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ABSTRACT:

The Panchayati Raj system is South Asian political system mainly in India. The word 'Panchayat' literally means 'Assembly' of five wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the local community. Panchayati Raj structure is totally based on three-tier system, which is consist of Zilla Parishad / Panchayat at top (district) level, Panchayat Samiti at middle (Block) level and Gram Panchayats at lower (Village) level. Gram Panchayat is the basic unit of PRIs in Indian economy. Z.P. have crucial role to play the galvanizing the lower tires into activity and in sustained the tempo of developments. Gram Panchayats had played a significant role in rural development and development of rural economy.

KEY WORDS: PRIs structure, Rural developments, South Asian political system, Assembly, Role of GPs.

INTRODUCTION:

Zilla Panchayati constitutes the Apex body of the three-tier structure. Block



Mukundrao J. Mane

Panchayat is second or intermediate level of Self-Local Government whereas; Gram Panchayat is the basic units of PRIs in Indian Economy. Zila Panchayats have crucial role to play galvanizing the lower-tiers into activity and sustained the tempo of development. Panchayats have been the backbone of the Indian villages;

Panchayat Raj is system of governance in which Gram Panchayats are the basic units of village administration. Mahatma Gandhi advocated Panchayat Raj, a decentralized from government. It is the oldest system of local self governments in Indian sub-continent.

This system was adopted by state government during the 1950s and 60s as law were passed to establish panchayats in various states. It is also found backing in Indian constitution with the 73rd Amend- ment in 1992 to accommodate the idea. In the history of Panchayat Raj Institutions in India, on 24th

April, 1993, the constitutional (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 came into force to provide constitutional status to the PRIs.



Statutory Bodies of Local Self Government :

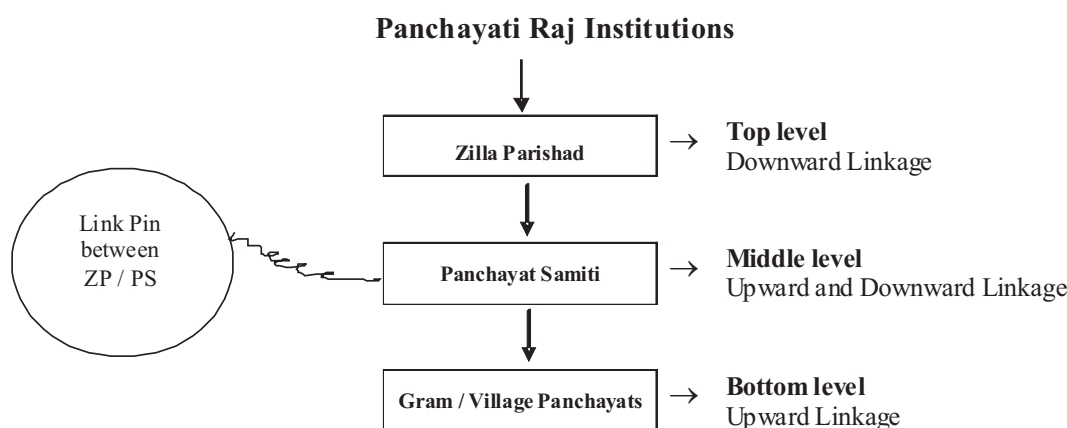
The States of Goa, Jammu and Kashmir, Mizoram, Maghalaya, Nagaland and Sikkim have two-tier Panchayats, whereas in all other states Panchayat Raj is three-tier system. Village as first level, block or janapad as second level and Zila or district as third level. The basic concept behind establishing Panchayat Raj was to create rural, local government agencies responsible for discharging certain select functions pertaining to developments. It is not merely a state agency but and self-propelling institutions which could mobilize its own resources, both human and material, so that, development could be energized. This also leads to a certain amount of social responsibility.

Gram Panchayats : The Linking Pin

As per the notification of state government, each and every district is divided into various blocks for achieving better and effective administrative efficiency and further, block divided in the numbers of Gram Panchayats so that micro level planning and compressive development work can be streamlined. For every block, the state governments shall constitute a Panchayat Samiti to co-ordinate and integrate the developments plans and schemes prepared by Gram Panchayats. Gram Panchayats played vital role in rural and community developments.

