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PRIA

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Functioning of the Gram Panchayat

Introduction

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, paved the way for the establishment of the Panchayati Raj Institution at village level. Proper functioning of the Gram Panchayat is the most essential factor for strengthening local self-governance. The basic philosophy of local self-governance is to give 'voice' to 'voiceless' people living in more than 5,00,000 villages in India and to break long years of "culture of silence" and dependency. This will also safeguard the fact that the ideal of "power to the people" does not degenerate into the "power to the powerful".

This paper focuses on the existing reality of the Gram Panchayat as well as major issues to understand the basic philosophy of democratic decentralisation at the gram Panchayat level after the 73rd Amendment Act. For this purpose, PRIA and the NCRSOs have been directly involved in working with the people and the Panchayats since the last two years. From our experiences and through studies, we are able to give a picture of the Panchayat and highlight some critical areas for strengthening grass-root democracy.

In order to make the panchayat functioning more effective, it is the duty and responsibility of the Panchayat to organise Gram panchayat and Gram Sabha meetings and ensure people's participation in this process. So, to study the process and know the existing reality, we have analysed the situation of the Gram Panchayat and our focus is mainly on the factors like Gram Panchayat meeting, who presides over the meeting, agenda, attendance of the meeting, people's participation in decision making process, implementation of the decisions and relationship of the Gram Panchayats with other tiers of the Panchayat and government. This paper primarily deals with these factors.

Study Objective and Methodology

The objective is to understand the functioning of the Panchayats in relation to people's participation in planning and decision-making process and its implementation vis-a-vis the state Panchayat Act. A common questionnaire was prepared by PRIA and NCRSOs to study various issues pertaining to the effective functioning of the Panchayats.

The studies, conducted by PRIA and NCRSOs since last two years in six states have been used as primary source of information. Some of the data have been taken from the survey of VA and PRI members conducted by PRIA during February-March, 1997 across the states. Besides this, some specific cases and findings of reports of various workshops, meetings and training programmes of PRIA and NCRSOs have been incorporated in this paper.

S.no	Name of the State	Number of Panchayat	Name of Districts
1	Himachal Pradesh	32	Mandi, Kangra and Chamba
2	Haryana	12	Faridabad, Gurgaon, Ambala and Rohtak
3	Kerala	12	Trivendrum, Kasargode, Kollam and Vyanar
4	Gujrat	79	Panchamal, Surat, sabarkanta, Ahmedabad, Bhavnagar and Surendranagar
5	Madhya Pradesh	41	Sehore, Sidhi, Gwalior and Morena
6	Uttar Pradesh	19	Gazipur, Benaras, Mau, Azamgarh, Sonbhadra, Baanda, Mahoba and sahuji

1. Gram Panchayat Meeting

1.1 Periodicity

As per the statutory provision of the state Panchayat Act of six states reveal that in Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Uttar Pradesh Gram Panchayat meetings shall be held once in a month where as in Haryana and Gujrat, it shall be two meetings in a month.

The study reveals that in the states like Himachal Pradesh. Kerala and Haryana the Gram Panchayat meetings are held twice in a month on a regular basis. As per the study conducted in 12 Panchayats of Sehore district in Madhya Pradesh, in all Panchayats the meetings are held regularly once in a month. However, in Sidhi, Gwalior and Morena districts, study has been conducted in 29 Panchayats and the data reveal that the meetings are held once in fifteen days because the officials related with particular Panchayats has to attend these meetings. In Madhya Pradesh it was also found that the dates of meeting for the Gram Panchayats are fixed by district administration, which is once in a month as per the provision of the Ad.

