

Role of Panchayati Raj Institution in Socio-Economic Development: "Strengthening Social Justice and Implementation of Central and State Government Schemes

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Abstract: *The Indian Constitution is renowned for its social doctrine, emphasizing liberty, equality, justice, and brotherhood. Article 38 of the Constitution emphasizes the importance of social justice in promoting the welfare of the people by securing and protecting a social order that informs all institutions of national life. This concept of social justice must infiltrate every facet of social life, including the stigmatized untouchability and backward classes.*

The current situation favors the introduction of democracy at the grassroots level, enshrined in Article 40 of the Indian Constitution. Village Panchayats (PRIs) are crucial to the execution of development initiatives and social change, particularly in achieving women's empowerment. The 73rd Amendment Act of the Indian Constitution of 1992 established Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), which are part of rural development. Measures to fortify the democratic framework of society through PRIs are part of rural development, including supporting rural households' incomes, enhancing rural infrastructure, and improving delivery systems for safety, health, and education.

The government established the Department of Rural Development, overseen by the Ministry of Rural Development, to promote rural development in India. The significance of these entities in the political system has been underlined in numerous committees and federal and provincial government plan documents. The importance of Panchayats in rural development was given particular attention in five-year plans, particularly the second one. This research aims to The Panchayati Raj Institution's Function in Social and Economic Growth: "Strengthening social justice and the enforcement of federal and state laws to investigate the function of Panchayati Raj Institutions in achieving women's empowerment and ensuring a more equitable society in the democratic nation of India..

Keywords: Rural Development, Article 38, Panchanti Raj Institutions, Rural, Justice, Welfare, Department of Rural Development

I. INTRODUCTION

In India, Panchayats are anticipated to be crucial to rural development, especially following independence (Kadam 2012, 15; Thanikasalam and Saraswathy 2014, 49). Given that 72.22 percent of Indians still reside in rural regions as per the 2001 census, rural development is more important there (Chauhan 2014, 4). The significance of these entities in the political system has been underlined in numerous committees and the plan documents of the federal and provincial governments. The importance of Panchayats in rural development was given particular attention in five-year plans, particularly the second one. According to the second five-year plan, a panchayat would be in charge of village development to transform rural areas' social and economic landscape. It states that rural development is dependent on



work. The function of Panchayats in rural development was emphasized in later national leaders' plans and policy statements.

It is unnecessary to highlight the function of Panchayati Raj institutions as tools for rural development and rehabilitation. They are now institutions of social and economic growth and political engagement, having been restructured with more authority and funding. There are now two general perceptions about Panchayati Raj. It is a state government agency in addition to being a government in and of itself. Administrators, elected officials, and the local populace all participate in the development process under the current three-tiered representational form of government, which coordinates roles in the integrated exercise of planning for social and economic development. In actuality, leaders are seen as facilities, and elected representatives are crucial to the decision-making process. The administrators are welcome to engage in the life and growth of the villages with missionary enthusiasm, and these establishments are to be inspired to become powerful tools for social and economic transformation.¹

Relevance of the Research

The study's significance Rural development is greatly aided by the Panchayat Raj System. The Hiya Gramme Panchayat, situated in the Nyapin block of Kurung Kumey district, Arunachal Pradesh, has assumed responsibility for carrying out several state and federally supported rural development initiatives. The study is essential for assessing the panchayat's function and how it affects the growth of the studied area.

The study's goals

- To assess Hiya Gram Panchayat's rural development initiatives.
- To pinpoint issues with Hiya Gram Panchayat's rural development programs.
- To offer recommendations for improved policy and development implementation.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study's goals are taken into consideration when creating a methodical research strategy. The study's pertinent data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. A sample of 180 recipients of different development programs was selected to evaluate the effects of the programs on their lives. Research instruments like participant observation and interview schedules were employed. The Hiya Gram Panchayat's official records are made up the secondary sources. Information from Gram Panchayat members and impoverished tribal people living in rural areas who have received aid and other advantages under the Gram Panchayat's control was gathered using separate questionnaires. Questions about their social, economic, political, and educational circumstances were included in a questionnaire that was created.

How Do PRIs Change Over Time?