Gram Panchayat is the basic unit of PRIs. It is generally a revenue unit, which in local self government in three-tier structure of PRIs. Gram Panchayat is the lowest unit. The Panchayats chiefly consists of representatives elected by the village or rural people. Only the persons who are registered as voters and do not hold any office of profit under the government are eligible for election to the panchayats. The persons convicted by the court for criminal offences are disqualified from election of the panchayats. The panchayats as body is accountable to the general body of the village know as ‘Gram Sabha’ which meets at least twice a year, at present it meets at least six time a year. The Gram Panchayats must present its budget, accounts of previous year and annual administrative report before the Gram Sabha. Further more, it has to secure the letters approval of the village production plan, proposals for taxation and development programmes before they are enforced by the panchayats.

Three-tier structure of (PRIs)



Gram Panchayat : Role and Function

Gram Panchayat have been linked to the Panchayat Samiti at block level and Zila Parishad at district or top level. The panchayat should be located at potential growth centers, covering group of villages, which could be serve awards and act as its hinterland.

Gram Panchayat have to perform functions as specified in the schedule I (XXI broad categories of functions); they including providing sanitations and proper drainage, maintenance of water supply, periodically revising and collecting taxes, rates and fees, enrolment of children in primary schools, immunization, construction repairs and maintenance of roads, streetlight facility, maintenance of records relating to population and persons below poverty line.

The Gram Panchayati has two types of functions, one is mandatory whereas another is discretionary. Sanitation, conservancy and drainage, prevention of public nuisances, drinking water, construction and maintenance of gram roads, construction and repairs of public building i.e. primary school building, public library building, cultural activities, clubs building, public temple building etc., registration of births and deaths of rural chिल्ds and persons, opening and maintenance of cremation and burial grinds, rural electrification, poverty alleviation programme, preparation of Annual Budget and development plans, construction and maintenance of cattle sheds, ponds etc.

The discretionary functions includes agriculture, animal husbandry and dairy development, minor irrigation, small scale industries, housing, electricity and non-conventional energy, rural development programs, educational cultural affairs and heritage, public health etc.

Gram Panchayat tries to address and needs of deprived and weaker sections of the society at the village level which is generally not covered in various governments schemes. These segments include the development schemes for women, children, old, widow and special schemes for schedule caste and schedule tribe.

Gram Panchayat meets expenses incurred on various schemes (development) primarily manage from revenue that is generated from various local taxes, license fees from the respective village area and grants-in-aids and loans received from the respective Panchayat Samiti, Zila Parishads and State Governments and can spend the same subject to approval of competent authorities (Zila Parishad and Panchayat Samiti).

Gram Panchayat is entrusted for the overall responsibility for the socio-economic development at the village level and should promote good governance by ensuring effective delivery of services, adhering to transparency and accountability in the process of planning and implementation of various development schemes.

The prospective plan of Gram Panchayat is generally made for a 5 year term and the annual plans are prepared at Gram / Village panchayat level to fine tune with the prospective plan so as to implements it to get immediate outcome. These plans get prepared and implemented under the effective leadership of Gram Panchayat Sarpanch and Gram / Village development officer.

The success of addressing the needs of masses particularly the weaker and deprived sections should be processed at the grass root level mainly at Gram Panchayat but it could be translated into real success only when block panchayat process and priorities these demands at its own level and further processes them at Zila Panchayat level to get the desired financial and planning support to execute and implement various development plans / schemes that are meant for socio-economic development.

CONCLUSION :

After passage of the 73rd Amendment in 1992, the states where expected to decentralize their authority to the institutions of local= self government at the local level. The purpose was to take democracy to the grass-root level so that the people should manage their own affairs at that level. Just creation of any structure of PRIs for better local self government by providing autonomy through decentralization and participatory managements at different level is not enough rather to create a sustainable people centered and people powered environment in which all the communities can

exercise their voices, and choices and thereby can get involved in the decision making process for better inclusiveness. Howsoever, Panchayat Raj system will definitely become effective and efficient through good governance, timely implementation and chose monitoring of various schemes and adhering to transparency and accountability in the process.

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