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**AN ANALYSIS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF
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An Analysis on the Development of Panchayati Raj in Rural Areas: A Case Study of PRI

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Abstract – The Panchayats are expected to play an important role in rural development in India, particularly after independence. Plan documents of both the central and state governments and various committees have emphasized the importance of these bodies in the polity. Five-year plans, specially the second five-year plan, laid special emphasis on the role of Panchayats in rural developments.

Overall development of country is the main objective of Indian government since its independence. Earlier the main thrust for development was laid on Agriculture, Industry, Communication, Education, Health and Allied sectors but soon it was realized that the all round development of the country is possible only through the development of rural India. Rural Development includes measures to strengthen the democratic structure of society through the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). It also includes measures to improve the rural infrastructure, improve income of rural households and delivery systems pertaining to education, health & safety mechanisms. Government of India has taken many steps to develop rural India and for this Department of Rural Development has been setup under the control of Ministry of Rural Development.

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INTRODUCTION

India has been a welfare state ever since her Independence and the primary objective of all governmental endeavors has been the welfare of its millions. Elimination of poverty, ignorance, diseases and inequality of opportunities and providing a better and higher quality of life were the basic premises upon which all the plans and blue-prints of development were built.

According to Ministry of Rural Development (Govt. of India). Rural Development implies both the economic betterment of people as well as greater social transformation. In order to provide the rural people with better prospects for economic development, increased participation of people in the rural development programmes, decentralization of planning, better enforcement of land reforms and greater access to credit are envisaged.. Initially, main thrust for development was laid on agriculture, industry, communication, education, health and allied sectors but later on it was realized that accelerated development can be provided only if governmental efforts are adequately supplemented by direct and indirect involvement of people at the grass root level. Keeping in view the needs and aspirations of the local people, Panchayati

Raj Institutions have been involved in the programme implementation and these institutions constitute the core of decentralized development of planning

and its implementations. The Ministry is also vigorously pursuing with the State Governments for expeditious devolution of requisite administrative and financial powers to PRI.s as envisaged under 73rd Amendment Act of the Constitution of India.

The village problem has to be solved by the villagers alone – Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi's idea of people's participation in development of rural areas is still applicable to Indian villages. Despite making Panchayati-Raj a constitutional body and implementation of a large number of development schemes, they have not achieved much needed success in rural development. Hence, there is a need to make rural people more active and participatory in rural development. This was realized by giving legal status to Gram Sabha through Constitutions' 73rd Amendment Act. The present paper discusses the issue of people's participation in rural planning and development through Gram Sabha, and people's awareness about rural development programs.

The Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj is responsible for the implementation of various rural development and welfare schemes and facilitates Panchayat Raj Institutions to discharge their duties and functions effectively so as to achieve

the objectives of Local Self Governance. This Government is committed to provide all the basic amenities in the rural areas at the habitation level, promote sanitation, reduce poverty, conserve the natural resources, minimize the urban-rural divide and ensure improvement in the quality of life of the rural people.

Though Balwantrai Mehta Committee had recommended for setting up of 3 tier Panchayats with Zilla Parishad at District level, The District Boards were abolished and the Panchayat Unions were the successor body to the District Boards. The District Collectors chaired the District Development Councils (DDC) with representatives from rural and urban local bodies, MLAs, MPs and others as members and thus, the Panchayat Unions started playing a pivotal role in the developmental process.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act was passed and it came into effect from April 1993. Article 243G of the Constitution provides for the scope of devolution of powers and functions to the Panchayat Raj Institutions. 29 items were specifically listed out in the XI Schedule of the Constitution and 74th Amendment provided for formation of District Planning Committee. The State Governments were required to carry out amendments in their respective Panchayat Acts and enact new legislations.

The 73rd amendment added a new dimension to the existence of local selfgovernance and provided scope for Grama Sabha in villages, constitution of three tier system of Panchayats, direct elections of members to the Panchayats, reservation of seats to SCs/STs in proportion to their population, reservation of 1/3rd seats for women, reservation of seats to the Chairpersons (i.e. Chairman, President) on rotation basis, fixing of 5 year tenure for Panchayats, holding of elections within a period of six months in the event of supersession of any Panchayat, devolution of powers and responsibilities to the Panchayats by the State Legislature, setting up of the State Finance Commission once in 5 years to review and recommend the fiscal status of Panchayats, establishment of State Election Commission, etc.

