



## A STUDY ON PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS AND ITS AWARENESS PROGRAMMES

### KEYWORDS

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### 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 Panchayati 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).

### INTRODUCTION

India is rightly regarded as the land of villages. In a country where seventy-five percent of the population dwells in over five lakh seventy-five thousand villages, the importance of Local Government, popularly known as Panchayati Raj in India, looks self-evident. Indeed, thoughts on Local Government are but part of the larger concern for social and economic amelioration of the people, a task to which India is committed. Panchayats have been amongst the oldest political institutions of India, and the very use of this term has deeply nostalgic association tending to take the mind to the distant and dim past. But in the form in which it is constituted and made to function today is a modern innovation. Community Development Programme was inaugurated on 2nd October 1952 in the country to synchronise the programme with the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, to whom the rural amelioration was dearer. Community Development in India as conceived by Jawaharlal Nehru, was not an expression of a pious wish but a well-thought out strategy for rural development, Panchayati Raj was introduced with great fanfare, and it easily constitutes the most conspicuous measure of reform in the system of Governance in Independent India.

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In spite of the fact that almost everyone is vitally affected by the activities of the Local Government, there is a wider spread lack of appreciation and understanding of the significant role played by it. As the spotlight of citizen interest focuses on national and international affairs and shines less intensely on the activities of State Governments, the functions of Local Governments may be obscured in the shadows people tend to take their Local Government for granted.

The **Panchayati Raj** in India generally refers to the system introduced by constitutional amendment in 1992, although it is based upon the traditional panchayat system of South Asia. The modern Panchayati Raj and its gram panchayats are not to be confused with the extra-constitutional khap panchayats (or caste panchayats) found in northern India. The panchayati raj system was formalized in 1992, following a study conducted by a number of Indian committees of various ways of implementing more decentralized administration.

Mahatma Gandhi advocated *panchayati raj* as the foundation of India's political system, as a decentralized form of government in which each village would be responsible for its own affairs. The term for such a vision was Gram Swaraj ("village self-governance"). Instead of it India developed a highly centralized

form of government. However, this has been moderated by the delegation of several administrative functions to the local level, empowering elected gram panchayats. There are significant differences between

- (1) the traditional panchayati raj system,
- (2) that envisioned by Gandhi, and
- (3) the system formalized in India in 1992.

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: gram panchayat (village level), mandal parishad or block samiti or panchayat samiti (block level) and zila parishad (district level).[6] It was formalized in 1992 by the 73rd amendment to the Indian Constitution.

The Panchayat Raj system was first adopted by the state of Rajasthan in Nagaur district on 2nd Oct 1959. The second state was Andhra Pradesh, while Maharashtra was the Ninth state. This system was adopted by state governments during the 1950s and 60s, as laws were passed to establish panchayats in various states. It also found backing in the Indian Constitution, with the 73rd amendment in 1992 to accommodate the idea. The Amendment Act of 1992 contains provision 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 eleventh schedule of the constitution.

The panchayats receive funds from three sources: Local body grants, as recommended by the Central Finance Commission

1. Funds for implementation of centrally sponsored schemes
2. Funds released by the state governments on the recommendations of the State Finance Commissions

In the history of Panchayati Raj, in India, on 24 April 1993, the Constitutional (73rd Amendment) Act 1992 came into force to provide constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj institutions. This act was extended to Panchayats in the tribal areas of eight states, namely Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan starting 24 December 1996. Currently, the Panchayati Raj system exists in all the states except Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram, and in all Union Territories except Delhi. The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee was a committee appointed by the Government of

India in January 1957 to examine the working of the Community Development Programme (1952). The Act aims to provide a 3-tier system of Panchayati Raj for all States having a population of over 2 million, to hold Panchayat elections regularly every 5 years, to provide seats reservations for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes 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. The 3-tier system of Panchayati Raj consists of:

1. Village-level Panchayats
2. Block-level Panchayats
3. District-level Panchayats.

Powers and responsibilities are delegated to panchayats at the appropriate level:

1. Preparation of the economic development plan and social justice plan.
2. Implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice in relation to 29 subjects given in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution.
3. To levy and collect appropriate taxes, duties, tolls and fee