In India, rural development has been mainly a government-sponsored process as opposed to a people-led one. It takes a suitable institutional structure to design and carry out programs for rural development. Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) were established in India to address this requirement. In addition, as local self-governing organizations, the PRIs guarantee that people have the chance to be involved in the creation and execution of rural development initiatives. Therefore, the responsibility of advancing rural development in India has been placed on the PRIs. Since gaining independence, our nation's social, economic, and planning policies have received more attention to foster overall development and build suitable rural, commercial, and social infrastructure. According to our county's planning policy, agriculture was given priority.

The first five-year plan's intended initiatives had a significant impact on the expansion of the rural economy. "Development of agriculture, based on the utilization of manpower resources of the countryside and the maximum use of local resources, holds a key to the rapid development of the country," according to the first five-year plan (Kadam 2012, 17). "As long as we do not find or establish a representative and democratic institution that will provide the local interest, supervision, and care necessary to ensure that expenditure of money upon local objects conforms with the



needs and wishes of the locality, invest it with never be able to evoke local interest and excite local initiative in the field," the Committee on Plan Projects states.ⁱⁱ

Panchayats have been around for a while. The current structure clearly distinguishes itself from the previous one in terms of authority, duties, and funding. The constitution's democratization and the widespread creation of panchayats are the first two of the current system's four primary features. (ii) giving these organizations more authority from the state; (iii) giving the panchayats additional authority and responsibilities in the areas of agriculture and related fields; (iv) bolstering their resource position; and (v) expanding their capabilities.

In addition to agricultural development, rural industries, the construction or renovation of social overhead facilities or infrastructure, such as schools, clinics, roads, communication, water supply, markets, welfare sources, better nutrition, literacy, adult education, etc., are a few examples of the multi-sectoral activities that are generally thought of as rural development. Improving the lot of the rural populace, especially the weaker and impoverished segments, is the main goal of rural development. Through the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs), democratic decentralization was implemented to foster local initiatives and involvement in development initiatives. Gandhiji asserted that "Indian independence must start at the bottom." Every village ought to be a fully functional Panchayat or republic. This is why the Constitution 73rd (Amendment) Act, 1992 has given the idea of Panchayati Raj a new dimension. Put another way, the idea of public involvement ought to be viewed as an ideological commitment, and as such, institutional and legal actions ought to be taken to legitimize it (Vijaykumar 1999, 32–33). At the village, block, and district levels, the Panchayati Raj Institutions are legally elected entities with local government authority. Panchayati Raj's main goal is to fortify democracy's foundation at the local level and empower each village's residents to pursue vigorous and ongoing development for the benefit of all neighbors, regardless of caste, class, or creed.

A democratic decentralization of administrative power is practiced through Panchayati raj or local self-government. The following ideas form the foundation of the system. i. Local self-governing bodies should be organized into three tiers, ranging from the village to the district level, with an organic connection between the lower and higher levels. ii. These entities ought to receive a true transfer of authority and accountability. It is necessary to provide these organizations with sufficient financial resources so that they can fulfill their duties. iv. These organizations ought to be the conduit for all development initiatives at these levels. v. The developed system ought to be able to support future decentralization of authority and accountability. (Dahama 1993, 41) Effective policies are crucial to the nation's future.ⁱⁱⁱ

Rural development: what is it?

The concept of development is wide and includes all facets of human existence. In essence, it is a state-led endeavor that involves the creation and implementation of policies for the good of society. On the other side, rural development refers to the general social, economic, political, and cultural advancement of rural areas to enable people to live comfortable lives (Pandit and Kulkarni 2012, 160). It is a general, inclusive word that considers the political and socioeconomic advancement of rural communities. In addition to initiatives to enhance rural infrastructure, rural household income, and educational delivery systems, it also involves steps to fortify the democratic framework of society through Panchayati Raj Institutions.

