

A Case Study on Panchayati Raj in the block of Barpali

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ABSTRACT: *Panchayati Raj is the system of local self-governance for villages which are an effective vehicle for people's participation in administration, planning and democratic process. These bodies which are genuine and effective democratic decentralized institutions, provide ample opportunities for a large number of rural people to take genuine and effective participation in the development and democratic decision making process, to infuse in the minds of the rural people is spirit of self-help, self-dependence and self-reliance. Panchayati Raj system provides basic infrastructure facilities and empowers weaker section of the society and aims at initiating democracy at the grass root level in India.*

KEYWORDS: *Transparency, Participatory Governance, Criminalization, Constitutionalized, Localization, Disguised Dependency, Clutch*

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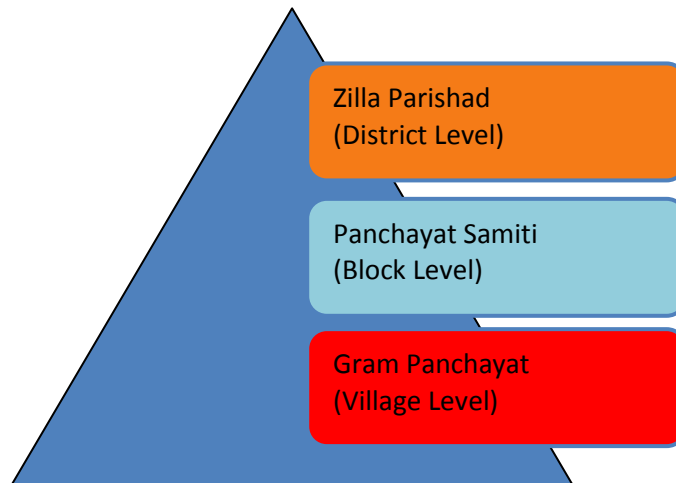
I. INTRODUCTION

“When the Panchayati raj is established, public opinion will do what violence can never do.” -Mahatma Gandhi

To build democracy at the grass root level, Panchayati raj system was adopted and established in all the states of India by the acts of State Legislature. Mainly it was entrusted with rural development and was constitutionalized through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992. In India on 24 April, 1993 Panchayati Raj came into force to provide constitutional status to the Panchayati raj institutions. Currently this system exists in all states except Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram and in all Union Territories except Delhi.

The Panchayati Raj system was first adopted by the state of Rajasthan in Nagaur district on 2nd October, 1959 and Andhra Pradesh was the second state. The Amendment Act of 1992 contains provisions 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 11th Schedule of the Constitution, and the ability to levy and collect appropriate taxes, duties, tolls and fees. Balwant-Rai Mehta, who was a great parliamentarian, is credited for pioneering the concept of Panchayati Raj in India and also known as “Father of Panchayati Raj” in India. Mahatma Gandhi advocated Panchayati raj as the foundation of India's political system. It would have been a decentralised form of government where each village would be responsible for its own affairs.

The Act aims to provide a 3 tier system of Panchayati Raj for all states having a population of over 3 million, to hold panchayat elections regularly every 5 years to provide seats reserved for SCs, STs and women; to appoint a State Finance Commission to make recommendations regarding the financial powers of the panchayats and to constitute a District Planning Committee, to prepare a development plan draft for the district (Chettri Hariprasad, 2008). The panchayats receive funds from three sources and they are: Local body grants, as recommended by the Central Finance Commission; Funds for implementation of centrally sponsored schemes; Funds released by the state governments on the recommendations of the State Finance Commission. In India, the Panchayati raj now functions as a system of governance in which gram panchayats are the basic units of local administration. The system has three levels as shown in the figure below:



(Figure 1- hierarchical relationship of the 3 tier system of panchayati raj)

II. OBJECTIVES

1. Our objective is to study the various aspects, issues and dimensions which is related to Panchayati raj system.
2. Secondly, our objective is to analyse working effectiveness of various sarpanch in aspect of various socio-economic transformation, political mobilization and political participation in Panchayati raj institutions.

III. HYPOTHESIS

There are several factors such as feelings of rich and poor, caste system, communalism, education, occupation, elections, local politics and socialization that are responsible to determine the effectiveness of Panchayati raj system.

IV. DISCUSSION

Panchayati Raj is a three-tier structure of democratic institution based on the philosophy of decentralization. Panchayati Raj have been a part of India since ancient times. Lord Ripon's resolution on local self – government laid the foundation of local self-government in rural India. The 1882 Resolution was important for two reasons; it set out general principles for development of local institutions in the future and provided the rationale behind functions of local bodies (Laxmikant,M., 2016).