The history of panchayati raj in Guntur district stretches back to a little over 130 years when it was a part of the erstwhile Madras Presidency. The Local Funds Act was passed in A.D. 1871 establishing Local Fund Boards. The area of the present Guntur District was included in the three local fund circle boards created under the Act. The next major landmark in the district was the establishment of Krishna District Board on the 1st April, 1885 under the Madras Local Boards Act of 1884 which repealed the earlier Act of 1871. The present parts of Guntur and Prakasam Districts were included in Krishna District. Consequent on the formation of Guntur District on the 1st October, 1904, a separate district board was constituted for Guntur on the 1st of April, 1905 with a sanctioned strength of 32 members, of whom 14 were official and 18 non-officials.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the panchayati raj institutions in Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh.
2. To focus on the Zilla Parishad, Mandal Parishad, Gram Panchayats in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh.
3. To analyse the awareness programmes for the villagers conducted by panchayati raj institutions in the Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh.

#### METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

For this study the data collected from the villagers are under the panchayati raj institutions are the sample size of 150 respondents from the Guntur district. The respondents are Sarpanchas, Panchayati samiti members, Zilla Parishad Members.

#### PANCHAYATI RAJ IN ANDHRA PRADESH

In conformity with the constitutional amendment the Andhra Pradesh Legislature repealed of its earlier Acts and enacted a new Act namely the Andhra Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1994. Under the new Act the Mandal Parishad has been retained as a unit at intermediate level in the three-tier system of panchayati raj in the State. The other two-tiers are Gram Panchayat at the village level and Zilla Parishad at the district level. The Act also provides for the constitution of Gram Sabha at the village level. The first ordinary elections to PRIs in the State, after the implementation of 73rd Constitution Amendment Act were held in 1995. The subsequent elections were conducted in 2001 and 2006. Elections to 14,591 MPTCs, 1094 ZPTCs were

held in July 2006. The elections to 21,434 gram panchayats and 2,08,291 wards in the gram panchayats were held in August 2006. Elections to the MPTCs and ZPTCs were held on party basis, while elections to the village panchayats were on non-party basis. The positions at all the three levels were reserved for persons who belonged to the backward classes (34 percent), scheduled castes (17.56 percent) and for scheduled tribes (7.61 percent). Within each of these categories and the unreserved category one-third of seats as well as positions were reserved for women. The major political parties namely Telugu Desam Party, Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party, Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist) contested the elections, The newly formed Telangana Rashtriya Samithi also fielded their candidates in the elections

#### GUNTUR DISTRICT

The Guntur District Board continued till the formation of the zilla Parishad in 1959. According to the provisions of the Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Samithis and zilla Parishads Act 1959, the Guntur Zilla Parishad came into operation on December 1, 1959. According to the 1986 Act, the panchayat samithis were abolished and 57 Mandal Praja Parishads (MPPs) were created in their place in the district. The new Panchayati raj Act 1994 has not brought any changes in the size and the number of mandal parishad and zilla parishad in the district. At present, there are 1,025 Gram Panchayats, 57 Mandal Parishads and one ZP in Guntur District. The functioning of each of the three-tiers has been examined in this following article. They are Returu Gram Panchayat, Kakumanu Mandal Parishad and Guntur Zilla Parishad.

#### Zilla Parishad

The Zilla Parishad stands at the apex of the three-tier structure and is the highest developmental agency in state. Through the organization of the Zilla Parishad differs in different state, general in consists of representatives of the Panchayat Samiti; all the member of the state Legislature and the parliament representing a part or whole of the district; all district level officers of the Medical, Public Health, Public Work, Engineering, Agriculture, Veterinary, Education, and other Developments. There is also provision for special representation of women, members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes provided they are not adequately represented in the normal course. The Collector or the Deputy Commissioner is also a member of the Zilla Parishad. He also acts as the Chairman of the Parishad.

#### Mandal Parishad

Under the three-tier Panchayat Raj system, the Grama Panchayat is at the lower level, the Zilla Parishad is at the upper level while the Mandal Parishad is at the middle level. There are 20-30 Grama Panchayats in the jurisdiction of Mandal Parishad. The Mandal Parishad strives to develop the village in its jurisdiction. The Mandal Parishad area is divided into required number of territorial constituencies for the purpose of electing members directly. The members who are directly elected and the co-opted members remain in office for five years.

