



## Political participation of local government institutions on Telangana state

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### Abstract

Development is regarded as a process that requires democracy. Democratic decentralization is the process of developing functions and resources of state from the centre to the elected representatives at the lower level, so as to facilitate greater participation of people in governance. Decentralization is widely viewed as a way to make government more efficient and responsive to people's needs in the delivery of public services. Such people-centered grassroots level development process not only needs devolution of powers to the rural masses but also involves sensitizing them, particularly the leaders, towards activating them for their own common weal. A major drawback of Indian democracy has been that the participation of citizens in governance was more or less limited to periodic exercise or franchise to elected representatives to the centre and state government. The centralized planning launched soon after independence turned out to be redundant as there was much scope for leakage, corruption etc. Decentralized governance is a process which allows people's involvement in administration and development programmes. It remains significant for the realization of people-centered development and therefore, decentralized governance is a strategy for all people to enjoy equal rights, and is an instrument for building the capacity for economic development. The issue of people's participation at local governance assumed more importance with the introduction of 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act 1992. The Panchayat Raj Act in Telangana governs the functioning of rural local governance, focusing on the decentralization of power, local self-governance, and rural development. The Telangana Panchayat Raj Act, 2018 (Act No. 5 of 2018), is a key piece of legislation that defines the structure, powers, functions, and responsibilities of Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the state. It was introduced to strengthen the local governance system and to ensure the effective implementation of development and welfare programs in rural areas.

**Keywords:** Political participation, democracy, local government institutions, Telangana

### Introduction

Local government framework has existed in India in each period of its history. The grassroot framework had shown an unconventional personality and strength regardless of continuous changes of force at the very primary level. Neighborhood self-government is the satisfaction as well as the groundwork of a vote based system. It is immediately the home and the nursery of a majority rules system. It can sustain individuals' interest locally and give a divert of cooperation in the the executives of neighborhood undertakings. Neighborhood self-government possesses an, truth be told significant spot in the political framework. It not just deals with the essential requirements of residents yet additionally empowers them to get familiar with the essentials of administration. It is therefore that it is an inescapable piece of present day vote based systems. Neighborhood government is an essential piece of the three-level arrangement of government in our nation, being at the lower part of a pyramid of legislative organizations with the public government at the top and the state government involving the center position. Local government works both in rustic furthermore, metropolitan regions. Nearby government is more significant in the day to day, truth be told life of a resident than the state or Local government. Hence, it is significant here to know some verifiable foundation of these organizations in our country.

The institutions of local government established in the early period which included institutions like Municipal Corporations, Municipal Boards in the urban areas and Panchayats and District Boards in rural areas find their entry in article 40 of our Constitution Article 40 of the Constitution clearly lays down that the, " States must take

initiatives to create village panchayats and equip them with the tools they need to function as self-governing bodies. As a result, all the state governments have established both the urban and rural self governing institutions in their respective states. There are two types of local government units in the country. These can be grouped into two broad categories i.e. Rural and Urban. The Rural Local Government consists of a three tier structure of local bodies popularly known as Panchayati Raj. It operates at three different levels including the Districts, the Blocks and the Villages.)These bodies have their own organization and area of operation, in the urban area, we have bodies which are termed as Municipal Corporations for bigger cities and municipal boards/councils/committees for small cities and towns. For cantonment areas and notified areas, there is separate boards/committees. Now we will discuss in brief the forms of local bodies in the rural and urban areas' separately.

### The concept of political participation

Different forms of political participation exist. Being politically active involves voting, sharing power, making decisions, and creating policies. Democracy's core values- liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice can protect people from artificial disparities. Thus, democratic values are necessary to evaluate political activity and empowerment. The highest level of involvement and empowerment requires a democratic system. Empowerment is about working with others to change, not dominating. Empowerment requires political participation. Participation and empowerment are linked. Empowered people participate more in organisations which empowers them.

### **Dimensions of political participation**

Political engagement often encompasses three components. One factor to consider is the level or strength of an individual's political engagement. What level of energy, time, or financial resources does an individual desire to dedicate toward political engagement? This question requires a thorough evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of engaging in political activities to accomplish specific outcomes. Political participation necessitates the exercise of individual agency and the subsequent progression toward greater and more profound involvement. The second level of political engagement encompasses voluntary and intentional forms of participation. Voting and expressing political opinions are the least and most prevalent forms of political participation that require the least and most effort, respectively. The third dimension refers to the level of activity that is selected. Frequently, individuals tend to see and act as if no political dynamics were occurring at levels below the national level. However, in the United States, the majority of problems are evaluated and addressed at the regional and state levels. Law enforcement, environmental protection, housing code enforcement, welfare benefits provision, and various other significant policies are established and implemented at these levels.

The scope and content of it, of course, have been different at different times of history or in different regions or communities. In the context of rural development however, the participation has a specific meaning. Participation is the 'introduction of a new set of people into the decision-making process with regard to resources allocations or resources distribution. By people we mean here those who have been victims of their exclusion from the developmental process and those who are likely to emerge as the beneficiaries of participation. The Political Scientists imply by participation all activities that support the system including those which may be temporally opposed to the ruling party or elite while any action of the masses to upset the 'apple cart' is 'mass action'. The first is democratic and the second is totalitarian in its potentially and hence has to be avoided.