Evolution of Panchayati Raj:

4.1 Balwant-Rai Mehta Committee 1957

In January, 1957, the government of India appointed a committee to examine the working of the Community Development Program (1952), National Extension Service (1953) and suggested establishment of a three tier Panchayati Raj system where directly elected members constitutes village panchayat while indirectly elected representatives constitutes Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad. All plannings and development activities should be entrusted to these bodies followed by a genuine transfer of power and responsibility (Mehta, G. Balwantray, 1957).

4.2 Ashok Mehta Committee 1977

In December, 1977, the Janata Government appointed a committee on Panchayati raj institutions under the chairmanship of Ashok Mehta. The reports of this committee were submitted in 1978 and made 132 recommendations to revive and strengthen Panchayati Raj. Some important recommendations were a constitutionally recognized two tier system where seats for SCs and STs should be reserved as per population and inclusion of political parties at all levels of election and formation of Nyaya Panchayat (Ashok Mehta Committee, 1977).

4.3 G.V.K. Rao Committee 1985

The committee was appointed by the Planning Commission in 1985 under the chairmanship of G.V.K. Rao. The committee proposed that district should be the basic unit of planning and program implementation and Zilla Parishad should be given prior importance where regular elections would play a vital role.

4.4 L.M. Singhvi Committee 1986

In 1986, Rajiv Gandhi Government appointed a committee to prepare a concept paper on 'Revitalization of Panchayati Raj Institution for Democracy and Development' under the chairmanship of L. M. Singhvi (Vyasulw Vinod, 2003). It recommended that the Panchayati raj should be constitutionally recognized. Though the 64th Constitutional Amendment bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha in 1989 itself, Rajya Sabha opposed it. It was only during the Narsimha Rao Government's term that the idea finally become a reality in the form 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment acts, 1992.

4.5 P. K. Thoongan Committee 1988

In 1988, a sub-committee of the Consultative Committee of Parliament was constituted under the chairmanship of P.K. Thoongan to examine the political and administrative structure in the district for the purpose of district planning. The committee suggested that Zilla Parishad should be responsible for carrying out all the planning and developmental activities and Panchayati raj should have a fixed tenure of 5 years, where maximum period of a super session of a body should not exceed 6 years. It should have seats reserved for SCs, STs and women on the basis of population.

4.6 Gadgil Committee 1988

The committee on Policy and Programmes was constituted in 1988 by the Congress party under the chairmanship of V. N. Gadgil. The Panchayati Raj bodies should have the responsibility of preparation and implementation of plans for socio-economic development and should be empowered to levy, collect and appropriate taxes and duties. Establishment of a State Finance Commission for the allocation of finances to the panchayats. The establishment of a State Election Commission for the conduction of elections to the panchayats.

Constitutionalization

The 73rd Amendment together with 74th Amendment is called 'a silent revolution'. This act has added a new PART-IX to the Constitution of India. This part is entitled as 'The Panchayats' and consists of provisions from Art 243 to 243(O). In addition, the act has also added a new 11th Schedule to the Constitution. This schedule contains 29 functional items of the panchayats which deals with Article 243-G. The act has given a practical shape to Art 40 of the Constitution which says that, "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." This article forms a part of the Directive Principles of State Policy. The act gives a constitutional status to the PRIs (Singh, H., 1994) (Institute of Social Science, 1994). The provisions of the act can be grouped into 2 categories: Compulsory and voluntary. The compulsory provisions of the act have to be included in the state laws creating the new Panchayati Raj system. The voluntary provision may be included at the discretion of the states.

Compulsory Provisions:

There should be establishment of panchayats at village, intermediate and district level and direct elections to seats at all levels excluding the post of chairperson at intermediate and district level, where 21 years is the minimum age for contesting elections to panchayats.

Voluntary Provisions

It aims at granting authority to panchayats for self-governance, granting financial powers to panchayats with a vision of devolution of powers and responsibilities upon panchayats. On the other hand, it also provides reservation of seats for backward classes at any level of panchayat and gives representation to members of Parliament and State Legislature in panchayats at different levels falling under their constituencies.

PESA Act (Extension Act) of 1996

At the present (2016), 10 states have 5th scheduled areas and they are Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan. All the 10 states have enacted requisite compliance legislations by amending the respective Panchayati Raj Acts (PESA Features, 2016).

The objectives of the PESA Act are:

- ✓ To extent the provisions of Part-IX of the Constitution relating to the panchayats to the scheduled areas with certain modifications.
- ✓ To provide self-rule for the bulk of the tribal population.

- ✓ To have village governance with participatory democracy and to make the Gram Sabha a nucleus of all activities (Buch, N., 2012).
- ✓ To evolve a suitable administrative framework consistent with traditional practices.
- ✓ To safeguard and to preserve the traditions and customs of tribal communities.
- ✓ To empower panchayats at the appropriate levels with specific powers conducive to tribal requirements.