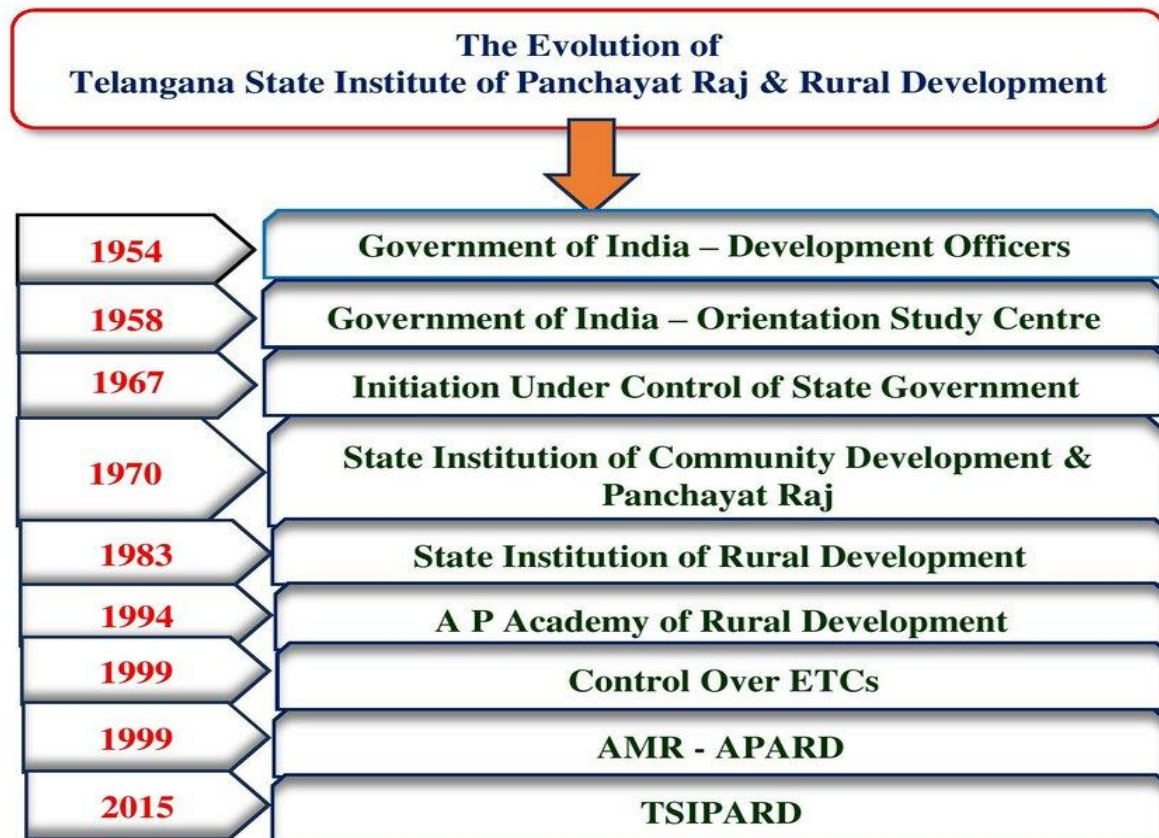
The goals of rural development programs are to lower unemployment and poverty, enhance health and education, and provide for the fundamental requirements of the rural populace, including clothing, food, and shelter (Panda and Majumder 2013, 37). To achieve this, the Indian government implemented several developmental programs, including the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), the Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), and others. The goal of all these programs is to reduce the disparity between rural and urban populations to alleviate imbalances and expedite the process of development.

The phrase "rural development" is highly regarded and of central concern in both developed and developing nations worldwide. However, no one definition of rural development is accepted by everyone, and the phrase is employed in a wide range of circumstances and ways. As a concept, it refers to the general development of rural areas intending to



raise rural residents' standard of living. The development of agriculture and related activities, such as village and cottage industries and crafts, socioeconomic infrastructure, community services, and facilities, and most importantly, human resources in rural areas, are all included in this all-encompassing and multifaceted concept. It occurs as a consequence of interactions between different physical, technological, economic, sociocultural, and factors related to institutions. Its goal as a strategy is to enhance the social and economic well-being of a particular demographic—the rural poor. It is a multidisciplinary field that represents the nexus of engineering, management, social, behavioral, and agricultural sciences (Singh 1995, 18).^{iv}