While study of 19 Panchayats in Uttar Pradesh reveals that barring a few cases. most of the Pradhans started with regular meetings, but later due to lack of financial resources, the Pradhans and the panchayat members lost interest and frequency of the meetings became less. The data reveal that in only 4 out of 19 Panchayats, the meetings are held on a regular basis. The principal reason being lack of funds because of which the meetings were reduced to mere talking point. To identify the facts, Pradhans of the Gram Panchayats were interviewed and the Pradhan of Tindwara Gram Panchayat strongly replied regarding the meetings, which has certainly helped in getting the facts. He said that "well I have not organised the meetings for last one year, but for what reason shall I hold the meeting if Panchayat is a paper"? Yet if one goes through the records of the panchayat, everything will appear perfect. In Uttar Pradesh the members who reside in the wards or villages other than the Panchayat headquarters do not get regular information as per the study. The date of the meetings has been fixed by the Pradhan, in his/her absence by Up-Pradhan.

In Haryana, the meetings are held twice in a month in all 12 Panchayats and the date of the meetings has been fixed by the Pradhan, in his or her absence the Up-Pradhan fixes the date.

However, in Himachal Pradesh, as per the study conducted in 32 Panchayats of three districts namely Mandi, Chamba and Kangra, the meetings are held twice a month in all the Panchayats. As per the provision of the Act, the meetings shall be held once in a month but in all the three districts it has been notified by the district administration to conduct meetings twice in a month.

It was also found that in Himachal Pradesh in most of the blocks, the date of the meetings has been decided by the BOO in consultation with the concerned Panchayat Secretaries in a meeting immediately after the election as per their convenience and Panchayats were informed of these dates. In some blocks the Pradhan and the members fixed the dates of the meetings in consultation with the Panchayat Secretary and then informed the BDO.

To find out periodicity of the meeting and the factors affecting for not holding regular meetings, we found a case from Himachal Pradesh during the workshop.

Case 1: Whose power is it?

The members of Lahat Panchayat (Kangra district) of Himachal Pradesh said that since three months there has been no Gram Panchayat meeting due to the absence of the Panchayat Secretary. The reason they explained is that that all the records are lying with the Panchayat Secretary. Without those records it is not possible to conduct the meeting. Even it is conducted the resolution cannot be passed and accepted by the block office because signature of the Secretary will not be there. So, they felt handicapped in organising the meeting. They also said that they have informed this matter to the BDO and even to the Deputy Commissioner. When the matter

reached the Deputy Commissioner, she immediately asked District Panchayat officer for explanation and the officer sent it for reply to the BDO. But BDO remained silent on this matter. When the members visited the Block office, then the BDO made allegation against those members and said that "You have complained against me". After few months the BDO retired. Then PRIA had taken initiative through discussion with the members and found out a possible solution and finally it was decided that the matter will be again taken up the new BDO and certainly PRIA mobilised people to do the follow up and also invited BDO to the training Programme. The matter was discussed with the BDO and he has taken immediate step, and then the matter was settled by discussion with Panchayat Secretary and the Gram Panchayat members.

From the above fact it is found that without Panchayat Secretary it is very difficult for the Panchayats to hold regular meetings because Secretary plays a major role in the Panchayat meetings. However, in a democratic process where people have given power to decide the dates of the meeting but in reality, they have to depend upon the Secretary for holding the meetings making the process more centralised.

However, in case of Gujrat, as per the study it was found that out of 79 Panchayats, only 40 percent of the Panchayats the meetings are held once in a month. Pradhan and Panchayat Secretary usually fix the date and inform it to the members and the dates are fixed in almost 60 percent of the Panchayats.

It was also found that the meetings are usually cancelled because of the Panchayat Secretaries. The reason they said that Panchayat Secretaries keep all the records without which the meetings cannot be held. As per the provision of the Act the record should be kept under Pradhan but as the Secretaries are well informed and there is a trend that for long time the Secretaries are keeping records with them. So, members also afraid of questioning the Panchayat Secretaries regarding this matter because they have feeling that Secretary may create more problem.

In Kerala, out of 12 Panchayats studied, the meetings are held on a regular basis twice in a month. We found that it is a statutory provision on the part of Panchayat Secretary to inform the members regarding the date of meeting which is happening in the studied area.

