

Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Rural Development with Reference to Anantapuramu District of Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract—The main responsibility of the Panchayati Raj Institutions is to accelerate the pace of development and involve all people in this process so that the felt needs of the people and their development aspirations are fulfilled. The decentralized planning is a multi-level planning process. It will have to start from lower level (Gram Panchayat), intermediate level (Mandal Parishad) and higher level (Zilla Parishad). Panchayati Raj Institutions are expected to play an important role in planning and implementing various developmental programmes. One may recall that after independence, India has continuously implemented development programmes with the objective of improving the social and economic conditions of the people.

Keywords: Development Programmes, Grampanchayat, Mandal Parishad, Panchayati Raj, Zilla Parishad.

1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of the Panchayati Raj System as a mechanism for effective people's participation had got highlighted through the deliberations of various committees like Balwantha Roy Mehta Committee in 1957, Ashok Mehta Committee in 1977 and so on, but finally these deliberations found their expression in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1993. Now it is strongly felt that an effective Panchayati Raj System can bring about rapid and integrated development through people's participation. In all the recently restructured development programmes like SGSY, SGRY, etc., adequate provision has been made for their implementation through the Panchayati Raj institutions. A democratic government is one that involves people to take decisions about the activities that directly concern their locality and lives. Naturally, panchayats should allow and help the rural poor to participate in the developmental activities directly. For example, if a Gram Panchayat decides to build a school, dispensary or drainage system, the people who need these facilities should decide what kind of the school, dispensary, and drainage system they need. Panchayats should not keep people at a distance. No work or decision should be kept as a secret. (1). Explain anti-poverty and other schemes to the people very clearly in the language that they understand. (2). Encourage the poor people

to speak in these meetings; (Many people may be hesitant to give their views in a meeting for many reasons. The elected members should create an atmosphere that enables the people to speak without fear). (3). Try to understand their views and thoughts, and (4). Identify the people who are really poor. There are a number of anti-poverty programmes under implementation in various states.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

One of the tasks stressed from the beginning of Panchayati Raj activities was to assist for the development of rural areas. This has been held to be the objective of various plans, programmes and schemes. The successive Five Year plans and the programme evaluation organizations underlined the need of equitable distribution of fruits from development and the people's participation in the plans of rural development. The welfare services such as health care, housing, water supply, rural roads, nutrition, tribal development and social welfare are being provided with a view to offer reasonable opportunities to the rural masses in general and under privileged sections in particular. Today the challenge of rural poverty cannot be met without the active involvement of Panchayati Raj. Panchayats are looked upon as a means to achieve socio-economic transformation of our rural societies. With this noble aim, Panchayati Raj institutions have been introduced in India. Panchayati Raj has been made its way from its uncertain past to its so significant present, inspite of the so many adverse situations it had to encounter on its march. Now it is generally believed that the socio-economic benefit of Panchayati Raj and rural development has not gone to the needy people. The introduction of this system in Andhra Pradesh as elsewhere had aroused lofty expectations in the minds of the rural masses, especially downtrodden sections of the society. But these institutions do not appear to have made much impact on the development of rural areas. Hence, the study entitled,

“Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Rural Development with Reference to Anantapuramu District of Andhra

Pradesh” is a humble attempt to analyse, evaluate and assess the role of Panchayati Raj institutions in the development of rural areas in Anantapuramu district.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to assess: 1. The impact of Panchayati Raj bodies on the socio, economic, political life of the rural masses. 2. The role of Panchayati Raj institutions on the development of rural infrastructure, alleviation of poverty, providing employment opportunities in rural areas. 3. Perceptions of the people on the functioning of Panchayati Raj bodies in relation to their development.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Both primary and secondary sources of material have been used in the collection of data on Panchayati Raj in general in the district and more specifically on the rural development programmes *vis-à-vis* Panchayati Raj institutions in the district. For the collection of primary data two Interview Schedules were prepared for administrating on the respondents. They are, schedule-I relating to beneficiaries of rural development programmes. Schedule-II for the people’s representatives at Village Panchayati level, Mandal Parishad level and Zilla Parishad level. For the illustration of the data,

tables, percentages and charts have been used wherever necessary. The secondary data has been collected from the published books, journals, periodicals, published reports, action plans, unpublished theses, official documents, brochures and official records. Data has been collected from the various offices like District Panchayat Office, Mandal Parishad Offices, and Office of the Zilla Parishad, Research Institutions, and different Libraries.

