rater the interest in its local manifestations, increased. Mostly local bureaucrats and the ways how through them’ the state’ gets mediated with regard to the everyday lives of rural people came to the centre of attention(e.g Manor 1993,Gupta1995,Brass 1997, Fuller and Benei 2000) One common outcome of most of these recent studies has been that “the state” can not (any longer) be understood as“(…)a discrete, monolithic entity ‘acting’ impersonally above or outside society” but that“(…) the boundary between the state and society is in reality unclear, blurred, porous or mobile” (Fuller / Harriss 2000:10). The discerned “blurring” of state and society and society at the level of local bureaucrats and the latter’s re-interpretation of distant state policies “beyond recognition” (Kaviraj 1991:91) runs through many studies as an explanation for the apparent “failure of the state” to implement its policies successfully.

At the beginning of this paper I would like clarify my methodological approach by making a case for an actor-oriented approach and shifting the attention slightly away from the bureaucrats, focusing at the gram panchayat as an interface instead. I will consider the latter as situated in a gendered political arena where different political actors negotiate state interventions in an interactional process. For the sake of intelligibility, I reduce in this paper “state intervention” exemplarily to the “33% women’s quota” as prescribed by the 73rd and 74th amendment.

One of my arguments will be that the expectation that a “33% women’s quota in local governance” could be implemented by state intervention in a 1:1 translation according to the state’s professed sublime democratic ideals is misleading in the first place. In a society where within the dominant discourse gender is constructed in such a way that women are seen as unfit, too ignorant and naïve to do politics, where family honour is associated with gender segregation and a gendered division of labour designates reproduction work as women’s foremost duty,

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probably one should be (temporarily) content if the ongoing negotiation process gets pushed into hitherto impossible directions and some redefinitions and transformations in gender relations eventually take place.

Therefore, I will subsequently argue, by introducing one case study from Andhra Pradesh, that even in the context of societal expectation like extreme gender segregation – under which women’s political participation would be usually dismissed as impossible and non-existent-new female political spaces are created and gender relation are subtly altered.

This paper considers gram panchayat councils as an interface of the local village community with the state. Gram panchayat councils are bodies of self-governance at the village level in India and constitute the lowest tier of the reformed and re-institutionalized Panchayati Raj System.

Functioning of Gramasabha -Reality

D.Lavanya

Abstract

. Decentralization which ensures people's participation in planning and governance is considered an efficient instrument of conveying benefits to the poor with the least cost. The 73rd Amendment included the Gram Sabha or village assembly as a deliberative body to decentralized governance along with a three-tier structure of Panchayats from village to the district. It is a constitutional body consisting of all persons registered in the electoral rolls of a village Panchayat. The Gram Sabha has been given a vital role to play in improving the service delivery mechanism in rural areas. It provides a political forum to people in the village to meet and discuss their common problems, and consequently, understand the needs and aspirations of the community. It also provides a forum to meet, discuss, debate and analyze the development and administrative actions of elected representatives and thereby ensure transparency and accountability in the functioning of the village Panchayat. The Gram Sabha enables each and every voter of the village to participate in decision- making at local level.

Thus Gram Sabha is also to act as a watchdog in the interest of village communities by monitoring the functioning of the Gram Panchayat. This paper focuses on the real and effective functioning of the Gram Sabha especially in the planning process, selection beneficiaries and other important issues.

Keywords: Decentralization, 73rd amendment, gramasabha, efficient instrument, deliberative body, administrative actions, decision –making.

Panchayati Raj Institutions role in the success of the National Rural Health Mission: An Evaluation

*V. Rama Krishna, * R.Shashidhar** & Mrs. D. Smitha****

Abstract

In the backdrop of the National Rural Health Mission there are enough portents to suggest that PRI engagement in improving key health indicators will become a reality in India. The paper will discuss the role of PRI's in order to expedite the process and to make it more effective, consideration of key issues related to empowerment of panchayats through funds, human resources and capacity are critical. It is also important to study on role of Rural Health Training Centre (RHTC) as a supporting component to a primary health care system for NRHM Programme in this paper. Further the paper will deal with the performance of NRHM in Karnataka and it can conclude that PRI engagement is perhaps the only existing mechanism to achieve large-scale community participation and reach the marginalized and vulnerable, particularly women, children, and the poor.

Key words PRI's, NRHM, RHTC, Rural Development, Health, Women, Empowerment.

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About Swachh Bharat Mission

R.MADHURAMEENAKSHI

ABSTRACT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched his dream project "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan" on 2nd October 2014, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan or the "Clean India Campaign " is the biggest ever cleanliness drive in the country and Prime Minister had appealed to each Indian to get involved in the mission and make it a success.

