



Role of Panchayat Raj and rural development in Karnataka

Vijayakumar B

Assistant Professor, Department of Studies and Research in Political Science, Vijayanagara Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Ballari, Karnataka, India

Abstract

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. Keeping this in view Panchayat Raj Institutions have been introduced under the 73rd Amendment Act of the Constitution of 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. The department through PRIs has launched various development schemes such as Sampoorna Swachhta Abhiyan, Gram Vikas Yojana, Farmer Market & Livestock Market, Underground Drainage System Construction Scheme, MGNREGA and so on. Through these schemes Government of India seems to accomplish its dream of rural India's development. Although some loopholes may also be seen. Without overcoming these drawbacks Government of India won't be able to foster the growth of rural India.

Keywords: Panchayath Raj, Rural Development, planning, Karnataka

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.

Rural development

Development of rural areas has been at the core of planning process in the country and also in the State. Rural

Development is a broad, inclusive term which takes in its consideration socioeconomic and political development of the rural areas. It includes measures to strengthen the democratic structure of society through the Panchayati Raj Institutions as well as measures to improve the rural infrastructure, improve income of rural households and delivery systems pertaining to education, health and safety mechanisms. Poverty alleviation is a key component of rural development. Government of India has taken many initiatives for rural development. For this purpose it has setup the Ministry of Rural Development. This Ministry is a nodal department for the two international organizations viz., the Centre on Integrated Rural Development of Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) and the Afro-Asian Rural Development Organization (AARDO).

The Ministry consists of the following three Departments:

1. Department of Rural Development
2. Department of Land Resources
3. Department of Drinking Water Supply

The Department of Rural Development implements schemes for generation of self employment and wage employment, provision of housing and minor irrigation assets to rural poor, social assistance to the destitute and Rural Roads. Apart from this, the Department provides the support services and other quality inputs such as assistance for strengthening of DRDA Administration, Panchayati Raj Institutions, training & research, human resource development, development of voluntary action etc. for the proper implementation of the programmes. The major programmes of the Department of Rural Development are Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, (PMGSY), Rural Housing (RH) Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) and Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY).

Panchayati raj institutions

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. Gandhiji's dream has been translated into reality with the introduction of the three tier Panchayati Raj system to ensure people's participation in rural reconstruction. "Panchayat" literally means assembly of five wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the village community. Panchayat 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 Panchayat 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 Panchayat Raj in India, on 24 April 1993, the Constitutional (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 came into force to provide constitutional status to the Panchayat 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, Karnataka Orissa and Rajasthan from 24 December 1996. Now Panchayati Raj System exists in all the states except Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram.

Panchayat Raj Institution in Karnataka

Panchayats are India's ancient autonomous democratic institutions. Whose description is found in the ancient Indian text 'Rigveda' in the form of 'Sabhas' and 'Samities'. At various points of time these autonomous bodies of governance have proven their importance inspite of the political disturbances within the country.

Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Rural Development

Panchayat 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.

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.

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. Under this scheme following main programmes are carried on:
 - Personal Toilets
 - School Toilets
 - Anganwadi Toilets
 - Community (Women) Toilet Complex
 - Rural Cleanliness Market Production Centers
 - Solid and Liquid Waste Management

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.

Responsibilities of the citizens

- a. Coordinating the meetings Public should get the information regarding the works and plannings of Gram Panchayat and the usage of received funds. Public should elect the deserving candidate for different schemes.
- b. Checking Cleanliness All the families should built and use the toilets. Toilets should be built keeping in view the convenience of ladies and elders. The cleanliness of drains and surroundings should be taken care of.
- c. Security of Gram Panchayat Assets Public should check the illegal cutting of trees, illegal possession of land of Gram Sabha and maintenance of community buildings.
- d. Increase Public Coordination Public should share hands in development and construction works, periodic cultural activities should be promoted.

Decentralization programme

Under the programme of decentralization Gram Panchayats are given the following works:

- a. For promoting education Gram Panchayats have to open primary and secondary schools.
- b. All the present and new Hand Pumps are the asset of Gram Panchayat. Gram Panchayat is responsible for the repair and maintenance of these Handpumps.
- c. Akhadas, Gyms, Sports Ground and Sports related works are being operated by the Gram Panchayat for youth welfare.
- d. Medical, Health, Family welfare and Mother & Child welfare centres are all under the control of Gram Panchayat.
- e. For women and child development different Anganwadi programmes and other welfare programmes are being carried on by the Gram Panchayats.
- f. Livestock department has been transferred to the Gram Panchayats under this they have to maintain 'Pashu Seva Kendra' and 'D' Category veterinary hospitals. g) Agriculture related all the village level programmes will be run by the Gram Panchayats.
- g. For the rural development 'Sampurna Gramin Rozgar Yojna' is being carried on by Gram Panchayat.
- h. Gram Panchayats have right to distribute all kinds of schoarships.

Control over gram panchayat

To stop the misuse of funds at Gram Panchayat level, there is a law of investigation against Pradhans, Deputy Pradhans and the members.

- a. The complaint along with affidavit and relevant proofs can be given to the district magistrate.
- b. The investigation of the complaint will be done by the district level officers only.
- c. A Chartered Accountant will be appointed for the completion of the accounts of Gram Panchayat.
- d. The audit of Gram Panchayats will be done by the Chief Accountant.
- e. Gram Sabha can restigate the Pradhan by passing a no confidence resolution if there is any grave charge against the Pradhan.

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.

On the basis of the above analysis we suggest the following measures

- Department should collect data which help in estimating the number of toilets needed in rural areas.
- It should further be estimated as to how much construction is possible in one year.
- The reviews of the number of constructed toilets and allotted amount shall be done more frequently.
- PPP model can be adopted for better utilization
- The development programmes shall be carried out throughout the year in a phased & planned manner.
- Involvement of local professionals or NGOs can be done to ensure better outputs.

Conclusion

Thus, we can say that due to the negligence of system the rural areas remain under developed. The government in spite of providing huge amount of funds remains unsuccessful in fostering the growth of rural India. There is a need to keep a strict watch over the utilization of funds by Gram Panchayats.

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