### **Factors contributing to political participation**

Political engagement is contingent upon various factors and exhibits variation across countries, time periods, and different segments of society, participation varies based on four significant characteristics. The factors that influence an individual's political behaviour can be categorised into four main aspects: the level of exposure to political stimuli, the individual's social features, the individual's personal traits, and the political context in which the individual is situated. Generally, the level of political engagement is influenced by several social, psychological, economic, and political aspects. The social variables identified in several research encompass a range of characteristics, including age, gender, education, occupation, income, mobility, religion, race, group influence, urban-rural background, social involvement, length of residence in the community, and caste, among others.

Local bodies in India constitute a mixed experience. Participation of the people in the grassroots and improvement in the conditions of poor and backward was a mixed bag of experience. Fundamental constitutional changes aimed at creation of viable local governments, regular elections and reservation of seats for the

marginalised sections were some steps taken to introduce participative and inclusive governance through decentralization. However, what one observed in the past decades is that it is one thing to change law and another to transform actual practices. Law brings about the potential for change but that is not all. Institutional design constitutes a necessary but not sufficient condition for successful local bodies.

While, with regional variations, there was an overall improvement in the incidence of rural poverty from last some decades. In India majority of population (around two third of people) live in rural areas. Despite a respectable growth rate, self-sufficiency in food and official policy commitments to the eradication of poverty, India has not been able to reduce the absolute or relative number of rural people living in poverty. A study argued that the rural poor's lack of organization and their inability to gain access to existing benefits or to tilt decisions in their favor lay at the heart of India's rural poverty. An enabling environment is required to make this vulnerable section involve in the process of democracy and development. Much attention should be given to the people's participation in the political and development process at grassroots level. It brings authorities closer to the people and increases transparency and accountability. The central government focuses on regional and national matters and is not able to give its due attention towards local bodies. Local authorities are well known about their problems, decentralization enhances transparency and effectiveness in all service delivery. The presence of an active community increased demands for effective local governments. The centre-state led development has been criticized because it could not become responsive, cost effective, and develop local capability and self reliance. With the failure of various state-led development programmes, attempts to improve people's participation in decision making and control of resources at the local level have been made. As a consequence, the local governance is now strengthening its base in the country with people-centered approach. So we can say that people's participation is essential for the overall development of rural masses.

Political participation is a process by which people take part in political activities. Exercising voting rights during elections is one of the important political activities of the people participation of women in this political activity is almost equal to men. Political participation is not just casting vote. It includes wide range of other activities – like membership of political party, electoral campaigning, attending party meetings, demonstrations, communication with leaders, holding party positions, contesting elections, membership in representative bodies, influencing decision making and other related activities. Political participation refers to actual participation in the voluntary activities by which members of the society share in the selection of rules and directly or indirectly in the formulation of public Policy.

### **Participation in local bodies**

Obstacles to equal political and public participation exist in many contexts. These barriers may include direct and indirect discrimination on grounds of race, sex, descent, religion, language political opinion, national origin, property, disability, nationality or other status. Even when there is no formal discrimination in connection with political or public participation, inequalities in access to other human rights may impede the effective exercise of

political participation rights. As many development workers have found, “communities” are not homogeneous units. There are often internal divisions and hierarchies which lead to the marginalization of certain groups - such as women, disabled, and minorities - and these groups get excluded from meaningful public life. Including participants from marginalized groups can ensure that they have the opportunity to express their opinions and reduce the incidences of discrimination. Empowerment of the marginalized is thus central to participative development. Political societies are characterized by extensive disagreement. It becomes a major challenge to arrive at a consensus. The challenge further intensifies when the community taking decision is extensively heterogeneous. Often it is witnessed that one fails to respect reason of other members of society and that defeats the purpose of collective engagement in decision making. The problem further aggravates when one fails to treat others as equals. Since a complete consensus is not possible those in majority try to gather maximum support and in that process subdue the views of the rest.

### **Panchayati Raj system in United Andhra Pradesh**

Andhra Pradesh was among the first states to introduce Panchayati Raj System based on the recommendations of Balwant Rai Mehta Committee recommendations. This process was initiated in 1958 and established certain Panchayati Samithis on provisional basis. During the year 1959 the state enacted the Andhra Pradesh Panchayati Samithis and Zilla Parishads Act. On October 11, 1959, the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurated the first Panchayati Samithi at Shadnagar, prior to this, two different Acts namely, the Madras gram Panchayati Act and Hyderabad State Gram Panchayati Act were in vogue. Again, during the year 1963, the government of Andhra Pradesh constituted a committee under Purushottan Pai to make a comprehensive study on making an Act for all the areas of the State on Panchayati Raj. Consequently, the State Government enacted the Andhra Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act (1964) which applicable to all the regions of the State. This Act provided for the establishment of a three tier Panchayati Raj System which includes, Gram Panchayat (at village level), Panchayati Samithi (at Block level) and Zilla Parishad (at District level).