The role of panchayat Raj institutions as instruments of rural reconstruction and development needs no emphasis. They have been reorganized with wider powers and financial resources not merely as institutions of political participation but institutions of social and economic development. Panchayat Raj has come to be associated with two broad images. First, it is a government by itself and second it is an agency of the state government. In the integrated exercise of planning for social and economic development, co-ordinate roles, the present set up is a three-tier representative structure of government where the administrators, elected leaders and local population participate in the developmental effort.

THE CONSTITUTION AND THE PANCHAYATS

Constitutional provisions relating to the establishment, powers, and responsibilities of the panchayats were introduced through the 73rd Amendment in 1993. Under Article 243B of the Constitution there shall be constituted in every state, panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels in accordance with the provisions of Part IX. In states with a population not exceeding twenty lakh, panchayats at the intermediate level may not be constituted. Article 243C empowers states to make provisions through law for the composition of panchayats, subject to the provisions of Part IX of the Constitution.

Reservation of both seats and leadership positions for the Scheduled Castes, tribes, and women are provided in Article 243D. Article 243E provides for a normal duration of five years for panchayats and a gap of not more than six months between the expiry of the period and the conduct of the elections for the next term of the panchayats. Article 243K invests the authority of preparing the electoral rolls and conducting elections in the state Election Commission. Article 243F empowers the state government to make laws providing criteria for disqualification of candidature from panchayat elections. Under Article 243J, the state can legislate with respect to maintenance of accounts by the panchayats and their audit.

Constitutionally mandated Panchayati Raj prescribed reservations for deprived classes and women in panchayat seats and leadership positions. Today, more than 21 lakh representatives stand elected to the three levels of panchayats. Of these more than 40 per cent are women, 16 per cent belong to SCs and 11 per cent belong to the STs (Table 1). At the gram panchayat (GP) level, each Panch's constituency comprises about 340 people (70 families), making India the largest and most intensely democratic country worldwide.

Panchayat level	Number	Elected representatives	Women %	SC %	ST %
District Panchayat	602	11,825	41	18	11
Intermediate Panchayat	6097	1,10,070	43	22	13
Village or Gram Panchayat	2,34,676	20,73,715	40	16	11

Table 1 : Composition of Panchayats

PANCHAYATI RAJ

Panchayats have been the backbone of the Indian villages since the beginning of recorded history. Gandhiji, the father of the nation, 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.

Gandhi ji's dream has been translated into reality with the introduction of the threetier Panchayati Raj system

to ensure people's participation in rural reconstruction. Panchayat. literally means assembly (yat) of five (panch) wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the village community.

Panchayat Or Panchayati Raj is a system of governance in which gram panchayats are the basic units of administration. It has 3 levels: village, block and district. The term .panchayat raj. is relatively new, having originated during the British administration. .Raj. literally means governance or government.

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. His term for such a vision was .Gram Swaraj. (Village Self-governance).

It was adopted by state governments during the 1950s and 60s as laws were passed to establish Panchayats in various states. 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, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan from 24 December 1996. Now Panchayati Raj System exists in all the states except Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram. Also all the UTs except Delhi.

PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Panchayati Raj Department is an important department of Uttar Pradesh related to the rural development. The main objective of this department is to strengthen the Panchayati Raj System in the state according to the 73rd amendment of Indian constitution. So that panchayats can realize the dream of rural administration and rural development with complete coordination and transparency. For this purpose the department has provided a Citizen Charter. For the sake of public convenience and knowledge, this charter has been divided into 7 subjects:-

1. Financial aid to Gram Panchayats.
2. Rural Cleanliness Programmes.
3. Responsibilities of the Panchayats- (Transparency in work, rural administration & development).
4. Responsibilities of public towards Panchayat.
5. Decentralization Programme.

6. Control over the Gram Panchayats
7. Arrangement of Panchayat Help-line.

Citizen Charter is a continuous process which will change periodically according to the feelings, recommendations, experiences and reactions of the public.

1. FINANCIAL AID TO THE GRAM PANCHAYATS-

Gram Panchayats are given financial aids on the recommendations of State Finance Commission. The main objectives of the financial aid given to these Panchayats are:

- a) Drinking water supply, cleaning and maintenance facilities.
- b) Maintenance of public lamp posts, roads, drainage system, cleanliness programmes, primary schools and maintenance of other public assets.
- c) Construction of Panchayat Bhawans for meeting halls and for the residence of secretary of Gram Panchayat.
- d) Construction of Gramin Kisan Bazaar and Livestock Markets.
- e) Construction of underground water drainage system for the objective of environmental cleanliness.

