

Panchayati Raj System : An Efficient Tool in the Development of Rural India

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The present paper is the study of various government schemes in India for primary education with the help of Gram Panchayats. Author reviewed all popular schemes and contribution of panchayats in the scheme. Author found that there is neither shortage of schemes run by the government nor there is any shortage of funds allocated for them. The main reason for their slow implementation and failures is the fact that these programs are being determined and implemented by the authorities without taking the target group into confidence and specifically there is a widespread corruption at all levels.

[**Keywords** : Panchayati Raj, Rular education, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mid Day Meal Scheme]

1. Introduction

India, the world's largest democratic governance system can only succeed if it's democratic beliefs and values are permanent at grass root levels. Thus, the successful operation of local self governance ensures the success of democratic governance system.

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The panchayati Raj system is a concrete step to make the democracy more realistic as it constantly maintains the interest of people in local work, as they can solve their territorial problems at primary level by provincial methods. In order to accentuate the functioning of the system, Panchayati Raj Institutions provide training in governance and administration to local people directly and indirectly through their participation in governance.

Local self governance is featured as psychological and practical requirement of human being. In India, Panchayati Raj system has been in existence since ancient times and this assembly of five persons still continues to exist inspite of many political and economic changes.

Many authors have been studied the educational development in India. Bhattacharya (1982) conducted studies on planning in India and abroad. According to Webster (1995) there is undoubtedly a great deal of evidence that lends support to such arguments. In India, the post-independence development experience demonstrates that Central planning undertaken by a state which neither represent no reflects the interests of the rural poor and socially marginalized, can rarely cater for their needs. In such a situation, decentralization and democratization of the Government and the encouragement of non-state institutions to represents the marginalized and is excluded sections of the population are necessary prerequisite for better, and also more egalitarian, development.

However, the contemporary arguments for decentralized democracy and non-governmental organisations taking on a greater role in rural development also have powerful ideological assumptions behind them; assumptions that reflect theories of social changes and development whose roots lie primarily in western liberal philosophy. While there might be disagreement as to the specific nature of the problem involved, there is a general acceptance of the need to reject the state's leading role in economy and social development.

Gupta (1984) studied the schemes that is being run for rural development. He studied the effectiveness of the strategies for rural development through government schemes implemented by Banks. Rajshekhar (1998) examined the rural development strategies of NGOs based on the empirical data collection from NGOs in different part of Karnataka state. He mentioned that development practi-

tioner, government officials and foreign donors consider that NGOs by virtue of being small scale are flexible, innovative and participatory and are more successful in reaching the poor and in poverty elevation. This results rapid growth in funding of for NGO by government and external donors. Rajshekhar found in his study there is a mismatch between the objectives and activities and that NGOs strategies evolved not on the basis of peoples needs and aspirations but on the basis of donor consideration. He said this policy of the government of rural development programs with the help of NGOs is not on the right track

Connell (1994) concludes in this article that targeted programs are unlikely to have a major impact unless they are part of a broader agenda for social justice. Nambissan and Rao (2014) focus on the relationship between poverty and elementary education in India and specifically on the advocacy of markets for the schooling of poor children. I view poverty within a complex and relational framework that takes into account structural inequalities as well as multiple and intersecting deprivations that disadvantage and render vulnerable large sections of society.

Kumar et al. (2003) propose an alternate model for delivery of primary education in rural part of India. They mention in their paper that indifferent success of the present system of primary education in India need a complete change of the method of delivery of education. The model discussed by the authors has features that ensure flexibility, accountability and quality, which can help achieve the threefold objectives of elementary education - universal access, universal retention and universal achievement.

