

Selection of beneficiaries at grassroots level

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Abstract

India is the land of diversities. Here dwell the people of various religion, races and traditions. These diversities often vent out as a demand of states in different area of the country. In one side there are a higher income group living a luxurious life and on the other hand there are also a group of people who scarcely earn the income to survive. Almost 70 per cent of the total population is living in the villages but there is still a very poor state of development in the villages. There is no sign of development, no proper facility of education, health, electricity and roads. To make the democracy meaningful and welfare oriented we need the affective decentralisation of democracy through the panchayati raj institution. Democracy is the fundamentally decentralised system of governance. We have several problems of education, poverty, lower income and unemployment.

Keywords: decentralization, Panchayat raj, 73rd constitutional amendment, the Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Raj amendment, 2001

Introduction

People are the real wealth of nation (HDR: 1990). The basic purpose of development is to enlarge people's choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and can change over time. People often value achievements that do not show up at all, or not immediately, in income or growth figures: greater access to knowledge, better nutrition and health services, more secure livelihoods, security against crime and physical violence, satisfying leisure hours, political and cultural freedoms and sense of participation in community activities. The objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives (Mahbub ul Haq: 1990) ^[9]. Human development, as an approach, is concerned with what I take to be the basic development idea: namely, advancing the richness of human life, rather than the richness of the economy in which human beings live, which is only a part of it (Amartya Sen: 1990).

In India after independence efforts have been made to meet the needs and expectations of the people. Special efforts have been taken up to address the rural multifaceted issues with massive investment but the results were not up to the expectations. The idea that produced the 73rd Amendment Act was not a response to pressure from the grassroots but to an increasing recognition that the institutional initiatives of the preceding decades had not delivered expected result, as the extent of rural poverty was still much too large and thus the existing structure of government needed to be reformed. It was a political drive to see panchayat raj institutions as a solution to the governmental crises that India was experiencing.

To make the democracy meaningful and welfare oriented there is a need of decentralisation. The democracy is fundamentally decentralised system of governance. Indian democracy has adopted a unitary system. Central government at the federal level, state government at the provincial level

and local government at the grassroots level. For the establishment of true democracy there is a need of local governance bodies. Fruits of democracy may reach to the public only by the local governance. Local self-government created by an Act of the Central or State Government is a government entity, including the district, town or village consists of representatives elected by the people of an area and for those who exercise their rights to human welfare (Dey, 1961: 91).

In the democratic system, panchayat is the only institute that takes the governance to the door of common people. The conception of democracy finds more realistic expression by the means of panchayat raj institutions. In this form of governance, villagers take part to decide their own future collectively. Since the problems are concerned with their villages, people take interest in solving them with the help of panchayat (Kothari, 1961: 757) ^[14]. Local governance has been outlined as the form of psychological and practical needs of the local people. By nature human has always a will to be governed by his own hands because he can serve himself better. Human is self-centered by the nature. This sense of governance has been seen from the ancient time (Mutalib and Khan, 1983: 259). Local governance as the sense of thoughtfulness, justifiable and sociability (Bryce, 1921: 149-50) ^[5].

Panchayat raj, as a system of governance at the grassroots level in rural India has been rightly conceived as the most viable and proper mechanism of realising the goals of democracy, development, peace and security. Panchayat Raj is a system of maximum welfare of maximum people and based on justice. After Independence efforts have been made to create the units of self-governance at grassroots level but all went in vain since they could not produce the desired result. After Independence efforts were continued to create the panchayats as units of self-governance but the committed

Central Government's initiative came out with 73rd Amendment for the establishment of panchayat raj institutions in India in 1993.

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People are the real wealth of nation. The basic purpose of development is to enlarge people's choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and can change over time. People often value achievements that do not show up at all, or not immediately, in income or growth figures: greater access to knowledge, better nutrition and health services, more secure livelihoods, security against crime and physical violence, satisfying leisure hours, political and cultural freedoms and sense of participation in community activities. The objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. To make the democracy meaningful and welfare oriented we need the effective decentralisation of democracy through the panchayati raj institutions. Democracy is fundamentally decentralised system of governance. We have several problems of education, poverty, lower income and unemployment. These problems can be only solved by more democratic government that is panchayati raj system.

The study conducted in the Dewas district of Madhya Pradesh. The study is mainly dealing with the primary data. The study as an evaluative study on fact based, descriptive and analytical. A proportionate sampling framework adopted. Dewas district which includes eight tehsils. Out of eight tehsils three tehsils were selected randomly for the purpose of this study. From the selected tehsils, 5 Gram Panchayats were chosen in-depth study. Thus from 3 tehsils 15 Gram Panchayats were chosen in-depth study. The selection of

Gram Panchayat was based on random from the list of all the gram panchayats of the selected block.