However, from the above facts we found that in three states, except Haryana, Kerala and Uttar Pradesh, the dates of the Panchayat meeting are fixed but somehow the other the dates are changed as per the convenience of the Panchayat Secretary and Pradhan. It is also found that the principal reason for irregularity of the meetings are due to absence of Panchayat Secretaries, lack of proper communication and funds.

However, from the above facts we found that in spite of the power given to the Panchayats to decide the dates of the meetings as per the state Panchayat Act, the district administration which mainly includes BDO and Panchayat Secretary decides the date in all the states except Haryana and Uttar Pradesh which is certainly not help in empowering the Gram Panchayat members to take decisions and will make them more dependent on government.

1.2 Place where meetings are held

The meetings are held in a common place such as Panchayat bhawans, chowpals, temples and school buildings. However, in states like Kerala, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh, most of the panchayats are having their own Panchayat building where the meetings are held.

However, the study reveals that the states like Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh, only more than 50 percent of the Panchayats are having their own Panchayat buildings and for other Panchayats, the meetings are held in a common place like chowpal, akhada and temple. While in Madhya Pradesh prior to the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional. Amendments, the total number of Panchayats were approximately 15,000 and each Panchayat had its own Panchayat bhavan called Gramin Sachivalaya. After 73rd Amendment, the total no went upto 30,922. So due to this

reason only 50% of the Panchayats are having the Panchayat bhavan and the newly constituted Panchayats, the meetings are held in a common place.

From the above facts we found that the Panchayat meetings are held in a common place whether it is in the Panchayat bhawan or school building, temples and akhadas where members feel free to attend the meeting.

2. Attendance in meetings

Subject to the provisions of the state Act and the rules framed there under one-half of the members of the Gram Panchayat shall form a quorum which is common for the Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh where as in Gujarat it shall be two-third of its total members and in Kerala, Uttar Pradesh.

The study conducted in all the six states reveal that approximately 75-80 percent of the gram panchayat members attend the gram panchayat meetings regularly. However, 20-25 percent of the members could not attend the meetings often and the situation in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana is very similar because of the following reasons:

a) All the members do not get timely and regular information and especially the Panchayat members who reside in the wards or the village other than the panchayat headquarters.

b) In Madhya Pradesh class and caste factors play a predominant role in the Panchayats. In Panchayat meetings the members from dominant class and caste basically attend the meetings. They dominate in the discussion.

c) The women members hardly attend the meetings because of the socio-cultural factors like the women are not allowed to sit with their male counterparts in the meetings. The purdah system is also a crucial factor in the society especially in the states like Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. When women attend the meeting, men started gossiping against them, passing comments and laughing at them due to which they get discouraged and avoid to attend the meeting. Women of the forward classes of Uttar Pradesh avoid to attend the Gram Panchayat meetings because of caste factors

d) Time is also a major factor especially for the backward community because in states like Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh where large percentage of the members are daily wage laborer. So, it is very difficult for them to attend the meeting by losing their one-day wage which they cannot afford.

e) While in case of Kerala when there is any socio-political tension on taking sensitive local issues, the members usually avoid to attend the meeting. However political factors also play a major role in all the states studied. But it does not create any obstacles for the members to attend the gram Panchayat meetings.

Despite all these factors, the meetings are largely attended by the members which is much higher than the required quorum in all the states. This trend shows across the states which indicates people's involvement and their interest to know various affairs of the Panchayat.

3. Who presides?

Subject to the provisions of the state Act, the meeting of the Gram Panchayat shall be presided over by Pradhan or in absence of the Pradhan by Up Pradhan. In the event of both Pradhan and Up-Pradhan being absent, the meeting of the Gram Panchayat shall be presided over by a member of the Gram Panchayat to be elected for the purpose. This is found across the states.

The elected Pradhan is supposed to preside over the Gram Panchayat meetings. In states like Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, the meetings of the Gram Panchayat are being presided over by the Pradhan and in his absence Up-Pradhan. In the event of both Pradhan and Up-Pradhan being absent, then one member elected among the members who presides over the meeting. But this situation does exist only in case of male headed panchayats moreover in all the states. While considering the case of female headed Panchayats usually the husbands of the women Pradhan presides over the meeting especially in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana.