2. Panchayati Raj in India

The word 'Panchayatan' is mentioned in ancient Indian text which means an assembly of five people. During that period every village was independent. Distribution of land, management of means of irrigation, care of pastures, organisation of fair and festivals, solution of mutual disputes, security of village and recovery from goods dealers were the main functions of Panchayats. From the Buddhist period to the Mughal period, the Panchayati Raj can also be called a kind of local self government existed in one form or another. But the present local self government is more a product of British rule. In 1870, the resolution of decentralization of Lord Mayo

was passed, the prime motive of this resolution was to provide an opportunity to develop self government, empower municipal institutions and enable Indians and Europeans to have more relations with administrative matters than ever before.

3. Panchayati Raj in Independent India

After the independence, the constitution of India was drafted and came into force on 26 January 1950. Under the constitution, panchayati Raj was included in the directive principles of State policy. The article 40 of the constitution provide that state will be obliged to organise the gram panchayats in such a way that it functions as a unit of local self government. After independence Community Development Program was the first effort towards the democratic decentralisation in India. This program was started from 2 October 1952 on the auspicious occasion of Gandhi Jayanti. But unfortunately it failed in its objectives. Balwant Rai Mehta committee (1957) was formed to review the program. The committee in its report stated the lack of popularity as the reason for the failure of the Community Development Program. The committee stated that in order to establish democracy in villages, there must be decentralization of power in the true sense. This committee recommended the establishment of a three tier Panchayati Raj based on democratic decentralisation. It worked on three levels namely - Gram Panchayat at village level, Panchayat Samiti at middle/block level, Zila Parishad at top/district level.

Panchayati Raj system was introduced on 2 October 1959 in Nagaur district of Rajasthan on the recommendation of Mehta committee and within the next 2-3 years, panchayati Raj system was enforced in most of the states of the country. But this excitement soon disappeared and the period between 1969 to 1977 is considered as a period of decline for Panchayati Raj Institutions.

The Janata party government formed in 1977 was interested to decentralize the powers and functions of local level bodies. So it appointed a 13 member Panchayati Raj commission headed by Ashok Mehta in December 1977. The purpose behind the setting up of this commission was to provide suggestions to make Panchayati Raj meaningful that may work for the welfare of the people. After this G.V.K. Rao committee (1985) and L. M. Singhvi committee (1986) suggested that the the Panchayati Raj Institutions should be

empowered for the success of decentralization. With a view to making positive efforts in all these directions and giving constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions, the Rajiv Gandhi government in 1989 presented the 64th Constitutional Amendment Bill before the parliament but this amendment bill could not be passed due to political reasons. The bill related to Panchayati Raj Institutions was again introduced in Lok Sabha on 16 December 1991 with some amendments. The bill was referred to select committee. The committee gave its consent in July 1992 and the number of the bill was changed to 73rd Constitutional Amendment which was passed in Lok Sabha on 22 December 1992 and in Rajya Sabha on 23 December 1992, which when approved by 17 state legislatures was sent for presidential approval. The bill was approved by the President on 20 April 1993 and it came into force from 25 April 1993. This amendment has added 9 after the previous part 8 of the constitution, which is titled 'Panchayat'. By this, the provisions related to panchayats have been included in the article 243 which contains 15 sub articles. This act also adds a new eleventh schedule to the constitution by article 243 (G) which has the following 29 subjects :

1. Agriculture.
2. Land reform and soil conservation.
3. Minor irrigation, water management and watershed management.
4. Animal husbandry, dairying, poultry.
5. Fisheries.
6. Soil forestry and farm forestry.
7. Minor forest produce.
8. Small scale industries including food processing industries.
9. Khadi, village and cottage industries.
10. Rural housing.
11. Drinking water.
12. Fuel.
13. Road, culverts, bridges, ferries, waterways and other means of communication.
14. Rural electrification including distribution of electricity.
15. Non conventional sources of energy.
16. Poverty alleviation program.