Panchayat Representatives and Gram Sabha Member /Villagers were the units of observation. From each selected Gram Panchayat – 5 Panchayat Representatives (1-Sarpanch, 1- Up-Sarpanch and 3- Panch) and 10 Gram Sabha Members (5 Male and 5 Female) were to taken for an in-depth interview. Thus, in all, from 15 Gram Panchayats of 3 tehsils, the size of sample was 75 Panchayat Representatives (15-Sarpanch, 15- Up-sarpanch and 45- Panch) and 150 Gram Sabha Members (75 Male and 75 Female). Thus, the total size of sample was 225.

For the study, both primary and secondary data were collected. Secondary data was based on books, journals, monographs, occasional papers, governments publications, circular, orders, ordinances etc. For primary data, two separate interview schedules were structured and administered among the respondents (gram sabha members and panchayat representatives). The interview schedules broadly included on issues of awareness and exposure of the respondents towards the indicators of governance. The eight indicators of governance viz., participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientedness, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency and accountability among the stakeholders and local political leadership were studied through primary survey. For the data collection included both the providers and the recipients, therefore the emerging trends were crosschecked with respect to facts, point of view, perception and attitudes towards governance with human development. For this purpose, the qualitative methods include-key informant interviews, in depth interviews, participant observation and case study analysis. The participatory assessment methods included mainly directional group discussion. Dairy maintained to record the observation throughout the field work. Besides these, a village schedule and a directional group discussion were also administered to know the profile of the villages and other similar issues. On the basis of collected data code books were prepared; all the interview schedules were coded accordingly. Coded schedules were entered in the computer using SPSS (version 10) software. Mainly frequency tables and cross tables were generated for analysis and interpretation of data.

1. Analysis and Interpretation of Panchayat Representatives

Table 1.1: Information about to the Schemes in the Meetings of Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat.

S. No.	Information about to the schemes in the meetings	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total (%)
1	Yes	11(61.1)	25(69.4)	13(65.0)	0(0.0)	49(65.3)
2	No	7(38.9)	11(30.6)	7(35.0)	1(100.0)	26(34.7)
	Total	18(100.0)	36(100.0)	20(100.0)	1(100.0)	75(100.0)

Source: Primary Data

Table 1.1 throws light on the information about to the schemes in the meetings of gram sabha and gram panchayat. 65.3 per cent respondents are of the view that the information about the schemes in the meetings of gram sabha and gram panchayat.

This response is comparatively high among OBC and SC categories. This show that majority of respondents agree on this point that the information is provided in gram sabha and gram panchayat meetings.

Table 1.2: The Procedure Adopted by Panchayat for Selection of Beneficiaries for Different Development Programmes.

S. No.	Procedure adopted by panchayat	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total* Responses (%)
1	Through gram sabha	8 (44.4)	12 (33.3)	13 (65.5)	1 (100.0)	34 (45.3)
2	Through all the members of the panchayat	12 (66.7)	17 (47.2)	7 (35.0)	0 (0.0)	36 (48.0)
3	By sarpanch	13 (72.2)	25 (69.4)	7 (35.0)	1 (100.0)	46 (61.3)
4	By village head/ patel	5 (27.8)	11 (30.6)	7 (35.0)	0 (0.0)	23 (30.7)
5	By secretary	8 (44.4)	21 (58.3)	5 (25.0)	0 (0.0)	34 (45.3)
6	Do not know	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (15.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (4.0)

*Multiple Responses

Source: Primary Data

PRIs have been bestowed with the roles and responsibilities of selection of beneficiaries for different development schemes being implemented through gram sabha. Table 1.2 describes the procedure adopted by panchayat for selection of beneficiaries for different development Programmes. 61.3 per cent respondents are of the view that the beneficiaries for the development Programmes are selected by sarpanch. 48.0 per cent respondents are of the opinion that the selection is done

through all the members of panchayat. Equal number of respondents (45.3%) feel that the selection is done by gram sabha and secretary. 30.7 per cent respondents find that village head/patel is involved in selection. 4.0 per cent respondents do not know about this. It explains that a sizeable majority of respondents are in favour of sarpanch, which has not officially been assigned this work. The involvement of all panchayat representatives is a welcome sign.

2. Analysis and Interpretation of Gram Sabha Members

Table 2.1: Information about the schemes in the meetings of gram sabha and gram panchayat for human development.

S. No.	Information about to the schemes in the meetings	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total (%)
1	Yes	19 (45.2)	31 (37.3)	6 (26.1)	0 (0.0)	56 (37.3)
2	No	23 (54.8)	52 (62.7)	17 (73.9)	2 (100.0)	94 (62.7)
	Total	42 (100.0)	83 (100.0)	23 (100.0)	2 (100.0)	150 (100.0)

Source: Primary Data

Table 2.1 throws light on the information about the schemes in the meetings of gram sabha and gram panchayat. 37.3 per cent respondents are of the view that the information about to the schemes in the meetings of gram sabha and gram panchayat.

This show that majority of respondents do not agree on this point that the information is provided in gram sabha and gram panchayat meetings.

Table 2.2: The Procedure adopted by panchayat for selection of beneficiaries for different development programmes.