Why this project started

It is very sad to say that the country has a massive problem of open defecation. More than 72 percent of rural people in India respond to their nature's call behind bushes, in fields or on roadsides. This has led to various other problems like untimely deaths of children, spread of infections and diseases and most importantly rapes of young girls who go to deserted places to relieve themselves. India has a population of more 1.2 billion people, out of which nearly 600 million people or 55 percent has no access to toilets. Even in areas, where there are toilets in rural India (32 percent of rural households, as per the 2012 data), there are no running water facilities available. Slum dwellers in cities have no access to running water supply and also toilets.

Considering this grave problem of rural sanitation in India and open defecation, the then UPA Government had launched Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan in 1999. In this Abhiyan, a target was set for universal household sanitation coverage by 2012. This was an integral part of the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) launched in 1991. However, the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan could not achieve its objectives.

Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan has now been restructured by the present Government as "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan" with the objective of making India a "clean" India by stopping the problem of open defecation, building up of toilets for all households, providing running water supply, treating of solid and liquid wastes in a proper manner. This drive also includes cleaning of roads, pavements, and clearing of encroachments in unauthorised areas. Above all, the project aims at creating awareness among people about the need for proper sanitation and hygienic facilities.

When it will be completed?

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, with the help of the Government of India, political parties, NGOs, corporations and with active people's participation, is slated to be completed in 2019. It was Mahatma Gandhi who laid great emphasis on cleanliness. He himself said "Sanitation is more

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important than Independence". He wanted India to be a clean India. He very well had a clear understanding of the pathetic condition of the rural people. It's been 67 years of Independence, and even today, more than half of India's population does not have proper toilets. Considering this fact in mind, the present Government of India wants to fulfil the dream of Mahatma Gandhi and usher a clean India by 2019, which will mark the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Efforts by Government

For proper execution of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, a 19-member expert team has been formed under the chairmanship of scientist Raghunath Anant Mashelkar. Mashelkar is the former director general of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). The entire team will be involved to suggest the best and the most advanced technology to provide sanitation and water facilities in various states using methods that are affordable, sustainable, and scalable.

On 2nd October 2014, when our PM launched the mission, he was accompanied by party officials, Bollywood actor Aamir Khan, thousands of government employees, school and college students. Prime Minister has been actively supported by his cabinet ministers. To make it a mass movement, he also nominated nine celebrities including Priyanka Chopra, Shashi Tharoor, Sachin Tendulkar and Anil Ambani to take up the cleanliness challenge, who in turn should invite nine more people and in this way the chain should continue. They have already accepted the challenge and have appealed more people to get involved. Some states have also participated in this cleaning campaign and more plans and programs are in the process to make this a success. **Implementation of Project**

: The "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan" has two sub missions

- Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (rural)
- Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (urban).

For execution of these two sub-missions, the ministries of drinking water and sanitation and rural development will look after the affairs in rural areas and the ministry of urban development in urban areas.

Under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan for the rural areas, the ministry of rural development will provide Rs 20 lakh to each village each year for the next five years. Under this programme, the government has fixed the unit cost of individual household latrines at Rs 12,000 so that ample water supply can be provided for cleaning, bathing and washing. An estimated Rs 1,34,000 crore will be spent by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation for the programme.

For Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in the urban sector, the aim is to provide individual household toilets, community and public toilets, including solid waste management, covering 1.04 crore households in all 4,041 statutory towns. It will provide more than two lakh seats of public toilets, and more than two lakh seats of community toilets, including solid waste management facility for all towns. In areas, where there are problems of constructing individual household toilets, community toilets will be constructed. Public toilet facilities will also be made available in common locations such as markets, bus stations, near railway stations, tourist

spots, and public recreation places. The urban development ministry has allocated Rs 62,000 crore for this project.

The overall project cost has been estimated at Rs 1, 96,009 crore. This amount will help in construction of 12 crore toilets across the country. The ministries of rural and urban development have requested religious gurus and groups like Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, and the Gayatri Parivar to propagate the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan project.

Major Issues of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

- According to Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Urban India generates about 47 million tonnes of solid waste every year. It is also reported that more than 75 percent of sewage or wastewater disposal is not treated in India. Recycling solid waste is a big problem. These issues need to be addressed now, so that a major crisis can be prevented in the future.
- In rural India, lack of adequate sanitation is a huge challenge.
- Another major challenge is to change the mindsets of the people. When will our countrymen learn not to spit or throw garbage on the roads? Or when will our people learn to keep themselves and their localities clean?

The dimensions of the problem of sanitation are so huge that it makes us wonder whether the PM will really be able to meet his target to clean up India by 2019 or not?