To prevent panchayats at the higher levels from assuming the powers and the authority of the panchayats at the lower level of the Gram Sabha (Dwarakanath, H.D., 2013).

11th SCHEDULE

It contains the following 29 functional items placed within the purview of panchayats that includes agriculture, land improvement, water management, animal husbandry, social forestry, small scale industries, cottage industries, rural housing and electrification, drinking water, social capital, non-conventional energy sources, poverty alleviation programmes, education, family welfare, development of marginalized section, public distribution system, maintenance of community assets, etc

V. FINDINGS

CASE STUDY

A case study was conducted in the Panchayats as Patkulunda, Kainsir, Satalma, Khemesara, Remta, Gopeipali, Kusanpuri, Lenda panchayats of the Barpali block. The Panchayats play a crucial part in our nation. The spirit of India lies in its villages and it has around 7 lakhs villages. So, it's necessary to have a more transparent picture of democracy. It is a great challenge for India to maintain its cultural spirit and at the same time walk in the path of development. For more effective solution to the complexities that India have, it is important to put an eye on the villages.

Sl.No.	Name of the sarpanch	District	Block	Panchayat	Sex	Age	Religion	Caste	Qualification	Working experience
1.	Subal Sahu	Bargarh	Barpali	Satalma	Male	64	Hindu	OBC	Matriculation	One term
2.	Prafulla Ku. Bhoi	Bargarh	Barpali	Kainsir	Male	38	Hindu	OBC	Graduation	One term
3.	Namita Sahu	Bargarh	Barpali	Patkulunda	Female	37	Hindu	OBC	M.A. (Odia)	One term
4.	Sankhashini Bishi	Bargarh	Barpali	Khemesera	Female	37	Hindu	OBC	Matriculation	One term
5.	Anita Patel	Bargarh	Barpali	Remta	Female	27	Hindu	OBC	Matriculation	One term
6.	Damrudhar Bishi	Bargarh	Barpali	Gopeipali	Male	37	Hindu	OBC	+2	One term
7.	Chaturbhuja Nag	Bargarh	Barpali	Kusanpuri	Male	52	Hindu	OBC	Matriculation	One term
8.	Rabi Sahu	Bargarh	Barpali	Lenda	Male	40	Hindu	OBC	+2	One term

Table 1: shows the list and details of the correspondents of the case study

		Panchayat's							
SL. No.	Contents of The Question	Satalma	Kainsir	Patkulunda	Khemesera	Remta	Gopeipali	Kusanpuri	Lenda
1.	Free Work Atmosphere	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
2.	Effectiveness of PRI in the system	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3.	Delectionation of financial power	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
4.	Most liked Policy of State Government	Kalia	Bhoocheta	No response	Biju Swastya Kalyan Yojana	Khusi scheme	Mukhya mantri Swatya Seva Mission	Anwasha Scheme	Biju Krushak Kalyan Yojana
5.	Most liked Policy of Central Government	Ayushman bharat	Drinking & sanitation policy	No response	Pradhan mantri Gramin Awaas Yojana	Janani Suraksha Yojana	MNREGA	Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana	Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana
6.	Awareness regarding policies of union and state govt.	No	No	No response	No response	No	No Response	No	No
7.	Steps Needed For Improvement of PRI	Yes	Health and education	No response	Yes	No Response	No	Yes	No Response
8.	Provision Making PRI Ineffective	Dominance of block level	No	No response	No Response	No Response	No	Less people participation	No
9.	Interference Of Political Parties in Panchayat Election	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
10.	Faith in decentralization process	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
11.	Status of Corruption Due To PRI	Declining	Increasing	Increasing	Increasing	No Response	No Response	Increasing	No Response
12.	Minimum Qualification Of Sarpanch	Matriculation	Graduate	+2	Matriculation	Matriculation	+2	Matriculation	Matriculation
13.	Specialist Advice For NITI Aayog	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
14.	Work Satisfaction	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Table 2: reflects the awareness regarding the plans and policies of both state and central government

From the survey, the following have been observed

- a) The rural bodies cannot work on their own. They are facing external interference from the upper level as well as intervention from the rural bodies. The Panchayati raj (Joshi R.P., 2002) is effective for developmental process only if the Sarpanch could exercise the village level democracy at his own clutch. The rural bodies are not even enjoying their economic powers freely. The local self-government has been constitutionalized on the assumption that localization of authority and decision-making being closer to the people would generate a sense of accountability in the citizens and that would contribute a lot towards democracy. But corruption is one of the most important problems facing the panchayats. Especially, it has been found out that in case of public works, corruption has been a common issue. The wide spread corruption at different levels of the 3-Tier system of governance raises questions about the transparency, democratic controls, participatory governance, right to information. One of the justifications is that corruption is done to recover election expenditure. So, the conclusion derived from this is that, decentralization, which is seen as effective in public service delivery, has failed to meet the local needs (Bandyopadhyaya, D. , Ghosh, S.K., Ghosh, B., 2003).
- b) Development in India is directly proportional to the development of its villages. Development at village level can be reflected by the facilities i.e water, sanitation, housing, poverty level, energy, health, environment, education, employment, etc. that a village has to enrich its human civilization. Development