S. No.	Procedure adopted by panchayat	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total* Responses (%)
1	Through gram sabha	18 (42.9)	19 (22.9)	9 (39.1)	0 (0.0)	46 (30.7)
2	Through all the members of the panchayat	20 (47.6)	51 (61.4)	11(47.8)	0 (0.0)	82 (54.7)
3	By sarpanch	30 (71.4)	59 (71.1)	20(87.0)	1 (50.0)	110 (73.3)
4	By village head/ patel	12 (28.6)	34 (41.0)	5 (21.7)	1 (50.0)	52 (34.7)
5	By secretary	14 (33.3)	31 (37.3)	6 (26.1)	1 (50.0)	52 (34.7)
6	Do not know	5 (11.9)	13 (15.7)	1 (4.3)	1 (50.0)	20 (13.3)

*Multiple Responses

Source: Primary Data

PRIs have been bestowed with the roles and responsibilities of selection of beneficiaries for different development schemes being implemented through gram sabha. Table 2.2 describes the procedure adopted by panchayat for selection of beneficiaries for different development Programmes. 73.3 per cent respondents are of the view that the beneficiaries for the development Programmes are selected by sarpanch. 54.7 per cent respondents are of the opinion that the selection is done through all the members of panchayat. Equal number of respondents (34.7%) feels that the selection is done by village head/patel and by secretary. 30.7 per cent respondents find that gram sabha is involved in selection. 13.3 per cent respondents do not know about this. It explains that a sizeable

majority of respondents are in favour of sarpanch and all the members of the panchayat, which has not officially been assigned this work. This involvement is not a welcome sign.

Conclusion

This response is comparatively high among OBC and SC categories. This show that majority of respondents agree on this point that the information is provided in gram sabha and gram panchayat meetings. It explains that a sizeable majority of respondents are in favour of sarpanch, which has not officially been assigned this work. The involvement of all panchayat representatives is a welcome sign. This show that majority of respondents do not agree on this point that the

information is provided in gram sabha and gram panchayat meetings. It explains that a sizeable majority of respondents are in favour of sarpanch and all the members of the panchayat, which has not officially been assigned this work. This involvement is not a welcome sign.

It has been evident from the working experience of panchayat raj institutions and also as the above mentioned responses of respondents indicate that the level of participation of people at grassroots level has been relatively low. Despite knowing the procedural aspect, gram sabhas are almost a formal institution. There is a clear cut gap between macro level decisions and grassroots reality.

The grassroots experiences suggest that the majority of the panchayat representatives and villagers are aware about the procedural aspects of gram sabha meetings. Keeping in view the indicators of governance, the understanding towards different aspects of panchayat raj is of mixed nature. In majority cases where present panchayat raj representatives endorsed the adherence to many procedural dimensions whereas the gram sabha members on the country gave their note of dissent on many issues and very specifically and categorically brought out the hegemonic position of sarpanch and secretary. This scenario has revealed an adverse kind of grassroots reality which has hampered the process of governance in term of participation, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability etc.

It seems that only amendment in the State Act from time to time and specific provision for the system will not change the scenario. There is an urgent need to opt for an effective device whereby maximum people can be informed, made aware and motivated to come forward for the proper implementation and execution of panchayat raj. There is an urgent need to break the culture of silence and to strive for capacity building; sensitisation and orientation toward improve the grassroots scenario.

It is clear from the above analysis that the increase of educational opportunities for children, which indeed very encouraging to notice for panchayat. It is indeed positive to notice that majority of the respondents are of the view on increase of sanitary environments in home/village. It is clear from the above analysis that the increase of educational opportunities for children, which is indeed very encouraging to notice for panchayat. There is no caste category differentiation. It is indeed positive to notice that majority of the respondents are of the view on increase of sanitary environment in home/village.

Suggestions

- The provisions of the State Acts should be translated into simple Hindi and local dialect and be distributed to all panchayat functionaries in the form of pocket booklets as ready beckoners. Posters can also be prepared and displayed on the walls of Gram Panchayat building.
- The Panchayat Raj Institutions have specially empowered people to work as units of self-governance but it has been observed that the level of awareness and exposure among panchayat raj representatives and gram sabha members are very low. It is therefore important to initiate special training packages, awareness campaigns and capacity building Programmes.

- Gram Sabhas have been provided supreme position in the new system but people at large are least informed about these provisions. They are still accepting the supremacy of gram panchayat. It is important to make them aware about such provisions. For this purpose public awareness campaigns can be launched through NGOs. Electronic media (Community Television) can also be an effective medium.
- Panchayat expected has to perform a very specific role to tackle social issue as well. The panchayat through the gram sabha should also take lead to minimise the social evils. Use of liquor and practice of dowry are to be discouraged.
- The study suggests that merely by resorting to amendment in the State Act and specific provisions for new system cannot change the scenario of villages. There is an urgent need to explore effective devices whereby maximum people can be informed, made aware and motivated to come forward for the proper implementation and execution of panchayat raj to achieve the goals of good governance.

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