



Role of Grampanchayat in Rural Development

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Abstract:

The Grampanchayats are expected to play an important role in rural development in India, particularly after independence. Plan documents of both the central and state governments and various committees have emphasized the importance of these bodies in the polity. Five-year plans, specially the second five-year plan, laid special emphasis on the role of Panchayats in rural development. Paper contains concept of development, objectives, need, organisational pattern, main functions and source of income of Gram panchayat, Decentralization program, Panchayat Help-Line. An attempt is made to study the role of gram panchayats in rural development in India.

Introduction:

The role of Grampanchayat as instruments of rural reconstruction and development needs no emphasis. They have been reorganized with wider powers and financial resources not merely as institutions of political participation but institutions of social and economic development. Gram Panchayat has come to be associated with two broad images. First, it is a government by itself and second it is an agency of the state government. In the integrated exercise of planning for social and economic development, co-ordinate roles, the present set up is a three-tier representative structure of government where the administrators, elected leaders and local population participate in the developmental effort. In fact the elected representatives play the key role in the decision making process, leaders are regarded as facilities of the process of development. Since the emphasis of rural development policies is bringing about people's participation in the development programmes, it is possible to achieve this through the leaders.

Concept of Development:

- Development is about improvement in economic and social condition of people and places
- It is linked to addressing poverty, education, health, employment, infrastructure and facilities, basic amenities like housing, drinking water, sanitation.
- It is also about equity and enhancing human abilities.

In the 1990s the human development paradigm was introduced. It argued that development is not merely economic growth; it is also about the people and their capabilities. It is linked to a healthy life, education and decent standards of living. This

emphasized the need to shift the focus from national income as the only indicator of development to expanding the choices people have. Thus, it became a people centric development process.

Development at a Village level:

Development at a village level can be reflected by the facilities that a village has to enrich a human life and sustain the environment around it. Water, sanitation, housing, no poverty, energy, health, environment, education, employment etc. reflect how developed a village is. While we think about village development, do think about justice for all, conserving our eco systems and gender equality.

Objectives of Grampanchayat:

1. Assistance to the economically weaker sections of the community.
2. Cohesion and cooperative self help in the community.
3. Development of cooperative institutions.
4. Development of local resources including the utilization of manpower.
5. Production in agriculture as the highest priority in planning.

Need of Gram Panchayat:

The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution of India laid the way for a paradigm shift in the governance system of the country. From two levels of the National and State governments, a new level was introduced which could be broadly called local government.

The major guiding principles followed in this shift were

- Autonomy of local governments
- Powers to take decisions in matters transferred to local governments, and
- Devolution of functions, finance and functionaries.

The major objectives of these Constitutional amendments include Ensuring social justice and local economic development. And these definitely cover all aspects of human development.

Organizational Pattern of Panchayats:

Panchayat Raj Institutions have been organized into three-tier system for enlisting people's participation in rural reconstruction, viz., 1. The Gram Panchayat Gram Panchayat is the primary unit of Panchayat Raj Institutions or local self-government. It is considered as the first formal democratic institution under the directive principle in the Indian constitution. It is a cabinet of the village elders, directly elected by the adult citizens of the village. The Panchayat has tenure of five years and is directly elected. It has income through taxes to perform its functions.

Main Functions of Gram Panchayats:

1. Preparation of Annual Plans for the development of the village Panchayat Area.
2. Preparation of Annual Budget of Village Panchayat.
3. Mobilization of relief in natural calamities.
4. Removal of encroachments on public properties.
5. Organizing voluntary labours and contribution for community works.
6. Maintenance of essential statistics of villages.
7. Such other development works as may be entrusted.

Sources of Income of Village Panchayats:

1. Share in land revenue.
2. Local tax.
3. Revenue earned from the settlement of shops, fisheries, etc
4. House taxes & other taxes as specified in Panchayat Raj Act.
5. Fees for providing amenities, cess, and tolls.
6. Contribution and grants.
7. Fine and penalties.

Decentralization Programme:

Under the programme of decentralization Gram Panchayats are given the following works:

1. For promoting education Gram Panchayats have to open primary and secondary schools.
2. All the present and new Hand Pumps are the asset of Gram Panchayat. Gram Panchayat is responsible for the repair and maintenance of these Handpumps.
3. Akhadas, Gyms, Sports Ground and Sports related works are being operated by the Gram Panchayat for youth welfare.
4. Medical, Health, Family welfare and Mother & Child welfare centres are all under the control of Gram Panchayat.
5. For women and child development different Anganwadi programmes and other welfare programmes are being carried on by the Gram Panchayats.
6. Livestock department has been transferred to the Gram Panchayats under this they have to maintain 'Pashu Seva Kendra' and 'D' Category veterinary hospitals.

Role of Gram Sabha:

Gram Sabha, as defined by Article 243, has its powers and functions at the village level under Article 243-A. "It has a dual role to play (i) as the watch dog of working of the Gram Panchayat. (ii) As a group to assist the panchayat in matters in which public participation is necessary. The main functions of Gram Sabha are said to be;

1. Mobilising people's participation and involvement through contribution in Cash, kind and or voluntary work in the programme for economic development and social justice.
2. Promoting harmony among all sections of the people.
3. Assisting the panchayat in finalisation of beneficiaries under anti-poverty programmes, including land reforms.
4. Assessing, from time to time, the working of the panchayat and providing guidelines for such working in accordance with law.
5. Suggesting for consideration of the panchayat, from time to time, the nature of programme and activities to be undertaken in the panchayat.

Control over Gram Panchayat:

1. The complaint along with affidavit and relevant proofs can be given to the District magistrate.
2. The investigation of the complaint will be done by the district level officers only.
3. A Chartered Accountant will be appointed for the completion of the accounts of Grampanchayat.
4. The audit of Gram Panchayats will be done by the Chief Accountant.
5. Gram Sabha can rusticate the Pradhan by passing a no confidence resolution if there is any grave charge against the Pradhan.

Panchayat Help-Line:

1. A Panchayat Help-Line System Has Been Implemented For The Information Regarding Panchayati Raj System, Legislature Or Related Rules And Programmes.
2. All The Departmental Officers From State To District Level Will Be available On Office Telephone Between 11:00 Am To 1:00 Pm.
3. At District Level, Every Panchayat Member Can Say His Problem On the Telephone Of Zilha Panchayat Adhikari Office.
4. For The Solution Of The Problems Of Gram Panchayats They Can Also Call On The Telephone Of State Commission Offices.

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