Sample Design: For in depth study on the impact of rural development programmes on beneficiaries, one mandal, each from the three Revenue divisions of Anantapuramu district was selected by simple random sampling method for administrating Interview Schedule. In the second stage from each selected mandal, 90 sample beneficiary respondents of rural development programmes were selected purposively. The total sample respondents are 270.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

Respondents’ image of Panchayati Raj: Image of Panchayati Raj means the impression or opinion which the people have of the functioning and functionalities of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The public image on the usefulness of services of PRIs is presented in the Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents image of Panchayati Raj:

Sl. No.	Views of Respondents	Social Category				Total
		ST	SC	BC	OC	
1	Useful	24 (72.73)	76 (80.85)	81 (84.37)	39 (82.98)	220 (81.48)
2	Not useful	4 (12.12)	7 (7.45)	6 (6.26)	4 (8.51)	21 (7.78)
3	Don’t know	5 (15.15)	11 (11.70)	9 (9.37)	4 (8.51)	29 (10.74)
	Total	33 (100.00)	94 (100.00)	96 (100.00)	47 (100.00)	270 (100.00)

Source: Field Data * Figures in parentheses is percentage of total

Table 2: Respondents Participation in 2014 Local Body Election (Multiple Responses):

Sl. no	PRIs	Caste wise participation in 2014 Election								Total	
		ST		SC		BC		OC		Yes	No
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No		
1	Zilla Parishad	26 (78.79)	7 (21.21)	87 (92.55)	7 (7.45)	88 (91.66)	8 (8.34)	42 (89.36)	5 (10.64)	243 (90.00)	27 (10.00)
2	Mandal Parishad	26 (78.79)	7 (21.21)	87 (92.55)	7 (7.45)	88 (91.66)	8 (8.34)	42 (89.36)	5 (10.64)	243 (90.00)	27 (10.00)
3	Gram Panchayat	32 (96.97)	1 (3.03)	93 (98.94)	1 (1.06)	96 (100.00)	—	45 (95.74)	2 (4.26)	266 (98.52)	4 (1.48)

Source: Field data *Figures in parentheses is percentage of total

Participation of Respondents in Local body election:

Local Self Governments are established with a view to train the rural people in the democratic process. The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) give training to the people by giving an opportunity to exercise franchise and to contest in the elections. Elections to PRIs in the state as well as in Anantapuramu district were conducted in the year 2014.

Respondents who contested in 2014 Elections

Every citizen of India with certain qualifications can contest in elections. In the recently held local body elections only microscopic minority contested in the elections. The respondents, who contested in recent elections, faced the elections either as independent candidates or on party ticket they turned victorious. Table: 3 gives the details of candidates who contested in 2006 local body elections.

Elections to Zilla Parishad and Mandal Parishads were conducted. In April 6, 2014 and in April 11, 2014. Elections to the Gram Panchayats were also conducted. In these elections good number of respondents exercised their franchise. Some of them also contested in these elections. The Table: 2 give the details of respondent participation in their tiers of local body election in recent elections (2014).

Knowledge about Rural Development Programme: The developmental schemes under taken by Panchayati Raj Institutions intended to assist various sections of the society. They are helpful to cultivators, agricultural laborers, unemployed youth, women, businessmen etc. The knowledge and awareness is a pre-requisite to estimate the precautions of beneficiaries on rural development schemes/programmes. The Table: 4 give the details of respondents' knowledge about development schemes.

Table 3: Number of Respondents contested in 2014 Elections:

Sl. NO.	Name of the Office	Social Category								Total	
		ST		SC		BC		OC		Yes	No
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No		
1	ZPTC	–	33 (100.00)		94 (100.00)	1 (1.04)	96 (98.96)	–	47 (100.00)	1 (0.37)	269 (99.63)
2	MPTC	–	33 (100.00)	1 (1.06)	93 (98.94)	2 (2.08)	94 (97.92)	1 (2.13)	46 (97.87)	4 (1.48)	266 (97.77)
3	Gram Panchayati President	–	33 (100.00)	2 (2.13)	92 (97.77)	2 (2.08)	94 (97.92)	1 (2.13)	46 (97.87)	5 (1.86)	265 (98.14)
4	Ward Member	2 (6.06)	31 (93.93)	3 (3.19)	91 (96.81)	4 (4.17)	92 (95.83)	2 (4.26)	45 (95.74)	11 (4.07)	259 (95.93)

Source: Field data *Figures in parentheses is percentage of total

Table 4: Respondents' Knowledge on Major Rural Development Schemes (Multiple Responses):

Sl. No.	Name of the Rural Development Programmes	Social Category				Total
		ST	SC	BC	OC	
1	MGNREGP	33 (100.00)	94 (100.00)	93 (96.88)	43 (91.49)	263 (97.41)
2	Indiramma Housing	32 (96.97)	93 (98.93)	95 (98.95)	45 (95.74)	265 (98.14)
3	Watershed Programme	19 (57.57)	74 (78.72)	78 (81.25)	40 (85.10)	211 (78.15)
4	IKP	30 (90.90)	92 (97.87)	95 (98.95)	45 (95.74)	262 (97.04)
5	Rajiv Arogya Sri	29 (87.87)	81 (86.17)	90 (93.75)	44 (93.62)	244 (90.37)
6	CLDP	16 (48.48)	79 (84.04)	76 (79.16)	39 (82.98)	210 (77.78)

Source: Field data *Figures in parentheses is percentage of total

Selection of Beneficiaries: Various rural development programmes initiated by Central and State Government yield results, only when the really needy people get enrolled in those programmes. There are reports that in some schemes, affluent and dominating families are getting their names enrolled at the cost of marginalized sections. As such beneficiaries were asked to express their satisfaction over the selection of beneficiaries for various developmental schemes and the same is presented in the Table.