Controversy

While Prime Minister's Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has been highly acclaimed by many in India and abroad, there are still controversies involved in the mission. Similar programmes were launched earlier with little or no success, the most evident example being Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan. Controversies have come up because this programme too has more or less same ideas that were under UPA's Nirmal Bharat schemes. Huge amount of money was invested for that program that time. What was the outcome? Where did all the money go? But, as a matter of fact, this mission should not be involved in any kind of controversies. That is why, Narendra Modi said, "Swachh Bharat" mission is "beyond politics" and is inspired by patriotism.

IMPLEMENTATION IN GRAM PANCHAYTHI

Implementation of SBM (G) is proposed with 'District' as the base unit, with the goal of creating ODF GPs. The District Collectors/Magistrates/CEOs of Zilla Panchayats are expected to lead the Mission themselves, so as to facilitate district wide planning of the Mission and optimum utilization of resources.

The Baseline Survey data of 2013 collected by States and entered on the IMIS of MDWS by 31.1.2015 will be considered as the base for States where the survey is complete. For other States the data entered on completion of the Survey will be taken as the base data. A project proposal shall be prepared by the District,

scrutinized and consolidated by the State Government into a State Plan. The State Plan with district wise details will be shared with the Government of India (Swachh Bharat Mission-Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation). This Plan will include a 5 year Plan along with 5 independent Annual Plans which merge into the 5 year Plan. These plans shall be approved by the Ministry each year. On the basis of formative research and consultation rounds, the State shall develop a tailor-made Communication Strategy, a Communication Plan, and material and will train community mobilisers to use these tools. allowed to make inter-district changes in allocation of resources to the individual districts within the overall funding of the state as a whole as per the approved Annual Implementation Plan (AIP), in consultation with the MDWSThe State plans shall provide details of the IEC, BCC, Triggering exercise, Capacity building, Implementation, Financial support and Monitoring activities planned in each district, consolidated for all Gram Panchayats. The District-wise plans will have Gram Panchayat-wise details. The State Project Implementation Plans currently prepared by States on a perspective basis shall be revised based on the Baseline data and the revised norms of the SBM(G). The States will be

- Bring about an improvement in the general quality of life in the rural areas, by promoting cleanliness, hygiene and eliminating open defecation.
- Accelerate sanitation coverage in rural areas to achieve the vision of Swachh Bharat by 2nd October 2019
- Motivate Communities and Panchayati Raj Institutions to adopt sustainable sanitation practices and facilities through awareness creation and health education.
- Encourage cost effective and appropriate technologies for ecologically safe and sustainable sanitation.
- Develop where required, Community managed sanitation systems focusing on scientific Solid & Liquid Waste Management systems for overall cleanliness in the rural areas.

Households: De-centralizing the waste management solution

Do not create waste in the first place: It is unfortunate that people have stopped carrying cloth bags when shopping. In the bargain each one comes back with innumerable plastic bags which litter the entire country and harm cows, birds and other creatures. As per one of the leading newspapers, 200 cows in Delhi are being operated upon to remove 50 kgs of plastic from their stomachs. If we revere the cow, then should we not bring about this basic change in our attitudes and carry cloth bags vis-à-vis the convenience of plastic bags? It is important to educate the vast population of the intergenerational negative consequences of plastics.

Reduce wherever possible: While buying vegetables the leaves can be left in the mandi/market, so that the same is not disposed of at the residential level, only to be collected and dumped at the land fill sites of a few cities. Aggregation of vegetable leaves at source can be deployed for manure making, or gas generation through the bio-methanation process.

Cook potatoes along with their jackets, chop apples with the skin for fruit salad, dry orange peel for pickling – some very simple examples which we seem to be forgetting.

Use every part of everything: To extend the example of vegetable plants, many such leaves/parts of a plant can be eaten, for example the leaves of the drumstick tree and the stem of the banana plant, are used as delicacies in the southern states of India.

In my view, being frugal is the need of the day to handle waste and not by allocating costly scarce urban land for practices which we have followed for thousands of years, but have forgotten in the onslaught of modernisation and globalisation.

We should build toilets that are a cultural and climate fit

In the sanitation domain for public toilets, we need to breakdown the subject into three segments:

- Considering the huge numbers of toilets required, we will need different materials depending on the five agro climatic conditions and its impact on natural resources.
 - How are we going to handle the waste for productive purposes in farming through use of the waterless pan design- a product called eco san is already in use in the State of Kerala.
 - The pan design lends itself to segregation of urine and faeces. While the urine can be used for farming, the faeces can be composted. Needless to mention, introduction of attitude shifts and developing systems which are clean and user friendly need to be introduced.
 - It is of paramount importance that the people who work in this field are given dignity and respect as opposed to the caste system of the country which keeps them ostracised for performing cleaning services.
 - **Conclusion**
Mere launching a program is not enough, results matter. It is not only the Government who can make it a success, people's participation is of utmost importance. Also, a detailed blue print should be prepared for implementing the programme. India will definitely be a clean country in coming years provided the Government and the people participate in this Swachh Bharat Mission in a holistic manner.
-

NATIONAL SEMINAR IS PROPOSED ON PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF PRIS

P.Ratnakumari

In our Indian constitution Article 40 clearly mentions that the “States shall take steps to organize village Panchayat and endow them with such power and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government”.

