



The Role of the Panchayath Raj Institutions in Rural Development

KEYWORDS

Rural Development, Panchayath Raj Institutions, Functions, Sources of income and Role of Panchayath Raj Institutions in Rural Development, Responsibilities of Panchayaths, Responsibilities of the Citizens, Control over Gram Panchayath.

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ABSTRACT *Ingeneral development of nation is the main point of Indian government since its sovereignty. Past the major push for growth 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 Panchayath 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 Panchayath Raj Institutions (PRIs).*

1. Introduction

Panchayath comes from panch, 'five,' but the body so called is not limited to this number. Many castes in towns and villages have also their own panchayats, which deal with business, social, and religious matters common to the caste" (Royal Commission 1909, p 236).

The Royal Commission describes the village in India as under "The typical Indian village has its central residential site, with an open space for a pond and a cattle stand. Stretching around this nucleus lie the village lands, consisting of a cultivated area and (very often) grounds for grazing and wood-cutting... The inhabitants of such a village pass their life in the midst of these simple surroundings, welded together in a little community with its own organization and government, which differ in character in the various types of villages, its body of detailed customary rules, and its little staff of functionaries, artisans, and traders.

The Rig Veda is the oldest religious scripture in the world and the most revered of the Vedas. It consists of more than 1,000 hymns addressed to gods. It refers to rituals, such as marriage and funeral rites, that differ little from those practiced today in Hinduism. It is the source of much Indian thought, and many consider its study essential to understanding India.

2. Rural Development

Rural Development (RD) is a process, which aims at improving the well being and self realization of people living outside the urbanized areas through collective process. According to Agarwal (1989), rural development is a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of rural poor.

The United Nations defines Rural Development as: Rural Development is a process of change, by which the efforts of the people themselves are united, those of government authorities to improve their economic, social and cultural conditions of communities in to the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national programme. Rural Development is a process of bringing change among rural community from the traditional way of living to progressive way of living. It is also expressed as a movement for progress.

3. Panchayath Raj Institutions

Panchayath Raj is a system of governance in which gram Panchayaths are the basic units of administration. It has 3 levels: Gram (village, though it can comprise more than one village), Janpad (taluka or block) and Zilla (district). The term "Panchayath raj" is relatively new, having originated by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru during 1958. Raj literally means "rule". Mahatma Gandhi advocated Panchayath Raj, a decentralized form of Government where each village is responsible for its own affairs, as the foundation of India's political system. The term for such a vision was Gram Swaraj («village self-governance»). The leader of the Panchayath was generally called the mukhiya or sarpanch, a position which is elected.

a. Functions

1. Implementation schemes for the development of agriculture.
2. Establishment of primary health centres and primary schools.
3. Supply of drinking water, drainage and construction/repair of roads.
4. Development of cottage and small-scale industries, and the opening of cooperative societies.
5. Establishment of youth organizations.

b. Sources of income

The main sources of income of the Panchayath samiti are grants-in-aid and loans from the State Government.

1. Taxes on water, pilgrimage, markets, etc.
2. Fixed grant from the State Government in proportion with the land revenue and money for works and schemes assigned to the Parishad.

4. Role of Panchayath Raj Institutions in Rural Development

Panchayati Raj Department is an important department of India 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.

5. Responsibilities of Panchayaths

Following are the responsibilities of Panchayats:

- a) Periodic meeting of Gram Sabha in order to communicate the functioning of Panchayaths.
- b) Monthly meeting of Gram Panchayath 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 Panchayath through the collection of taxes and fees prescribed by the act of legislature.

6. Responsibilities of the Citizens

(a) **Coordinating the meetings:** Public should get the information regard the works and planning's of Gram Panchayath 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.

7. Control over Gram Panchayath:

To stop the misuse of funds at Gram Panchayath level, there is a law of investigation by the Collectors, Deputy Collectors and the members.

- a) The complaint along with affidavit and relevant proofs can be given to the District Collector.
- 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 Panchayath.

Conclusion

The above study reviews the role of PRIs in rural development. In spite of the powerful system maintained by the government this system is facing several challenges. It is evident that a huge amount of funds is spent on the rural development by the government. The government was providing huge amount of funds in fostering the growth of rural India. There is a need to keep a strict watch over the utilization of funds by Gram Panchayaths.

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