17. Education including primary and secondary schools.
18. Adult and non-formal education.
19. Libraries.
20. Markets and fairs.
21. Cultural activities.
22. Health and sanitation, primary health centres.
23. Family welfare.
24. Technical training and vocational education.
25. Women and child development.
26. Social welfare.
27. Welfare of the weaker section particularly welfare of schedule caste and scheduled Tribes.
28. Public distribution system.
29. Maintenance of community assets.

The government also made considerable efforts to strengthen the financial position of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Presently, Panchayats receive funds from three sources.

Thus, 73rd constitutional amendment gave life to the deceased Panchayats. Their existence has been secured by being given constitutional status. The biggest achievement of this act is that it will bring uniformity in the formation of panchayats across the country and regular elections will be held. By this act, the panchayats have not only got administrative rights but also ensured the availability of financial resources which has helped in rural development.

4. Gram/Village Panchayat

Gram panchayat is the smallest unit of Panchayati Raj Institutions. The state government has the authority to declare a village or a group of villages a Panchayat area for every thousand population. A Gram Panchayat then will be established in the name of this Panchayat area. Under Sec 12(1)a, the organisation of the panchayat will be declared only after the election of Pradhan and 2/3 of its members. Then, Gram Panchayat will form total six communities to assist in its work. The gram panchayat may entrust these committees to perform all or some of its functions as per the requirement. If there is a function that two or more Gram Panchayat want to work together, they can also form a joint committee.

Functions of gram panchayat (Sec.15) :

1. Related to agriculture and horticulture.
2. Related to minor irrigation.
3. Related to animal husbandry.
4. Related to forest and trees.
5. Related to small industries.
6. Related to water.
7. related to housing.
8. Related to fuel.
9. Related to roads, culverts, bridges etc.
10. Related to energy.
11. Related to poverty.
12. Related to education and art.
13. Related to sports and cultural affairs.
14. Related to panchayats.
15. Related to health and welfare.
16. Related to essential commodity.
17. Related to weaker sections.

5. Rural Development

The importance of rural development is self evident in developing countries like India where majority of population resides in villages. In fact, rural development means giving priority to rural development programs for the people living in these areas. This includes things like agricultural development, rural housing, rural planning, health, education, communication, changes in socio-economic structure. But the development of rural people means improving their standard of living. Thus, rural development is all round development of rural areas.

The schemes that is being run by education department are as follows :

1. **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan** : Sarva Shiksha abhiyan is a major program of the Government of India. It was launched in November 2001 by Atal Bihari Vajpayee for a fixed time period. This program aims to achieve universalisation of quality

primary education by 2010. Thus today, all primary schools in the country provide free education.

2. **Kanya Vidya dhan Yojana** : This scheme was launched by the Uttar Pradesh government in April 2004. Its objective is to promote girls education in the state by encouraging the girls belonging to below poverty line families to go for higher education. Under this scheme, the girls who have passed intermediate were given an amount of Rs 20000 as an incentive to create their interest in the education. Now this amount has been increased to Rs 30000. So far 1 lakh girls have been benefited under this scheme. Initially, only the girl students of UP board were given benefit in this, but later girls from CBSE, ICSC board, Secondary Sanskrit Shikshan board and madrasa board have also been included.
3. **Mid Day Meal Scheme** : This scheme has been implemented by the government of India throughout the country. It aims to upgrade the nutritional health of the students. This scheme was started by the former chief minister of Tamil Nadu M.G. Ramachandran during his tenure to attract children towards the school. After its fruitful results, the central government implemented the scheme all over the country in 2004. Features of this scheme are as follows :
 - At present, under this scheme, per day 100 gram of wheat/ rice per student with the expenditure of Rs 4.48 per student for cooking has been approved.
 - The central government also pays for the transportation from Central warehouse to state warehouse and from there to the children.
 - The responsibility of running this scheme in primary schools has been entrusted to the Gram Pradhan, Principal and Teachers of the school.