The Hiya Gram Panchayat's development initiatives: Many Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and state-sponsored programs about rural development are being implemented by the Indian government and the state government of Arunachal Pradesh. Panchayat-wide development, health and family welfare, education, agriculture,



women's and children's and poverty, and enhance people's quality of life. Additionally, several of these programs seek to build the fundamental assets and infrastructure needed for rural economies to flourish. Over the development, housing, sanitation, irrigation, safe drinking water, transportation, social welfare, etc. All of these programs' primary goals are to increase employment, lower economic inequality past few years, different departments in the study area have implemented the following types of development programs. Apart from the previously mentioned duties, the Gram Panchayat is also involved in much in carrying out special economic plans and programs supported by the federal and state governments.^v



Development Initiatives by the Planning Department:

District-Level Decentralized Planning Program The Kurung Kumey district had just recently adopted the idea of decentralized planning. The District's Planning and Development Boards are fully empowered to carry out district-level programs economically and efficiently. They may also pinpoint the local communities and populations that require particular attention for fair socioeconomic development. District Planning & Development Boards have the authority to choose executing agencies to carry out the work using decentralized money whenever it is most convenient for them. These Boards will also grant administrative permission for projects up to Rs. 20 lakhs. The highest limit is explained to apply to each job and not to the overall amount authorized under a certain program or scheme. Work up to Rs. 50 lakhs must be submitted for administrative permission to the Department of Planning. Under the Constitution's 73rd amendment, initiatives are created to establish District Planning Committees and transfer funds, functions, and personnel to the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Program for MLA Local Area Development (MLALADS)

Through the annual allocation of Rs.2 crores, this program allows each Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) to carry out minor development projects in their respective constituencies. The pieces suggested under this program are in line with the overall framework of the projects and programs that the local authorities are carrying out. These projects are approved and carried out in the same way as the others. Technical and administrative sanctions are given when necessary, following the departmental protocols that apply to other government agencies and municipal organizations. Only projects that can be finished in a year or two and result in the production of long-lasting assets are carried out, and the average cost of each project is not to exceed Rs. 70 lakhs.^{vi}

The MPLADS (MP Local Area Development Scheme)

A member of the Rajya Sabha or Lok Sabha representing a parliamentary constituency is given access to money totaling Rs. 5 crore annually under this plan. The plan is put into action. based on the guidelines that the Indian government provided under the scheme. Funds are made available for the projects that the relevant M.P. recommends, and the Line Departments/Implementing Agencies—such as BDPOs and Panchayati Raj—carry out the projects.^{vii}

The Central Pool of Non-Lapsable Resources (NLCPR) According to the government's intention to set aside at least 10% of plan funds' Gross Budgetary Support (GBS) for the Northeastern States, including Sikkim, the Ministry of Rural Development has been allocating plan monies for several rural development initiatives. 10% of the Plan Budget was set aside to ensure that the NE States would have money available to carry out essential pro-poor initiatives. Additionally, it has mandated that the Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR), which is run by the Ministry of Development of the North Eastern Region (DONER), get the unused monies from the annual 10% plan budget.^{viii}

Programs for Development by the Department of Relief and Rehabilitation For Fire Damage: This plan is designed to cover all relief requests resulting from natural disasters and fire incidents. All assistance claims impacted by natural and man-made disasters must be reported within 24 hours of the event for prompt assistance. Every relief case is examined by the Circle Officer at the circle level and presented to the Deputy Commissioner at the district level. For quick help in the event of a fire, the district authorities must receive a report in the form of a WT message within 24 hours of the disaster. The central government has also granted each affected household between Rs. 4,000 and Rs. 6,000.^{ix}

Crop damage: To help the impacted families, a circle-level relief committee led by a circle officer reviews beneficiaries under this program once a year.

Flood Damage: Using the deputy commissioner's discretion, all Flood Damage Reports (FDR) shall be filed at the district level. Essentially, the financial situation determines this assistance plan.

