

Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Rural Development: The Study of a Village in Dehradun-Uttarakhand

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Abstract

It is well known that India is a classical land of the villages. Villages constitute the backbone of the country. Villages continue to contribute a huge percentage of our notional income. Villages, therefore, play a vital role in the life of nation. If villages grow and develop, the country shall automatically develop. The rural development is concerned with the process of improving the quality of life and social and economic well-being of rural population. Rural development is associated with the improvement of all the sectors of rural economy. Rural development is also related to the improvement of the social conditions of rural people through the provision of the rural infrastructure, vocational training, improve income of rural households and delivery systems pertaining to education, health & safety mechanisms. Government of India has been setup the Department of Rural Development under the control of Ministry of Rural Development. Democratic decentralization in the Indian context assumes the form of Panchayat Raj System. It is self-governing institutions which are set up in the rural areas. These self-governing rural local bodies are described in the Indian context as institutions of Panchayati Raj. Panchayati Raj Institutions are playing major role in rural development of India. Panchayati Raj Institutions established a linkage between local leadership enjoying confidence of the local people and the government, and translate the policies of the government into action. An attempt is made in this paper to study the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in rural development in general and a village of district Dehradun in Uttarakhand in particular.

Keywords: Rural Development, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Democratic Decentralization, 73rd Amendment Act, Gender Uplift, Aamwala Tarla Village.

Introduction

India is the country of villages. From the ancient era Indian rural community has three main bases of social structure- caste system, joint family and panchayats. The Panchayat system of India is expected to play an important role in rural development in India as a unit of self-governance, specially after one decade of independence. In the Indian society rural development assumes greater significance as 68.83 per cent (2011 census) of its population still live in rural areas. The central and state governments and various committees as well as non-government organizations have emphasized the importance of these local panchayat bodies in the polity in India. Planning commission of India through Five-year plans, specially the second five-year plan, laid special emphasis on the role of Panchayats in sustainable rural developments. After Community Development Programme (CDP), in second five year plan India focused on panchayat's as responsible for rural development keeping transformation of social and economic life of rural areas as its goal of development. The rural progress depends entirely on the existence of an active organization in the village which can bring all the people, including the weaker sections like poor and women, into common programmes to be carried out with the assistance of administration and participatory cooperation. To achieve these objectives, the second Five year Plan entailed the Panchayats to perform civic, developmental, land management, land reform, financial rights and judicial functions.

Community development is the main objective of rural development and Panchayati Raj is means for that. The role of Panchayati Raj institutions as major instruments of rural reconstruction and other

development needs. They have been reorganized with wider powers and financial resources for political participation and socio-economic development. In the integrated exercise of planning for social and economic development, active participation of rural people, rural reconstruction, transfer the development policies to representatives, co-ordinate roles, the present set up is a three-tier representative structure of the government where the administrators, elected leaders and local population participate in the developmental effort. The elected representatives play the important role in the decision making process, leaders are regarded as facilities of the process of development. The administrators are accepted to participate with missionary zeal in the life and development of the villages and these institutions are to be channelized to become effective instruments of social and economic change.

Democratic decentralization is the main aim of Panchayati Raj system. The meaning of Panchayat Raj is Democratic Decentralization. The basic argument given for the establishment of "Panchayat Raj" was, people should be given power to rule over the villages. The Panchayat Raj system is a lineage between local leadership enjoying confidence of the local people and the government, and translates the policies of the government into action. With this initiation in mind the Mehta committee made its recommendations to fulfill three major objectives. They are:

1. To represent the "felt needs" of the village community.
2. To give power to the non-officials for the development of village communities.
3. To give power of implementation or execution of programmes to the people.

The above explanation makes it clear that the Panchayat Raj system came into being with main intention of ensuring the involvement of people in the development of villages. Keeping in view the role of Panchayat Raj Institutions, the third Five Year Plan was also revised. Thus Planning Commission in the Third Plan suggested several new strategies for the development of the villages. The new form of the development programmes included the following:

1. Increase in agricultural production.
2. Area development programme, and
3. Programme for special target groups.

The Government launched various programmes in order to fulfill the above mentioned three targeted objectives.