The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment acts (CAA) provided constitutional status to the Panchayat Raj Institutions and urban local bodies.

Objectives :

To examine the problems and functioning of Gramasabha in its day to day developmental activities.

Our Indian Government declared 2009-2010 as year of Gramasabha as a mark to fulfill the Gandhian Ideology of Grama Swaraj or decentralization of powers and strengthening the Gramasabha. Every village Panchayat has to conduct Gramasabha meetings Four times per year. But the concept of Gramasabha did not fully succeed in our state. It became a ritual.

Village Panchayat is the lowest unit or basic unit of the three tier of the Panchayat Raj.

Normally there will be a village Panchayat for a minimum population of 2000.

It consists of 5 to 31 Members elected by the Gramasabha, through secret ballot for a period of five years. The Members are called Panchayat and the president as the sarpanch.

The Gramasabha is the general body of the local citizens comprising all the eligible voters in the village or group of villages over which the Gramapanchayat as the executive committee exercises its Jurisdiction. It is expected to meet twice a year, and work as the watch-dog of the Grampanchyat.

Every village Panchayat comprises four organs, namely 1 Panchyat 2 sarpanch 3. Secretary or Executive Officer 4. Gramasabha

2.)Surpanch :

The Surpanch is the Political head of the Panchyat. He presides over the meetings of village Panchayat. He was elected directly by secret ballot by villagers. His tenure is Five years he will have administrative control over the panchyat secretary and properties of panchayat vice president will be elected from the ward members.

3.Executive Officer :

The official executive of the Grampanchayat is appointed by the state government he implements the resolutions of the panchayat. Minor Panchayats have no Executive Officer. The collector has a power to transfer the E.O.S

4.Functions of Village Panchayat :

1. Maintenance of budget and accounts, collection and maintenance of records and statistics registration of birth, deaths and marriages, records of the villages cattle and land management .
2. Up keep roads and streets culverts and bridges, maintenance of drainage and sanitation, well and tanks , provision of water supply for domestic, supervision of street lighting etc.
3. Famine and flood relief work aid to the handicapped, welfare programs for women, youth, children and for backward classes, maintenance of panchyat schools libraries and reading rooms and holding of villages fairs etc.

5.Soruce of Income :-

1. Income from taxation on property .
2. Grant -in- aid from the state government
3. Public contribution and voluntary donations

Facing the Major problems of GramaSabha :

1. Not sufficient water purification and distribution
2. Poverty of population
3. Lack of Knowledge
4. Not cooperative with other members.
5. Interference of Political leaders

THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN SWACHH BHARAT PROGRAMME

Y.SWATHI

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, today gave its approval for a massive program called "Swachh Bharat Mission for Urban Areas". This is proposed to be implemented over 5 years starting from 2nd October, 2014 in all 4041 statutory towns. The total expected cost of the programme over 5 years is Rs. 62,009 crore, out of which the proposed Central assistance will be of Rs. 14,623 crore.

The programme includes elimination of open defecation, conversion of insanitary toilets to pour flush toilets, eradication of manual scavenging, Municipal Solid Waste Management, bringing about a behavioural change in people regarding healthy sanitation practices, generating awareness among citizens about sanitation and its linkages with public health, strengthening of urban local bodies to design, execute and operate systems to fulfil these objectives and creating an enabling environment for private sector participation in capital expenditure and operational expenditure.

The Programme consists of components for providing:\

- i. Individual household toilets,
- ii. Community and public toilets and
- iii. Municipal Solid Waste Management in all 4041 statutory towns.

It would cover 1.04 crore households, provide 2.5 lakh seats of community toilets, 2.6 lakh seats of public toilets and solid waste management facility for all towns. Community toilets will be proposed in residential areas, where it is difficult to construct individual household toilets, public toilets will be constructed in designated locations such as tourist places, markets, bus stations, near railway stations and places of public recreation wherever required.

The scheme will be part of a joint Swachh Bharat Mission to be implemented for rural areas by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation and for urban areas by the Ministry of Urban Development.

A National Advisory and Review Committee, headed by Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development and comprising of representatives of Finance and other concerned Ministries shall release funds, monitor and supervise the programme. A High Powered Committee headed by the Chief Secretary at the State level would steer the programme in its entirety. Detailed guidelines shall be prepared by the Government of India separately.