is about improvement in socio-economic, political and rational development of the population of the village (Singh Vijendra, 2003). The developmental works are given priorities, policies are being implemented, but only in pen and paper where the practicality of the policy in reality is minimum. Corruption may be a reason or lack of awareness may be the one or ignorant behaviour of people may be another. Through the survey we found that the Sarpanch of villages are not aware about the privileges that are being provided by the central government or state government. They cannot even distinguish between the policies of state government and central government. Ignorance is not bliss but the highest form of selfishness. We have always been a nation where the grass-root level leadership has been valued. However, what our nation should be and what it is are two separate realities. We have to train the representatives about the operations of the policies implemented and their modelities according to the complexities of the villages [9].

- c) Youth, who are the future of the Indian politics, don't care about politics at grass root level because they just don't understand it and also do not feel the need to. No, here, we are making a mistake in understanding the youth talent. Older folks love to believe that youngsters do not have any substantial thought and they are immature while making decisions. Breaking this stereotype, youths want to be a part of the world's largest driving force, but the young voices deserve to be heard with respect. What inessential in modern time is the spirit of the youth and the unconditional support of the young mass. But I regret to say that their voices are being treaded in the name of political experience. However, with time, a few leaders are opting for unexplored platforms like social media to engage with younger audiences but until more leaders find a way to connect with the young minds, it will remain a major hindrance for the all-round development of the rural areas (Rao Rajagopala Narayanamurthy, 1992).
- d) Education is the most important aspect of human life. It is the portal through which development takes place. Because our leaders are self-interested and incompetent, development has still not grasped the rural ground. Education is the platform where ideas evolve and creativity takes shape. So, one of the answers to develop the under-developed villages is educated leaders. Having degrees is not enough to rule the nation, it needs conscience to decide the best for their people, the strong will to go against any odd to provide their people the best opportunities, the rational decision making skill, the love and respect for their community. Here, the system fails. More often leaders of today have become self-serving beings. We need more educated leaders who are flexible with changing situations and can deal with complexities. Only when people are aware of the problems, can they think of the solutions. Why are the educated community are not participating in elections? This is because politics has been compromised today and has become a profession that everyone despises of. Cheap tactics to secure votes cannot be played by the moral beings which are followed by uneducated leaders to win the elections. We lack educated politicians who want to serve the nation first rather than fulfilling their own materialistic expectations (Sharma Raw Sita, 1994).
- e) Freedom is of no means if the women are not emancipated from all forms of oppression. The beauty of democracy is the possibility of all citizens to participate in managing the public affair (Kohli Atul, (2001). Equal participation of women and men in politics is an important condition for effective democracy and good governance and also reflects a more stable democratic society. Despite of the Reservation Bill, 1992, which grants 33% reservations of seats for women in both houses, the number of women in political participation is very less. The disguised dependencies of women upon their male counterparts have left them ineffective and they lack the confidence to come to the forefront while making decision in the political system. A rise in the participation of women in the political process would enhance good governance and further more would result in the formation of a more transparent democracy.

SOLUTIONS

The PRI has been found ineffective because of the problems like there is no authentic distribution of power to the local elected representatives. Further, the institutional structures like the district planning board, created to expedite decentralized planning do not give priority to PRIs. Moreover, limited efforts have been made to empower elected PRIs representatives with their constitutional functions.

The need of the hour is to move from a political representation to power devolution. The state representatives need to accept the importance of PRIs and devolve power to them as mandated in the Constitution of India. The focus should be given to PRI representatives to become planners and evaluators rather than mere implementers of the projects mend to strengthen the local institution and its development (Rath Jitendra, Panda Sameet, 2018).

VI. CONCLUSION

The elementary motive behind the introduction of local self-governance was to decentralize the political power, thereby, expanding the democratic reach to the social groups. This idea also facilitates the self-building process and self-propelling status of efficient local institutions. For a good governance, the selfless service to the public should be the motive. Unless and until, the selfish nature of the representative is not emancipated from the political biasness, there is no meaning of devolution of power. Political process has now become a means to fulfil the hedonistic lifestyle based on materialistic feelings rather than public-oriented service. The best way to improve the efficiency of local self-governance is people's participation in the political process and that can be enhanced by creating awareness among all the social groups that all together fulfil the nature to become a civilised and rational society.

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