This scheme is still running successfully without fixation of termination period. This scheme in villages is being run by Gram Pradhan, as the allocation of the raw/uncooked food grains according to per child is done only by the Pradhan of the village and it is cooked under the supervision of the Teachers. Moreover, different food menu have been prepared from Monday to Saturday by the government like Roti-Sabji on Monday, Dal-Rice on Tuesday, Milk (150 ml per child), Tehri on

Wednesday, Roti-Sabji, Dal-Roti on Thursday, Tehri on Friday and Sabji-Rice on Saturday and 1 fruit, Suji Halwa or Kheer on Monday etc. But, it is found that only Daliya, Khichdi etc are distributed in most of the primary schools.

4. **Shiksha Mitra Yojana** : This scheme was launched by Uttar Pradesh government by an executive order issued on 26 May 1999. In order to achieve the goal of universalization of primary education in the state, this scheme was implemented with 65% assistance from Central Government and 35% from state government to overcome the shortage of teachers in primary schools. Shiksha Mitra must have passed intermediate examination. They were being appointed at a salary of Rs 2250 per month which is now increased to Rs 10,000 per month.
5. **Shiksha Guarantee Yojana** : In order to achieve 100 percent literacy amongst the children of remote areas, the scheme was approved in the year 2001-02 for those areas where young children face difficulty as they have to walk far to reach schools.
6. **Nishulk Pathya Pustak Vitran Yojana** : This scheme was launched in the year 2001-02. This scheme, provides a provision of free textbooks in all the districts under Sarva Shiksha abhiyan at primary and higher level of education to all the girls and the boys belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled Tribes categories.
7. **Chhatravriti Yojana** : This scheme is being run by the social welfare department. Under this scheme, scholarship is provided every year to class 1 to 8 students of scheduled caste and scheduled Tribes.
8. **B.T.C. Prashikshu Yojana** : Under this scheme, every candidate who passes the BTC examination is given a job as a teacher of primary school.

6. Role of Gram Panchayat in the Schemes

The management of primary education has been given to the Gram Panchayats in July 1999 by the government of Uttar Pradesh under the joint provision of Basic Education Act, Uttar Pradesh and Panchayati Raj Act, Uttar Pradesh.

Thus, the role of panchayats in the field of primary education has become extremely significant. The function of the panchayats is to discharge the responsibility of the purchase of school building

materials, arrangement of mid day meals for the children, selection of teachers and the distribution of textbooks and scholarships etc.

NPRC (Nyay Panchayat Resource Centre) for every 10 to 15 schools have been set up at the headquarters of each Nyay Panchayat, which organise and conduct educational and other curricular activities.

7. Study : Implementation and Impact of above Schemes in Selected Area

The Objective of the study is to identify the level of development in the villages after the availability of more and more financial resources to Gram Panchayats and the implementation of various governments programs. Also one more objective is to analyse the effect of primary schools and other educational schemes on the education level of the village children and how far do the employees recruited under these schemes are able to achieve the target? Whether the people of the village want to send their children to school or not? If not, why? What are the reasons behind this?

This study is related to the rural society of Barabanki district on India. Barabanki is located about 29 km East of Lucknow, the capital city of Uttar Pradesh state. The study has been conducted in about 20 different areas of the district.

In my study, I observe that the level of education in the selected area is not disappointing. The educational level here has improved considerably than before, it can be said, it is in a satisfactory condition. Yet, a large number of people here are illiterate. But now almost all the children of the village go to school because of the educational schemes run by the government. The total number of school going children have also increased.

All the above mentioned schemes are running in the selected area but they are not implemented properly. The Objective of Sarva Shiksha abhiyan is to attract children towards schools and ensure the implementation of mandatory attendance in the schools are not being implemented properly. Although several objectives explaining the importance of education to children and their families in villages are failing. The reason is not unwillingness of the parents but their untrust in the government and its schemes.