Review of Literature

Atulan Guha (2014) argues that the panchayati raj institutions in Gujarat are being undermined by the state government. The failure to evolve financial devolution to fund the PRIs is making them financially dependent on the state government. Further, the Samras Gram Yojana, which encourages consensus candidates without elections plays into the hands of traditional dominant castes' power.

Gandhi Siga (2015) considers that Panchayat Raj Institution has brought a many socio-political changes in the rural Arunachal Pradesh. Therefore, importance and effectiveness of working of

Panchayat Raj in Arunachal Pradesh is an interesting subject of study to whether these institutions are an effective mechanism for the modern grassroots democratic political participation. With this objective, the present study is intending to shed light on the democratic decentralization political institutions and empowerment of people in Arunachal Pradesh. The findings of the study reveal that the PRIs in Arunachal Pradesh have been exercising very few powers and perform very few functions. The majority of respondents observed that the intended functions were not transferred to PRIs. It is observed that the Government of Arunachal Pradesh is not willing to devolve power and transfer functions to PRIs.

Keshlata, and Syed Nadeem Fatmi (2015) highlight the role of MGNREGA in alleviating the poverty of India. As per the study majority of the Scheduled Tribes is in Madhya Pradesh 14, 7 crore. Through this research paper we will try to focus the impact of MGNREGA on poverty alleviation and rural development in Madhya Pradesh Sheopur district. The authors try to focus the impact of MGNREGA on poverty alleviation and rural development in Madhya Pradesh' Sheopur district. The paper concludes that as India is a rural based country, so many rural development public policies were implemented through Government to alleviate the poverty from India as SGSY, PMGSY and MGNREGA etc. There is hope to have loopholes to leakage of government money. In MGNREGA the participatory planning and decentralized implementation are its basic specialties and here 50 per cent of the works are implemented through the Gram Panchayat. MGNREGA is a demand based programme where the limit of funds is not fixed for the implementation of work. On the other hand there are certain safeguards under the MGNREGA implementation as opening of bank accounts of labourers, labour intensive projects through permissible works such as water conservation, land development, flood control, drought proofing etc. are 67 preferred, 60 per cent of the funds must be paid to the labourers and the non presence of contractors to maintain legality in the system and so on.

Jagdeep Singh and Anju Beniwal (2015) stated that the 2011 Census estimates that 69 percent of the country's total population inhabits in villages. Despite implementing a number of programmes for creating gainful employment opportunities and to improve the quality of lives of rural masses, rural development continues to be a key policy challenge. Rural development essentially reflects in the improvements in the economic well being of people living in villages. Rural development implies both the economic betterment of people as well as greater social transformation. In order to provide the rural people with better prospects for economic development, increased participation of people in the rural development programmes, decentralization of planning, better enforcement of land reforms and greater access to credit are needed.

Henry Maddick (2018) stated in book's subtitle, is concerned with rural local government in India. Panchayati Raj is playing an important role in

promoting social change, economic development and the intelligent administration of representative government. It is vital for India that its rural local government shall be both democratic and effective because its functions include most of the development activities – such as agriculture, rural industry, family planning, water and irrigation, rural roads, warehouses and markets, finance – as well as the complementary and intertwined functions of education, health, sanitation and housing.

Research Gap

The many studies made focus on the importance and implication of 73rd Constitutional Amendment. Only a few of the studies made an attempt on financial and administrative aspects of the decentralized institutions. None of the studies discussed on the pattern and functioning of decentralized institutions in Dehradun district. Some of the studies are centered to explain the main provisions of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and its implications on various facets of rural local self government. Whereas some studies are confined to a particular state and particular aspect of the Panchayat Raj Institutions. The studies on the role of Panchayat Raj Institutions on rural development is very limited or almost nil.

Significance of the Study

Uttarakhand is newly constructed state of India and the Panchayat Raj System is playing an important role in rural development. As migration in Uttarakhand's villages is a very big issue now days and villages that wear a deserted look. Aamwala Tarla Gram panchayat under Raipur block of Dehradun district, Uttarakhand has taken the responsibility of implementing various rural development programmes sponsored by both state and central governments. The study is crucial for evaluating the role of panchayat and the impact of the same on the development of study area.

Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate the rural development programmes of Aamwala Tarla gram panchayat;
2. To identify major socio-economic problems of Aamwala Tarla gram panchayat in implementing rural development programmes by Central and state Government.
3. To evaluate gender upliftment in voting behavior and Politics.
4. To examine people's participation in implementation of programmes.
5. To give suggestions for the better implementation of policies and development.

Methodology

In the light of objectives of the study, an exploratory and descriptive research design is taken. The relevant data for the study was collected through primary and secondary sources. By purposive sampling 150 beneficiaries of various development programmes and policies were taken to assess the impacts of the various development schemes/ programmes on their livelihood. Research tools such as interview-schedule and participant observation was used. The Secondary sources comprised of official records of Aamwala Tarla Gram Panchayat and

District Rural Development agency. Interview-schedule comprised questions on various aspects dealing with their social, economic, political, religious and educational conditions of rural people of village Aamwala Tarla.

Role of Panchayat Raj Institutions

Mahatma Gandhi advocated Panchayati Raj, a decentralized form of Government where each village is responsible for its own affairs, as the foundation of India's political system. It is also found backing in the Indian constitution, with the 73rd amendment in 1993 to accommodate the idea. The Panchayat Raj Institutions, being local self-governing bodies ensure, the opportunity for people's participation and involvement in the formulation and implementation of rural development programmes. Thus, the Panchayat Raj Institutions are entrusted with the task of promoting rural development in India. Since Independence greater emphasis has been laid on the social, economic and planning policy of our country for creating an appropriate rural, economic and social infrastructure and to promote an overall development. The planning policy of our county accorded the highest priority to agriculture and rural development. The measures envisaged from the first five-year plan had considerable bearing for the growth of rural economy. The first five-year plan laid down that "development of agriculture, based on the utilization of man power resources of the countryside and the maximum use of local resources, holds a key to the fast development of the country.

Panchayati Raj Institutions establish rural social structure into a 3-tier Panchayati Raj system. The 3-tier system of Panchayati Raj consists of:

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

Panchayats have been in existence for a long period. The present set-up clearly marks itself off from the past in respect of powers, functions and financial resources. The main aspects of the present system are:

1. Democratization of the constitution and Transfer of more powers from the state to these bodies and decentralization.
2. Powers and responsibilities are delegated to Panchayats at the appropriate level
3. Single multiple agency for rural development.
4. Generating progressive outlook among the rural people and to make villages self-sufficient.
5. Transfer of more functions to the panchayats in regard to agriculture and allied activities, health and welfare and education and
6. Strengthening of the resource position of these bodies.
7. Encouraging community thinking and collective action.
8. Implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice in relation to 29 subjects given in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution.
9. To levy and collect appropriate taxes, duties, tolls and fees

Rural Development

Rural development implies both the economic betterment of people as well as greater social transformation. Development is a broad concept which encompasses every aspect of human life. It is essentially an activity carried out by state involving policy formulation and execution on the part of the government for the benefit of society. Rural development, on the other hand, means total and sustainable development of rural areas in social, economic, political, religious and cultural spheres so that people could lead a happy life. Rural development virtually means development of villages including agriculture. It is a comprehensive socio-economic process undertaken by the government for the purpose of improving the economic and social conditions of the people living in rural areas. It represents planned programmes to change and improve the quality of the life-style of rural people. Rural development is generally conceived as a multi-sectoral activity which includes, besides agricultural development, rural industries, the establishment or improvement of social overhead facilities or infrastructure, such as schools, clinics, roads, communication, water supply, markets, welfare sources, improved nutrition, literacy, adult education etc. The primary objective of rural development is to enrich the quality of the rural masses, particularly the poorer and the weaker sections. The implementation of democratic decentralization through the Panchayat Raj Institutions was meant to give an opportunity for local initiative and participation in the developmental activities.

Development Programmes through Panchayati Raj Institutions in Aamwala Tarla Gram Panchayat

The Government of India and the state government of uttarakhand is implementing a number of Centrally Sponsored Schemes and state sponsored schemes related to rural development, health and family welfare, education, agriculture, women and child development, sanitation, housing, safe drinking water, irrigation, transport, social welfare, etc. throughout the panchayat.

