



## Panchayati Raj Institution In India – An Overview

Dr. Nagarathnamma. K  
Associate Professor,  
Govt. Women's First Grade College,  
K. R. Nagar, Mysuru District.

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### I. INTRODUCTION:

Panchayati Raj is the bulwark of India's social and economic development in 21st Century. India has adopted a decentralized strategy in its local governance system with a more active and area based approach to rural development through the 73rd constitutional amendment in 1992. It holds very important place in 11th schedule of the constitution. Panchayati Raj institutions in rural areas signify India's experiment with direct democracy at the grass root level. The present three tier system was the brain child of Balawant Rai Mehta a Committee 1957. The ideal construction of the Indian Constitution postulates an aspirational level both for the institutions and functionaries of the Panchayati Raj, provides a measuring rod for evaluating their performance and also contributes to improving the tone of their working, by constantly reemphasizing how far removed from the ideal they still are. In order to help local bodies understand how best to govern, the India Institute of Local Self Government was established in 1926. The institute acts as the perfect guide to all the urban local bodies and spreads awareness about urban education, capacity building, and governance. All India Institute of Local Self Government helps the local government bodies upgrade their skills and knowledge for carrying out effective administration. They also ensure the proper implementation of various development programmes. Every village had a Local Self Governing body which functioned as a mini republic. Though the Kings used to have a sovereign power in a centralized monarchy, much scope was given by the rulers for the local administration. The local heads of the villages in their assembly used to take many administrative decisions, regarding social justice, economic issues, and judicial issues etc. which were beneficial to the village, after mutual discussions. The King used to endorse the decisions of these assemblies of local bodies, thereby, recognizing and protecting them. This powerful and rich tradition was in vogue in every village in Karnataka as evidenced by the Inscriptions.

### II. OBJECTIVES:

- Article explain brief outlook understand the meaning of local self government in India
- To evaluate Present PRIs and Developments in rural India;
- Identifies major problems and challenges being faced and solution for the PRI system in democracy

Panchayati Raj was introduced to give a fillip to the development of programmes launched in rural areas. It was the hope of the promoters of Panchayati Raj, that if the representatives of the local people were associated with developmental administration, there would be better people's participation in the implementation of the programmes. They have, therefore, assigned a significant role to the non-officials in Panchayati Raj and all important decisions in these bodies are taken by them now. Among the non-Officials, the political executives, i.e., refers to elected executives such as the Chairman of the Jilla Parishad, the President of the Panchayat Samithi and the Sarpanch of the Gram Panchayat, play a dominant role. As leaders of the Panchayati Raj administration, they are largely responsible for setting its pace. Such leader would be popular and their legitimacy would be widely accepted only if they are drawn from a cross-section of the rural society. National Panchayati Raj Day India celebrated by Ministry of Panchayati Raj on 24 April annually. The 64<sup>th</sup> 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 72<sup>nd</sup> & 73<sup>rd</sup> 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 73<sup>rd</sup> & 74<sup>th</sup> amendments to the Constitution of India on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1993.

The Panchayats, throughout the years, have relied on federal and state grants to sustain themselves economically. The absence of mandatory elections for the Panchayat council and infrequent meetings of the gramapanchayat have decreased the spread of information to villagers, leading to more state regulation. Many Panchayats have been successful in achieving their goals, through cooperation between different bodies and the political mobilization of previously underrepresented groups in India. There is an obstacle of literacy that many Panchayats face for engagement of villagers, with most development schemes being on paper. However, homes linked to the Panchayati Raj System have seen an increase in participation for local matters. The reservation policy for women on the Panchayat councils have also led to a substantial increase in female participation and have shaped the focus of development to include more domestic household issues.

Workings of PR institutions during the past three decades have produced two views. One is that PR functionaries, political as well as administrative, are interested in power politics and the distribution of patronage, creating tensions in village communities and divided in caste based power capturing based on money and muscle. The effect of the trend today they have failed to protect the interests of the marginalized poor society and even failed to protect and strengthen the planning process at the micro level, such as in the development of agriculture, minor irrigation systems, social welfare, development of rural infrastructure and so on. The other point of view that attributes the limited success of panchayati raj to lack of money sources, mainly lack of cooperation from state and central government departments.