Meanwhile, the central government appointed Ashok Mehta committee in 1978 on strengthening panchayati Raj System in India. The government of Andhra Pradesh assigned new terms of references to C. Narasimham Committee and requested to study the feasibility of implementing the recommendations of Ashok Mehta Committee in Andhra Pradesh. During the year 1986, the State Government led by N.T. Rama Rao as Chief Minister enacted a new legislation namely, Andhra Pradesh Mandal Praja Parishads, Zilla Praja Parishads and District Planning and Development Review Councils Act. The Act came into force in 1987. Accordingly 1104 Mandal Praja Parishads were established in the place of 330 Panchayati Samithis. During the year 1991, the government of Andhra Pradesh constituted an expert committee under B.P.R. Vittal on reorganizing Panchayati Raj System alongwith reorganizing Revenue System. The State Cabinet constituted a Cabinet subcommittee under the Chairmanship of D.K. Samarasimha Reddy to study the recommendations of B.P.R. Vittal committee. Meanwhile, the Union government with P.V. Narasimha Rao as Prime Ministry formulated the 73rd and 74th constitutional

Amendment Acts in 1992 to bring constitutional status with powers and functions of Panchayati Raj Institutions in India.

### **Panchayati Raj Institutions in Telangana State**

Panchayati Raj in Telangana Telangana State – A Brief Profile On 2 June 2014, Telangana became the 29<sup>th</sup> state of India, consisting of ten districts with Hyderabad as its capital. The State of Telangana is located in the Southern region of India. Most of it was part of the princely state of Hyderabad, which was ruled by the Nizams during the British Raj until 1947, and later until 1948, when it joined the Union of India. In 1956, Hyderabad state was dissolved and Andhra state was merged with the Telangana region of the state of Hyderabad to form the state of Andhra Pradesh. The State of Telangana spans over an area of 1, 14,840 sq.kms. It is bound by the states of Andhra Pradesh on the south and east, Maharashtra on the north and northwest, Karnataka on the west, and Chhatisgarh to the North-east. The state comprises ten districts, namely, Hyderabad, Khammam, Nalgonda, Warangal, Karimnagar, Medak, Nizamabad, Adilabad, Mahaboobnagar and Ranga Reddy. Presently the state has 31 districts. The total strength of the ZPTC, MPTC, and Sarpanch of the Telangana State is as follows: ZPTC – 0197, MPTC – 6473, Sarpanch – 1397. With the establishment of PRIs in our country a woman gets an opportunity to prove her worth as a good administrator, decision-maker, or a good leader. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 is a milestone in this regard. It provides women a chance to come forward. This experiment is proving to be a big success, particularly by providing an opportunity for women to come out of their houses and participate in administrative and political fields. It has to be considered that the inclusion of well-qualified women in village Panchayati at the initial state of the interlocation of Panchayati Raj Institution in rural areas would be an important instrumental measure in planning for improving social status.

### **Conclusion**

Telangana, a state in southern India, has a well-structured local government system designed to facilitate governance at the grassroots level. The local government in Telangana includes rural and urban areas, with a focus on decentralization of power, democratic participation, and development at the local level. The system operates under the framework provided by the Constitution of India, particularly the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments, which created a three-tier system of local governance. Local bodies in Telangana play a critical role in governance, ensuring the delivery of public services, local development, and the decentralization of administrative functions. These bodies are empowered by the Constitution of India (especially through the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments) and have distinct roles based on whether they are in rural or urban areas. Self governing rural local bodies are essential for overall development of the rural masses. There is the need of more and more participation of people in local governance. Local Government in India has not been a great success. The first area of concern is the wide gap between the aspirations of the people and the performance by the grassroots institutions. The second area of concern is the mismatch between the financial resources of the local bodies and the functions allotted to them or between expenditure responsibilities and their own resources available. The third area relates to weaknesses in

the working of Gram Sabha. The ethos of democracy can find real nourishment only when power reaches the grassroots level. For the ordinary citizen, it is local democracy, which can have real meaning and significance. In a vast country where large masses are still unlettered, village panchayats and participative democracy can do wonders. If the aim is to establish a democratic society then there should be transparency and accountability in local governance and should be given much chance of participation to the rural masses in local governance. In that sense, the most revolutionary measures in recent decades have been the 73rd Constitutional Amendments. It is hoping that with this Indian democracy could become a unique model for the rest of the world. Participation and inclusion in development should include three important aspects. One, people should not be forced or coerced to arrive at a decision. There should be openness in decision making. Two, all people should be equally valued and opportunity for participation should be distributed fairly. Three, diversities in society should be celebrated as a key to improved participation rather than considering them as barriers to participation. Participation requires that participant has to devote time but in turn it renders a feeling of ownership of projects and therefore increases effectiveness and sustainability in implementation. But all this depends on the internal dynamics that exists within the local bodies.

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