Programmes by District Rural Development Agency (DRDA)

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act(MGNREGA) Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is the renamed scheme of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act which was enacted by the Parliament as an Act No. 42 of 2005. The Act provides a guarantee for rural employment to households whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work not less than 100 days in a financial year in accordance with the scheme made under the Act.

Table 1: Beneficiaries under MGNREGA Scheme in Aamwala Tarla Village

No. of Registered Households	No. of Beneficiaries		Total No. of Beneficiaries
	Male	Female	
292	182	210	392

Source: Panchayat Record, 2018 Aamwala Tarla Village.

Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) 1985/ Pradhanmantri Awas Yojna 2016-

Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) is a centrally sponsored scheme funded on cost-sharing basis between the Government of India and State Government in the ratio of 75:25. Under this scheme Rs. 25, 000/- are provided for construction of a House, Kitchen, Ujjwala Gas and Toilet to a family living Below Poverty Line in rural areas in lump sum. The goal of this scheme is to provide home to all citizens till 2022. The allotted house will be jointly the name of husband and wife.

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)-2000

Rural road connectivity is not only a key component of rural development by promoting access to economic and social services and thereby generating increased agricultural incomes and productive employment opportunities in India, it is also a key ingredient to ensure sustainable poverty reduction. The primary objective of the PMGSY is to provide connectivity, by way of an All-weather Road (with necessary culverts and cross drainage structures, which is operable throughout the year), to the eligible unconnected Habitations in the rural areas.

Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) 1999/ National Livelihood Mission 2011

The families living Below the Poverty Line belonging to rural areas are assisted under this programme— individually as well as in Groups (Self Help Group). Funds to be received under the scheme are shared by Centre and State Government in the ratio of 75:25 ratios. Assistance is provided for income generating activities.

Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY)2001:

This is a centrally sponsored Wage Employment Scheme, Implementation of which will be done through Panchayati Raj Institutions. The scheme has the objectives:

1. To provide additional wage employment in rural areas,
2. To provide food security,
3. To create durable community, social and economic infrastructure in rural areas,
4. Special emphasis to provide Wage Employment to:
 - a. Women;
 - b. Scheduled caste;
 - c. Scheduled Tribes; and
 - d. Parents of children withdrawn from hazardous occupations.

Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)

Integrated Rural Development Programme is a programme or scheme for improving the living standards of the poorest of the poor living in rural areas and for making the process of rural development self sustaining. The IRDP initiated in 1978-79 was a major attempt to attack poverty. The programme based on "the local needs, resources, endowments and potentialities." The objectives of IRDP are mentioned below:

1. To improve the economic and social conditions of the poorest section of the rural society.
2. Developing agriculture and raising the productivity of agriculture by providing agricultural inputs and credit facilities.
3. To develop the secondary and tertiary sector of rural economy.
4. To generate employment opportunities in the rural areas.
5. Promoting self employment in rural areas.

Public Distribution System (PDS) by Department of Civil Supplies

The Government of Arunachal Pradesh introduced the subsidised rice scheme in the late 1990s to improve the consumption levels of the weaker sections of the society. Since then, a poor household is entitled to 15 kgs of rice per person per month at Rs. 3.50 per kg. Besides rice, they are entitled to sugar and kerosene on subsidised rates. Almost all families have been issued ration cards in the village. It is observed that though the PDS shop is reserved for the people, they are not running the shop. All the people of the village have complained about the increase in the prices of ration items like kerosene, rice, and sugar. They also complained about the quantity of items, which have reduced drastically over a period of time. It is because of the frequent change of norms by the government as well as problem in weighing machine of the dealer/shopkeeper.

Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojna 2014

It a part of National Livelihood mission and has the objectives of catering to the career aspirations of the rural youth and adding diversity to the income of rural families.

Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas (PURA) 2004

PURA is a strategy for rural development in India which was proposed by former President APJ

Table 2: Number of Beneficiaries Reporting Improvement in Village Infrastructure

Infrastructure	Beneficiaries Reporting Satisfaction	Beneficiaries Reporting Dissatisfaction	Total
Drinking Water	90 (60%)	60 (40%)	150 (100%)
Sanitation	75 (50%)	75 (50%)	150 (100%)
Street Light	25 (16.67%)	125 (83.33%)	150 (100%)
Quality of Roads	37 (24.67%)	113 (75.33%)	150 (100%)
Education	118 (78.67%)	32 (21.33%)	150 (100%)

Source: Fieldwork Data -Aamwala Tarla Village.