### **Functions of Local Self-Government**

The primary objective of these local bodies is to promote local economic and social development, social justice, and infrastructure development. The various functions of the local government include:

- To construct infrastructure like transport, roads, power specialty, Educational institutions, health.. etc
- To maintain community harmony and development
- Support of agriculture by proper financial assistance of irrigation, water schemes, land development, and soil protection.
- To increase health facilities and awareness about women health
- Support small-scale traditional industries of the villages
- To develop social forestry, dairy, poultry, and animal husbandry

The local government bodies are also responsible for implementing a wide variety of schemes that the state government comes up with to develop rural and urban areas. Local bodies are not necessarily confined to rural areas. The depth of participation in the local government is largely contingent on how the citizens take part in the process of decision-making. An increase in the amount of funds received may even make these institutions more impactful. The joint working of local and state governments may result in better execution of policies and programmes. For instance, state governments can encourage local bodies to create political awareness of the policies benefiting the citizens. The lack of coordination among the various authorities can be an obstruction in the implementation of policies and programmes. The fundamental purpose of establishing grassroots level institutions is to reduce the concentration of excessive power at the hands of the Centre, thereby, operationalizing democracy.

The local bodies fall under the state government in our country. This means the state government exercises some powers over the local government to keep everything in check. But won't this mean extra work for the state government. Why is it required, are the local bodies not good enough or can't they be trusted to run on their own. Since the different levels of the government work in coordination with one another, it is inevitable that they are affected by each other and failure of one will lead to the failure of others. Thus, it is important that all the tiers of government co-exist and function efficiently. For this, some rules are laid down for the relations that different levels of government have. Women reservation of 33% of seats under the Panchayat Raj system has been a morale booster for women in rural India, their husbands & other men in the village were yet to reconcile themselves with the women's new status. Women members who go out with men for work related to the Gram Panchayat, Taluk or Zilha Panchayat are castigated & they become victims of character assassination.

Governance discourse tends to focus strongly on formal political institutions. This is particularly true at the local level where decentralised governance has become synonymous with local governance. Given this strong focus on formal decentralised structures of governance, the role of customary village councils in local governance often gets overlooked. There are two reasons for this. It is generally believed that formal institutions are quite distinct from the customary institutions and are relatively free of traditional influences that bear on them; and more powerful than the customary ones, and so tend to drive them out. However, the extent to which these assumptions are consonant with local reality is debatable. Decentralised local government structures such

as grama panchayats coexist with customary village councils and often interact with them. Development outcomes, either positive or negative, at the local level are often determined by these interactions.

### **Challenges of Local self government**

Local self government requires many technical, administrative and financial fixes.

Low spending - India has the lowest spending on local government as a proportion of resources. The state at local levels is competent, it is just constantly being let down by lack of support and investment from the top.

Constraints: The constraints placed on them by a combination of bureaucratic control and deliberate underinvestment in capacity, and the lack of political pathways for successful panchayat performers to rise in their parties, limit their salience.

Obsolete distinction between Panchayats & municipalities: There is a case to be made that the distinction between the 73rd and 74th amendments is now obsolete. There are opinions for the creation of a unified district-level local government rather than a distinction between urban and rural. Many of the decisions consequential for India's urbanisation, like land use change, for example, are being made in "panchayats"; there is arbitrage over how a settlement gets classified, and rural and urban is now, at best, a continuum.

Lack of Computer-based knowledge and Infrastructure: The government initiated the e-panchayat project in about gram panchayats. However, most of these districts lack infrastructure, skills and have poor broadband internet connectivity.

Proxy Presence of female Gram Pradhans: Female pradhans are more likely to be influenced by the family members to stand for the polls and post winning; most of the work is handled by the male family members. On the face, the women won the election but are indirectly being controlled by the male members.

**PROBLEMS SALUSTION:** It is high time that specific corrective action should be taken to ensure a truly representative form of governance. These issues can be combated, but it requires cooperation by the people to accept these changes. Funding must be adequate in order to run these institutions effectively and smoothly. There must also be accountability at all administrative levels in order to hold corrupt officials responsible. The focus must be on the training and development of human resources to eliminate any conceptual inconsistency. Women's role in the panchayat must be recognised and not taken over by the male family members.

The state would be better served by decentralisation than centralization, transparency instead of opacity (hence the RTI Act), public reason instead of administrative discretion (hence independent regulators), local capacity instead of concentrated authority, active participation instead of subject status.

### **III. Conclusion**

The Indian Constitution divides our governing system into three tiers, with local self-government taking care of the grassroots level. The local self-government falls under the state government's jurisdiction and is further divided into Zila Parishads, Panchayat Samitis, Mahanagar Palikas, Nagar Palikas, and Panchayats. India has a strong local self-government system and has ensured democracy at even the remotest corners. The government should make adequate efforts to devolve funds, functions, and functionaries to local bodies so that they can effectively plan economic development and social justice schemes.

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