#### Grama Panchayat

A Grama Panchayat is a village level administrative unit. One Grama Panchayat is constituted for every village. Every village has a Grama Sabha. All the villagers who get their names enrolled in the electoral roll of that village are members of the Grama Sabha. The number of elected members in all Grama Panchayats is not uniform. The number of members depends on the village population. The number of elected members of the Grama Panchayat including the sarpanch should be based on the population of the village as per the latest census. The village is divided in wards for the purpose of election of the

members. The term of office of Grama Panchayat members is 5 years. The sarpanch, upa-sarpanch and the members may resign their posts on any ground at any time.

**TABLE 1: VILLAGERS PARTICIPATION IN PANCHAYATI RAJ ACCORDING TO THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

SL.No	Sarpanch	Panchayati samiti Members	Zilla Parishad Members	Total
<b>Age</b>				
25-35 years	10(6.66%)	25(16.66%)	13(8.67%)	38(25.33%)
36-50 years	20(13.33%)	15(10%)	19(12.67%)	54(36%)
50 years	26(17.33%)	12(8%)	10(6.67%)	48(32%)
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	30(20%)	26(17.33%)	28(18.67%)	84(56%)
Female	20(13.33%)	38(25.33%)	8(5.33%)	66(44%)
<b>Education</b>				
Primary Education	25(16.67%)	18(12%)	8(5.33%)	51(34%)
Secondary Education	26(17.33%)	13(8.67%)	8(5.33%)	47(31.33%)
Boardlevel / Degree level	31(20.67%)	21(14%)	0	52(34.67%)
<b>Caste</b>				
OC	21(14%)	16(10.67%)	8(5.33%)	45(30%)
BC	12(8%)	19(12.67%)	5(3.33%)	36(24%)
SC	25(16.67%)	8(5.33%)	0	33(22%)
ST	10(6.67%)	15(10%)	3(2%)	28(18.67%)

The above table represents the villagers participation in the panchayati raj institutions according to the demographic profile of the respondents. The researcher has taken age group of three categories are 25-35 years (25.33%), 36-50 years are 54(36%) and 51 years are 48(32%). In the education divided into three categories are Primary education are 51(34%) are taken as respondents, secondary education are 47(31.33%), Board level are 52(34.67%). According to the Caste wise respondents OC are 45(30%), BC are 36(24%), SC are 33(22%), ST are 28(18.67%).

**TABLE 2: Awareness Programmes about the Panchayati Raj Meetings for the Respondents**

Schemes	Options	Sap anch	Panchayati Samiti members	Zilla Parishad Members			
		F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Main agenda PRI Meetings reported by respondents</b>	1.Construction	10	6.67	6	4	7	4.67
	2.Drinking water facility	21	14	5	3.3	8	5.33
	3.Sanitation and Health	15	10	4	3	5	3.33
	4.Education and Training	10	6.67	5	2.6	12	8
	5.Women and Child	8	5.33	6	15.	10	6.67
	6. Do not know	7	4.67	6	62	5	3.33
<b>Persons according to the influences PRIs meeting discussion</b>	1.Landlords	25	16.67	15	10	18	12
	2.Farmers	15	10	17	11.	15	10
	3.Public	20	13.33	18	33	7	4.67

Utilisation of Govt Schemes by villagers according to the respondents	1.Yes	25	16.67	31	20.67	17	11.33
	2.No	30	20	27	18	20	13.33

The above table represents Awareness Programmes about the Panchayati Raj Meetings for the Respondents regarding to the Main agenda PRI Meetings reported by respondents Construction are 7(4.67%), Drinking Water facility are 8(5.33%), Sanitation and Health are 5(3.33%), Education and Training are 12(8%), Women and child are 10(6.67%), Do not Know are 5(3.33%).

Persons according to the influences PRIs meeting discussion Landlords are 18(12%), Farmers are 15(10%), Public are 7(4.67%).

Utilisation of Govt Schemes by villagers according to the respondents say yes are 17(11.33%), No are 20(13.33%).

**Conclusion**

The implementation of rural development programmes through the Panchayat Raj Institutions has brought a radical change in the socioeconomic conditions of the rural people in the study village. The implementation of rural development programmes has affected even the social and political affairs of the people. In the economic sphere, these programmes have shaped an improvement in economic position of the village. As a result, most of the villagers have acquired an added income. Furthermore, in the newly erected houses drinking water facility , electricity had been provided through which indicates a cumulative progression of infrastructural development in the village. These programmes have also provided good social and economic positions for the rural people. The tribal people of the village are getting more facility of rural development programmes compare to the other nearby villages.

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