Table 5: Respondents' Satisfaction Levels on the selection of Beneficiaries for Rural Development Schemes:

Sl.No.	Social Category	Responses			Total
		Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory	No Response	
1	Scheduled Tribes	16 (48.48)	15 (45.45)	2 (6.06)	33 (100.00)
2	Scheduled Castes	43 (45.75)	48 (51.06)	3 (3.19)	94 (100.00)
3	Backward Caste	47 (48.96)	47 (48.96)	2 (2.08)	96 (100.00)
4	Other Castes	29 (61.70)	14 (29.79)	4 (8.51)	47 (100.00)
5	Total	135 (50.00)	124 (45.93)	11 (4.07)	270 (100.00)

Source: Field data *Figures in parentheses is percentage of total

Table – 6, Respondents suggestion on the selection of Beneficiaries:

Sl. No.	Responses	Social Category				Total
		ST	SC	BC	OC	
1	Gram Sabha	30 (90.90)	89 (94.68)	84 (87.5)	38 (80.85)	241 (89.26)
2	Gram Panchayati President	2 (6.06)	2 (2.13)	6 (6.25)	1 (2.13)	11 (4.08)
3	Village Leader			2 (2.08)	6 (12.77)	8 (2.96)
4	Government Officials	1 (3.04)	3 (3.19)	3 (3.13)	2 (4.25)	9 (3.33)
5	Other Political Leaders			1 (1.04)		1 (0.37)
	Total	33 (100.00)	94 (100.00)	96 (100.00)	47 (100.00)	270 (100.00)

Source: Field data *Figures in parentheses is percentage of total

Table – 7: Respondents views on the Utility of Development Schemes:

Sl. No.	Responses	Responses			Total
		Useful	Not-useful	No Response	
1	Scheduled Tribes	31 (93.94)	1 (3.03)	1 (3.03)	33 (100.00)
2	Scheduled Castes	90 (95.75)	3 (3.19)	1 (1.06)	94 (100.00)
3	Backward Castes	87 (90.62)	6 (6.25)	3 (3.13)	96 (100.00)
4	Other Castes	41 (87.23)	5 (10.64)	1 (2.13)	47 (100.00)
	Total	249 (92.22)	15 (5.56)	6 (2.22)	270 (100.00)

Source: Field data *Figures in parentheses is percentage of total

Respondents views on the selection of Beneficiaries: The data in the previous Table (Table 6) reveals that nearly half of the respondents are not satisfied, with regard to selection of beneficiaries. Closely following their satisfaction levels on the selection of beneficiaries, they have been asked to suggest the correct method/procedure for selection of beneficiaries.

Utility of Rural Development Programme: The rural development programmes/schemes are intended for the comprehensive development of rural areas. During the field study the respondent's perception were recorded about the usefulness or non-usefulness of these programmes and the same was tabulated in the Table: 7.

6. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. The awareness of people on such rural development programmes, whose scope is wide, is high and vice versa. 2. Nearly 50 percent of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction over the present procedure of selection of beneficiaries. As such around 90 percent opted for Gram Sabha as impartial body to select the beneficiaries. 3. Around 92.22 percent of respondents accorded that the rural development programmes are useful. 4. The percentage of younger and middle age is increasing in the Panchayati Raj leadership. 5. The awareness levels of Panchayati Raj leaders with regard to rural development programmes are also decreasing with an increase in the tier of panchayat. 6. Large number of the leaders of rural local bodies conceded that the ongoing rural development programmes are useful and the leaders are, also expecting to introduce more such programmes. 7. The peculiar

finding of the study is that nearly 58 per cent of Panchayati Raj leaders acknowledged that their involvement in the implementation of the rural development programmes is almost nil. 8. Almost all the leaders, of Panchayati Raj Institutions expressed that the district authorities shall make them as part and parcel of rural development planning as well as development. 9. Around 36.37 per cent of leaders said that the allocation of funds to the Panchayati Raj Institutions is done by the government by partisan attitude. 10. Highest number of beneficiaries in the district under NREGP and CLDP programme hail from Scheduled Castes

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