The study reveals that certain social facilities like sanitation, street light and quality of roads were found inadequate to beneficiaries. As the extent of their adequacy and accessibility varies from village to village, about 75 (50%) of the 150 sample beneficiaries have expressed their dissatisfaction over the adequacy and accessibility of the sanitation while 113 (75.33%) and 113 (75.33%) of the beneficiaries expressed dissatisfaction over street light and quality of roads respectively. Hence there is an urgent need of providing these critical facilities on top priority basis to the villagers. Although the beneficiaries have expressed their satisfaction over some services like drinking water and education, here is a greater need for improving the quality and quantity of their services.

Abdul Kalam in his book "Target 3 Billion". PURA proposes the urban infrastructure and services should be provided in rural areas to create opportunities outside the cities.

People's Participation in Developmental Process

People's participation in local level planning means participative development. In its ideal form, local planning implies entrusting to the local people and their institutions all duties and responsibilities of local planning and development, with the government reserving to itself only the functions of guidance, supervision and higher planning. In fact, the local level planning process is one of working with the local people, most directly affected by facilities and programmes, so that the plan: is more responsive to local needs; reflects more accurately local perceptions; produces a sense of local ownership and responsibility; builds on and reinforces the fabric of the community and its internal structure; and supports the evolution of a continuing on-going structure of local administration by creating a core of people.

Improvement in Infrastructure in the Village

Provision of basic infrastructure is a pre-condition for the success of rural development programme. Those who have easy access to infrastructural facilities benefit most and those who do not have adequate access to the infrastructure get bypassed in the process. Opinions of the sample beneficiaries regarding the accessibility, adequacy of different infrastructural facilities such as drinking water, sanitation, street light, education, health, quality of roads, transport, etc. were collected. Extent of people's satisfaction/dissatisfaction on the provision of these facilities was also ascertained during the study. The following table 2 shows the extent of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of beneficiaries about the infrastructure facilities in the study area. The analysis is for all the villages that come under the Aamwala Tarla Gram Panchayat.

Similarly the education facility was found to be accessed. Out of the total 150 beneficiaries, 118 (78.67%) beneficiaries have expressed their satisfaction on the facilities provided in the schools and only 32 (21.33%) beneficiaries have expressed dissatisfaction. However, there is a need for improving the quality of education facility and making it possible within the roads of a high level education. Therefore, along with extending the infrastructure, quality maintenance and enhancement should also be given due care.

Research Findings

Various rural development programmes, projects, plans and schemes which the government has launched have brought about some impact. It

must be noted that the impact of these programmes has not been uniform throughout India. It is found that majority of the respondents were to some extent satisfied with the programmes as they had helped them to improve their economic condition at least marginally and to some extent employment. Majority of the sample felt quite satisfied with the change that has resulted in an increase in their income and employment.

Thus the rural development programmes especially the MGNREGA implemented through the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the selected rural village have provided more employment opportunities for villagers. These programmes have also provided good social and economic positions for the rural people. The people of the village are getting more facility of rural development programmes compare to the other nearby villages.

The rural development programmes have become a good mechanism for infrastructure development of the study area. The Aamwala Tarla Gram Panchayat as an agency of state government is providing facilities like drinking water, sanitation, health services, school buildings, adult education, roads, bridges, street lights, etc. Thus, the assertion that Panchayati Raj Institution plays a decisive role in stirring the positions of the rural people stands validated.

Conclusion

Rural development programmes, in general, have created an impression among the rural India and the Government wants to do something for the development of the villages. The Panchayat Raj Institutions has brought a radical change in the socio-economic conditions and created socio-political consciousness among the rural people in the study village. Empowerment of rural people through the Panchayat Raj Institution's has given them fresh hopes for the future. Panchayat Raj Institution's established self sufficiency in rural areas and created job opportunities for rural people.

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