As per the study conducted in Haryana. it was found that out of the six female headed Panchayats, the meetings are presided over by their husbands in five Panchayats and study conducted in Uttar Pradesh found that out of three female headed Panchayats. the meetings were presided over by the husband in one Panchayat.

As per the study vis-a-vis the provisions of the Act, the meetings are presided over by the Pradhans across the states. However, we found that large proportion of the female headed Panchayats. the meetings are presided over by their husbands. Despite the reservation made for the women in the Panchayat they are not getting opportunity to exercise their power in the Panchayat because of male dominance in the society which affects the effective functioning of the Panchayats. Therefore, there is a need to empower women to make them self-reliant.

4. Agenda of the meeting

As per the provisions of the state Panchayat Act, the agenda shall be decided by the Pradhan in consultation with the members of the Gram Panchayat and in absence of Pradhan, the Up-Pradhan and the members shall decide. If both of them are absent then a member to be elected for the purpose who shall decide the agenda in consultation with the members.

The data reveal that five out of six states, the panchayat prepared agenda for the Gram Panchayat meeting. The agenda is very similar for all the states. The agenda is basically focused on the following items:

- a) infrastructure development such as drinking water facilities, Primary health care facilities. electrification, construction of roads and bridges and proper sanitation.
- b) Discussion on various schemes and programmes especially the centrally sponsored schemes like Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, Integrated Rural Development Programme, Indira Awas Yojana and Old Age and Widow Pension Schemes as well as some state sponsored schemes which differs from state to state
- c) Planning and implementation of schemes and programmes
- d) Conflict resolution and problem solving of the Panchayat
- e) Approval of the tenders for various schemes and programmes in case of Kerala and Gujarat.

In majority of the states like Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana the agenda is being fixed by the Pradhan in consultation with other members present in the meeting and then the agenda is placed for debate and discussion.

However, in Gujarat the agenda is fixed by Pradhan and Panchayat Secretary in majority of the cases.

In Uttar Pradesh 2 out of 19 Panchayats prepared the agenda of the meeting and it was fixed by the Panchayat Secretary. we found that due to the lack of funds, the meetings were reduced to mere talking points.

While in Madhya Pradesh, we found that the government department has circulated a list of issues to be discussed in the meetings and most of the Panchayat now address the circulated issues without developing their own agenda of the meetings. In some places the panchayats have appreciated the decision of the government and it has helped them in deciding on the basis of pre-fixed agenda while in some of the panchayat the issues are different and since they have to adhere to pre-determined agenda, such panchayat find it difficult to follow such decision.

Mainly the issues circulated for discussion in the gram panchayat meeting by the government are basically on various schemes like IRDP, IAY, JRY, Pension Schemes, Schemes for women, Million Latrine schemes; identification of beneficiaries for various schemes, Planning and implementation of various schemes.

From above findings we found that the agenda is prepared for the Gram Panchayat meetings but it is either sent by the government or decided by the Panchayat Secretary which is against the provisions of the Act. The facts prevail that despite the provisions made under the Act to encourage people's participation in the development process, participation of outside forces is more predominant and give directions in deciding affairs of the Panchayat.

5. Committees of Gram Panchayat

It is statutory for the Panchayats in all the states where the study has been conducted to form various committees. However, in some states like Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Gujarat are having more or less similar committees such as:

- Social justice committee
- Amenities committee
- Production committee
- Executive committee

In Madhya Pradesh three committees are there namely: Education, Health and social development work, General Administration and in Kerala there are four committees namely: standing committee, functional committee, sub-committee and ward committee and joint committee but as per the study, it was found that in all the panchayats the standing committee exists which is functional. This committee is constituted for the assessment of tax, finance, accounts and planning.

The places where the studies were undertaken revealed that none of the above-mentioned committees were formed. Where ever the committees have been formed, the Panchayat members are unaware about their roles and responsibilities of these committees. Even in most of the states the Pradhans do not aware that formation of committees is statutory.