Among all the schemes run by the government, Mid-day meal is seems to be the most directionless scheme. The truth of this scheme

is often revealed in newspapers and random inspections. According to Dainik Jagran of 12 June 2005, inaccurate number of students are being presented in the registers of the schools. For instance, if the actual number of students present in school are 150 or 200, then generally students presented in the register log is 300 or more. Here, fraud in weighing by Kotedars are very common. In which, largest part belongs to Gram Pradhan. In this series of corruption, fraud is being done in food menu as well. In order to save children from malnutrition, the government has already set a menu for mid day meal to provide them healthy food. On the basis of this, Puri-Sabji, Tehri, Daliya, Kheer, Fruits and Milk have been kept in the menu. But in reality Khichdi without dal and Daliya boiled in water are given to children. Many a times, dangerous khesari dal which is banned as a food item is added to the Dal. The fruits given are also not of good quality. Moreover, water is added to the milk that is fixed to be given to children in 150 ml quantity. In many places, 21 litres of milk is registered but only 6 litres of milk is purchased, the remaining money is saved by the school staff and children are served with the watery milk.

It is observed many a times that Gram Pradhan and Headmaster give wheat and rice to their cattle, which was allocated for the school children. According to various newspapers children of primary schools are being served Khichdi cooked from rotten rice. School children are usually served food in less quantity and it is very common to find insects, straws and iron nails in the food. Sometimes poisonous insects also fall in the food. A similar incident took place in Bihar, when food had become poisonous after a lizard fall into it, due to which many children got sick and died.

In villages, the truth of the above statements is 100% visible. While talking to Gram Pradhan, he replies that he is given such a low quality of ration while the truth is something else. After extensive study, a teacher said that it would be less profitable if they serve Tehri or PuriSabji to children. As everyone from top to bottom is involved in the entire corruption or scam, that is why Gram Pradhan and Headmaster also have to give a share to the Secretary and B.D.O. etc. To understand it better, let take an example, If he registers 3 kg of pulse at the rate of Rs 60 per kg and gives only 1 kg of pulse for mid day meal, then he makes a profit of Rs 120. While if he registers 3 kg of potatoes for Tehri at the rate of Rs 10 per kg and gives only 1 kg of

potato for mid day meal, then he can only make Rs 20. And also if he registers 21 litres of milk and pays for only 6 litres, he can save Rs 450 for 15 litres of milk at the rate of Rs 30 per litre. Other than this, Gram Pradhan appoints only that woman to cook mid day meal who is ready to cook at Rs 700 or 800 per month by putting her thumb in register for Rs 1500 per month. In fact, when there 2 to 3 cooks are appointed in the school, Gram Pradhan keeps one of them to cook food in his house.

According to a senior teacher of primary school, the number of students have increased due to Mid day meal scheme. But these students are more interested in lunch only, they do not have any interest in studies. These children do not come to school at the time of harvesting and sowing as they assist their families in labour. But all the children are generally present at the time of mid day meal. On complaining to their parents, they reply "homes run from money and not from education". Kanya Vidya dhan Yojana is not implemented by Gram Panchayat. Shiksha Mitra are also doing well in their job. Apart from this, very little part of the sanctioned amount is sent for the construction and the beautification of primary schools and only formalities are done. Many schools have neither boundary walls, nor toilet facilities for students, nor do they have drinking water, nor electricity. In such an environment, although teachers work hard to teach children, it is very difficult task in summer to teach 250 to 300 children in a two room school.

8. Conclusion

The present study of all the schemes run by the Village development Department and their implementation in selected area, allow to withdraw the conclusion that there is neither shortage of schemes run by the department nor there is any shortage of funds allocated for them. The main reason for their slow implementation and failures is the fact that these programs are being determined and implemented by the authorities without taking the target group into confidence and specifically there is a widespread corruption at all levels. Use of Panchayati Raj system in the growth of rural primary education is a more democratic way to involve people in the implementation of schemes for the their children. Use of technology in the monitoring of programme can be useful to control corruption in the various schemes.

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