Implementation of the PESA Act of 1996 is inadequate:

Additionally, because tribal lifestyles and cultures inherently respect trees and natural resources, it should be noted that tribal lands constitute the planet's last remaining natural resource deposits. Through comprehensive and ecologically sound belief systems, resources, tribal religions, and outlooks guarantee the survival of all living things. PESA provides



a fantastic opportunity to improve grassroots democracy and bolster its hands in the broader cause of social justice. By putting the following recommendations into practice, both objectives will be met. The Gram Sabha's designation as a self-governing body and its legal power over forests and natural resources are still largely unknown, even ten and a half years after the PESA Act. Additionally, there is no assistance. The fact that the state governments have not made a significant effort to implement PESA sincerely is evident. They continue to desire to control the PESA areas through centralized management and legislation essentially reducing the benefits that PESA provisions provide to the indigenous community.

The officers of different departments are barely inclined to cede control over the resources and duties that PESA has delegated to the Gram Sabhas. They also show no regard for tribal traditions and way of life. To enable the tribal people to take control of their lives as envisioned by the PESA provisions, a persistent awareness campaign is required to empower and enhance their capacity. The Indian Forest Act, Land Acquisition Act, and other relevant Acts must be amended promptly to allow for the ownership of minor forests. Produce, water resources, and land are specifically given to the PESA areas' Gram Sabhas. No State Government official should be able to disregard a Gram Sabha's recommendation. This anti-democratic legacy of the British Raj needs to be eliminated right away. The bureaucracy that relies on centralized authority has been unable to embrace the drastic shift envisioned in the PESA Act, and the existing form of governance is still mostly colonial. Therefore, an immediate, comprehensive training-cum awareness campaign for all pertinent officials of several ministries should be started to raise their awareness. It is necessary to perceive Gram Sabha institutions as self-governance organizations rather than just local governance organizations. It is necessary to give the Gram Sabha the necessary equipment and structure to function as an efficient district administrative body. Additionally, the Gram Sabhas must have direct access to funding to function more autonomously. Strengthening the physical infrastructure in interior regions is necessary to safeguard tribal members' lives and property. Building culverts, bridges, check dams, school compound walls, etc., requires special consideration. The Centrally Sponsored Schemes' provisions ought to incorporate the idea of community ownership of resources in PESA zones.^x

III. CONCLUSION

Ever since recorded history began, panchayats have served as the foundation of Indian settlements. Gandhi had correctly stated in 1946 that the Indian Independence must start at the bottom, and each village should have its own Republic or Panchayat. His vision became a reality when the three-tiered Panchayati Raj system was established to guarantee public involvement in rural rehabilitation. With the ratification of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 (also known as the Panchayati Raj Act), the nation's federal democratic system entered a new phase. For the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to operate as an organic and essential component of the country's democratic process, it gave them the much-needed constitutional sanction. Starting in April, it became operative.

Since the PRIs' operations were characterized by protracted delays in organizing Panchayat meetings, the Panchayati Raj Act was required to simplify them. elections, regular suspensions, supersessions, and dissolutions of Panchayat bodies, a lack of financial and operational independence, poor representation of marginalized and weaker groups, and small, sporadic, and connected government funds. Due to this, Panchayats were unable to operate as the Constitution's intended institutions of local self-government. The Act's five primary elements are: (a) a three-tiered Panchayati Raj, or governance, system for all States with a population of at least 20 lakh; (b) periodical Panchayat elections every five years; (c) reserving seats for women, Scheduled Tribes, and Scheduled Castes (at least one-third of the seats); (d) appointing a State Finance Commission to offer recommendations regarding the Panchayats' financial authority; and (e) establishing District Planning Committees to create district-wide development plans. Thus, the Panchayats have been given the authority and powers that may be required for them to operate as social justice and self-government entities. The amending Act's main goal is to grant genuine functional autonomy at the village level. The study village's rural tribal population's socioeconomic circumstances have drastically changed as a result of the Panchayat Raj Institutions' implementation of rural development programs. Even the social and political issues of the populace have been impacted by the execution of rural development initiatives. In terms of the economy,



these initiatives have improved the village's financial standing. The majority of the tribal villages now have additional revenue as a result.

Power schemes like Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyuthikaran Yojana (RGGVY) and housing schemes like MGNREGA and SGRY have created several profitable activities that have helped impoverished tribal villages rise beyond the poverty line. Additionally, RGGVY had installed electricity in the recently constructed tribal homes.

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