

INTERVENTION OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN KARNATAKA STATE: A PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Panchayati Raj in Karnataka has a rich historical legacy. It was created by the past rulers as effective platforms for achieving the goal of rural development by the Mouryans, British, Mysore State rulers, Congress leaders and other political leaders over a period of time. Especially, the decade of 1980s had witnessed a remarkable revolution of Panchayati Raj System in Karnataka State. Devaraj Urs, Ramakrishna Hegde, Veerappa Moily, Siddaramaiah and other leaders have laid a strong foundation for the democratic decentralization and integrated rural development in the state. The role of PRIs in rural development with special reference to Karnataka state is amplified in this paper on the basis of qualitative research methodology.

KEYWORDS: *Rural Development*

INTRODUCTION

Panchayati Raj and Rural Development in 1980s

The enactment of Karnataka Zilla Parishads, Taluk Panchayat Samithies, Mandal Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayats Act, 1983 was patterned on the recommendations of the Ashok Mehta Committee. Former Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde had played a key role in achieving the goal of 'power to the people'. It was implemented in the year 1987 in order to achieve the goals of democratic decentralization, inclusive development and distributive justice in the context of development administration at the grassroots level (Bhargava and Sivanna, 1992:03).

The Karnataka Panchayati Raj Act, 1993 was another milestone in the history of Panchayati Raj in the state. The adoption of 73rd Constitutional Amendment in Karnataka State had facilitated the development of an elected three-tier system at the village (Grama Panchayat), taluk (Taluk Panchayati Samiti) and district (Zilla Panchayat) levels. There are 5,628 panchayats, 175 taluk panchayati Samitis and 30 Zilla Panchayats in the present times in Karnataka state. The new legislation ensured 33 per cent reservation for women, 33 per cent for Other Backward Classes and 28 per cent for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, in keeping with the constitutional provisions.

Karnataka has a fairly long and impressive history of democratic decentralization. The state has achieved notable progress through land reforms and other developmental activities (Manor, 1997:13). The creation of Ward Sabha, Gram Sabha, Gram Panchayats, Taluk Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Panchayat had facilitated systematic development administration at various levels. The Panchayati Raj System has created space within the democratic structures for the marginalized sections of society to assert their rights and avail several benefits through the implementation of various central and state rural development programs.

Karnataka State has gained national recognition in the fields of agriculture and rural development. There is significant association between level of infrastructure and agriculture and rural development in Karnataka state (Venkatachalam, 2003:17). The goal of integrated rural development can be achieved on the basis of meaningful collaboration among public agencies, PRIs, banks, private companies, universities and beneficiaries in the rural areas.

The non-government organizations have contributed significantly to enhancement of substantive democracy in the countryside (Banu, 2003:01). The state is responsible for bringing PRIs and NGOs close to the mainstream of development in the rural areas. The Mission Group of Karnataka had visualized that Panchayati Raj Institutions should play a pro-active role in the process of rural development which is the foundation of national development.

Democratic decentralization has become the prominent means of empowerment of rural masses in Karnataka states. The PRIs need adequate powers and resources to achieve the goal of inclusive development at the grassroots level (Kumar and Mahesh, 2013:12). The rural development programs in India are executed and monitored by the 3-tier Panchayati Raj Institutions. Karnataka state government has launched the e-governance to strengthen the management of PRIs on the basis of transparency, accountability, quality oriented governance and delivery of services in a cost-effective way (Khushboo, 2013:11). The e-governance is responsible for improving the delivery system in the PRIs. The state has to bridge the digital divide in order to achieve absolute success in e-governance on the standards of transparency and accountability.

Gram Panchayats in Karnataka generate income through tax and non-tax sources for the management of various developmental endeavors. The Gram Panchayats receive about 8 percent of revenue from their own sources. The probable reason for the low percentage share of own revenue at present is the larger grants accruing for MGNREGS (Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, 2013:05). Gram Panchayats require financial resources directly from the government and tax payers in order to manage the administrative and developmental activities effectively in the rural areas.

Panchayat Raj Institutions undertake infrastructure development activities which improve the standard of living of the rural masses (Raj and Shanmugam, 2014:15). The PRIs need governmental patronage and civil society support to undertake various infrastructure development activities through effective fiscal decentralization.

The Karnataka Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Bill, 2015 had enabled the SC, ST and Other Backward Classes and non-reserved category to avail the benefit of political reservation up to 10 years. The new legislation had provided about 50% of reservation to women in the PRIs (Das, 2015:06). The PRIs have played a significant role in the implementation of various rural development programs in the state.

Karnataka has achieved considerable progress in Human Development by implementing socially beneficial development programs. The government gave priority for human development in addition to social and economic development of the people at the grassroots level (Kavya and Manjunatha, 2015:10). The new three tier system was established with a view to achieve the goal of integrated rural development on the basis of active participation of people. In particular, women and weaker sections have gained adequate political representation in these new bodies over a period of time. The new system has also brought the rural development activities to the door steps of the people in the rural areas.

Democratic decentralization is the foundation of integrated rural development in the country. Karnataka state has gained prominence in the field of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development through adoption of innovative approaches

(Dhavaleshwar and Ali, 2016:07). There is an interconnection between the episodes of land reform, Green revolution and decentralization (Iyer, 2017:09).

PRIs, regional banks, cooperatives, self-help groups and non-government organizations are required to put forth coordinated efforts for the integrated rural development. The government primarily depends upon the PRIs to implement various development programs including Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Guarantee Scheme which aim to eliminate rural poverty and unemployment (Honnappa, 2017:08).

Gram Panchayats, Taluk Panchayats and Zilla Panchayats have played a vital role in the process of rural development on the basis of active participation of elected representative (Benakanahalli, 2017:02). There is a necessity of a polycentric resource governance system with multiple governing authorities at different scales (Sivaramakrishnan and John, 2018:16).

The PRIs need effective back-up of financial decentralization. The dominant powers continue to be a threat to the inclusive development of the marginalized sections of society in the rural areas (Brahmanandam, 2018:04). Elected representatives and officials are responsible for the effective implementation of various development programs in order to build reputation for PRIs.

The Constitution mandates that regular elections and adequate devolution of powers and resources by the state are necessary to promote PRIs as effective platforms for grassroots development. The Fourteenth Finance Commission was constituted by the Government of India to facilitate proper devolution of financial powers and resources (Raghunandan, 2019:14).

CONCLUSIONS

Karnataka state has come a long way in the development of Panchayati Raj system. The state has achieved commendable progress in the development administration at the grassroots level. The role of panchayats in the management of various rural development programs has gained social recognition and support. The PRIs need constant support of the government and non-government organizations in order to function effectively as agents of rural modernization and rural development.

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