2. RURAL CLEANLINESS PROGRAMME -

Sampoorna Swachhta Abhiyan (Complete Cleanliness Mission) is a programme financed by the Indian government with an objective to provide toilets to all rural families by the end of year 2012 and to make the public aware of the cleanliness programmes and to encourage them to learn and follow cleanliness habits. The four main objectives of the mission are:

- a) Usage of toilets by the rural inhabitants and to change the habit of open toilets till 2012.
- b) To construct toilets in government schools and Anganwadi Centres for children in order to develop the habit of using toilets among children from their childhood.
- c) To develop the habit of washing hands before taking meals and after using toilets in rural areas.

- d) To control the diseases arising due to the usage of dirty water by practicing cleanliness in rural areas.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PANCHAYATS -

Following are the responsibilities of Panchayats:

- a) Periodic meeting of Gram Sabha in order to communicate the functioning of Panchayats.
- b) Monthly meeting of Gram Panchayat to communicate the related information to the elected members.
- c) Monthly meetings of Samities for the completion of predetermined functions with the coordination of 6 samities.
- d) Increase in the income of Gram Panchayat through the collection of taxes and fees prescribed by the act of legislature.
- e) For transparency in work a notice board on the wall of public premises will be displayed showing all the details of usage of the funds.
- f) Rural cleanliness through environmental cleanliness and stopping usage of open toilets.
- g) Control over Government Ration Depot.
- h) To plan and pass different welfare programmes with the coordination of public upto the amount of Rs. 50000.
- i) The Gram Pradhan should inspect all the assets of Gram Samaj at least once in a quarter.

4. PANCHAYAT HELP-LINE -

- a) A Panchayat help-line system has been implemented for the information regarding Panchayati Raj system, legislature or related rules and programmes.
- b) All the departmental officers from state to district level will be available on office telephone between 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.
- c) At district level, every Panchayat member can say his problem on the telephone of Zila Panchayat Adhikari Office.
- d) For the solution of the problems of Gram Panchayats they can also call on the telephone of state commission offices.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN PANCHAYATI RAJ

The first decade after the 73rd Amendment saw very little change in the way that central and state departments dealt with panchayats. Most line departments continued to function more or less in the same manner as they did before the 73rd Amendment. Panchayats have been hardly recognized as having any autonomy or responsibility. They have at best been perfunctorily involved in implementation and at worst, ignored and supplanted by parallel agencies in implementing departmental programmes. Since departments at the Centre predominantly obtain their feedback on performance and implementation of existing schemes from their counterparts in the states there has been a lack of information about the contemporary status of panchayats. Therefore, several stereotyped prejudices against their capacities still continue to exist at various levels.

In June 2004, the Government of India created a Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR), to primarily oversee the implementation of Part IX of the Constitution. A detailed consultation on the scope of the Ministry's work began in the Conference of Chief Ministers on Rural Poverty Alleviation and Prosperity through Panchayati Raj organized by the Government of India at Delhi on 29th and 30th June, 2004.

Speaking at the conference, the Prime Minister requested all Chief Ministers to 'consider if we should adopt a system of providing block grants to districts based on their incidence of poverty to plan and implement strategies that optimize their resource potential'. The PM asked whether 'we have too many schemes, which are fragmented in concept, are rigidly designed and impose national parameters on highly differentiated local realities in terms of resource endowments or felt needs.' He sought to know whether 'the compartmentalization of our effort in multiple schemes in a ministry or ministries—both at the centre and in the states without a core vision make this

investment sub-optimal'. He also asserted that 'before we set this right at the centre we cannot be asking the states to do so'. He signed off by saying that 'incrementalism will not take us very far as sometimes the fault may be in the very design of the programmes imposed from above.'

CONCLUSION

The above study reviews the schemes of PRIs for rural development. In spite of the powerful system maintained by the government this system is facing several challenges. It is evident from the data given that a huge amount of funds is spent on the rural development by the government but this is not properly utilized. There is a huge difference between the funds sanctioned by the government and funds utilized by the Panchayats.

The implementation of rural development programs through the Panchayati Raj institutions has a drastic

change in the socio economic conditions of the rural people in the selected areas. The implementation of rural development programs has affected even the social and political affairs of the people of the selected area. In the economic front of the rural development programs have created an improvement in economic position of the selected area, as a result of implementation of rural development programs most of the people gain additional income. Significance of participation in the panchayat activities and implementation of rural development programs has not yet been realized by the common man. Women representatives are much neglected.

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