6. Participation

The study reveals that Participation of the members in the gram panchayat meetings are relatively higher as compared to gram sabha meetings.

While considering the participation of women, we found that women's participation is relatively higher in the gram panchayat meetings as compared to the gram sabha meetings because of the following reasons:

a) Continuous interaction between the male and female members for long time has created healthy atmosphere and feel them more comfortable to take part in the planning and decision making process and hence increase their participation. For example, during the community problem analysis phase of micro planning in a village in Himachal Pradesh, the priority decision of women members prevailed over that of the male members. Women members demand of drinking water facilities was given greater priority in comparison to the construction of a metaled road as demanded by the male members. In contrast to these women in the larger forum especially in the

gram sabha meeting hesitate to speak because of socio-cultural factors which is more common in the rural areas.

b) In gram panchayat meetings the participants are very limited in which women representation is comparatively higher because of the reservation. Because of their relative higher percentage. they feel confident to take part in the deliberation. But still the women's participation is low as compared to their counterpart because of the male dominance and socio-cultural factors which needs to be improved.

From Kerala experience we found that the participation of women in the wards of the women headed panchayats is comparatively higher because of the fact that the respect commanded by the Pradhan among women and due to their special efforts.

While considering participation vis-a-vis factors like caste and class, the participation of under-privileged section is very low and the situation is prevalent in almost all the states but degree and kind varies. The dominant section of the society creates an atmosphere of anarchy in panchayat functioning. That happens when the panchayat is headed by Pradhans belonging to the schedule castes and other backward classes.

To understand the conditions of Pradhans from backward castes and to find out the reality, a study conducted in Uttar Pradesh in which a greater number of backward castes Pradhans were taken. About 13 out of 16 Pradhans belong to backward caste. But the striking difference is that though the backward castes have been elected either through reservation provision made under the Act or through public opinion, but the control of all the major activities of the Panchayat is within the control of upper caste. This was very difficult to see in picture, but when the researcher probes deeper, and through discussion with people, the community accept the fact that the backward caste still have very little say in decision making process. The reasons are many such as lack of awareness, less educated community, dependent proneness, nexus between government officials and the upper caste and socio-cultural factors. In Uttar Pradesh caste determines a lot of things and it is more prevalent in southern Uttar Pradesh.

The data also reveal that when discussion takes place on various sensitive issues like criminal cases, village and panchayat disputes, land encroachment, political matters most of the members do not participate especially in case of female participants, only the influential members of the panchayat take part in the discussion and decision. This is the situation in almost majority of the states like Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Kerala.

However, from the above facts we found that participation of the weaker sections especially women and the backward castes and classes is very low because of the socio-cultural and economic factors. When we consider participation of women, male counterparts predominant and create obstacles for participation. Despite the fact that reservations made for the weaker sections they are unable to participate in the process of development and they are still crowded out by the rich and the upper castes. Still a large percentage of the population are not participating in the discussions which is in the hands of a few powerful people.

7. Decision making

The study reveals that the states like Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat where the agenda prepared, discussions held and then decisions are taken by the majority of the members or if necessary, then by vote.

As per the study conducted by PRIA in Himachal Pradesh, It is found that women are poor in decision making even if they are capable in taking the decisions but because of certain factors such as:

a) When the decisions are taken on various critical issues like criminal cases, disputes, land encroachment, social evils; the women Pradhans are unable to handle such issues with confidence because of the family pressure. They are not allowed by their family to take any decision even if do not allow them to take part in the discussion.

b) Because of this pressure they lack confidence in taking decisions. Sometimes the culprit become the friends or relatives of their family in that case they feel very awkward in taking decisions.

c) At times they are suppressed by the male members during meetings and when the decisions are taken. these male members create problems, in spite of all such adverse condition if the decisions are taken then no body follow the decision because people feel that nothing will happen if they go against it. In that case women are also not aware of their duties and responsibilities which makes them handicap to take further action.

In Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh caste and class factors also play a major role in decision making process. The privileged sections take the upper hand in decision making process.

However, in Madhya Pradesh as per the study conducted by Samarthan. it is found that in majority of the Panchayats, the problem of land entitlement has been the measure issue especially in the tribal dominated areas. So, discussion and decisions are also taken in these areas.

In gram sabha meetings the discussions and decisions are taken mainly on these issues and a.re sent to the gram panchayat meetings. In the panchayat meetings the members again discuss on those issues and finally they incorporate most of the decisions of the Gram Sabha.

In many states the panchayats are given the power to take decisions for the development of their own areas.

After decision taken. resolution gets approved and signed by the Pradhan, Panchayat Secretary and in some state like Himachal Pradesh the members present also sign on the resolution and then it is sent to block office, Panchayat Samiti and other concerned department.

However, in Kerala the proceedings are reported by the Secretary in the prescribed minutes book which is signed by the Pradhan and read in the next meeting as a first item of the agenda for conformation. In that meeting the minutes is approved with or without amendments. However, in majority of the states, generally decisions are taken on following issues:

- infrastructure development
- to plan and implement various schemes and programmes
- Selection of beneficiaries for various schemes

We found that the agenda is decided by the government or the Panchayat secretary so hardly members discuss the matters related to their wards, village and Panchayat.

8. Implementation of decisions of Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha

The study reveals that, in all the states implementation of the decisions taken in the gram panchayats are still a major problem because of the following reasons:

a) As most of the times the proposals have sent to the block office, Panchayat Samities and other concerned departments where these proposals get blocked and no decisions are taken fur months.

b) In all the states, we found that block, Panchayat Samiti and the concerned departments have a limited quota of sanctioning proposals of the panchayats due to paucity of funds. Information regarding the limited resources available with various departments, blocks and Panchayat Samities are not given at the panchayat level and the Gram Panchayats keep on sending proposals.

c) Government indifferent attitude and apathy towards the panchayats and at times their non-co-operative approach has created an adverse effect in the functioning of the Panchayats. In this regard Pradhans of some Panchayats in Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh were interviewed to find out the truth. In Uttar Pradesh all the Pradhans opined that it is very difficult to get the work done without paying commission to the government officials. Some of the Pradhans did not grease the palm of corrupt officials so they faced lots of problems in their work like did not release grants, made obstacles by investigating the work.

d) Lack of adequate knowledge of the members and complicated procedures of the government regarding various schemes and programmes paralysed effective functioning of the Panchayats.

e) In majority of the Panchayats of all the states studied are having acute shortage of funds because the funds generated by the Panchayat through taxes, levies, revenues and other sources are very less which cannot fulfil the requirements. Mobilisation of local resources in terms of land, labour and capital is almost negligible.

The decisions which are generally implemented are related to schemes available in the panchayats which are basically self-employment schemes in nature like Indira Awas Yojana, Gandhi Kutir Yojana, IRDP, TRYSEM and old age and widow pension schemes. Under these schemes only the persons those who were below the poverty line get benefited. In very few cases panchayats have done only small development works either by government assistance or by their efforts.

9. Relationship with other tiers of PRI and Government

The study reveals that there is hardly any relationship of the Gram Panchayat members with the government and other tiers of the Panchayats except in the state of Kerala.

In five other states where the studies were undertaken revealed that there is lack of co-ordination and communication between Gram Panchayat and the bureaucracy. The gram panchayats are more dependent on government because of the rules made under the Act which makes government more powerful and panchayats more dependable. In somehow, the other Panchayats has to depend upon government for any reasons such as:

- Approval of the proposals
- Mobilisation of financial resources
- Technical guidance for preparing plans and budget estimates
- To get various information related to schemes and programmes
- Need assistance in administrative and accounts matters of the panchayats
- solve any type of disputes or problems

So, they have to depend upon the government to get these works done. There is a trend in every state that the government are holding powers for long time and accustomed to exercise their power over people and not ready to transfer the power easily.

While considering the role of government functionaries at the Gram Panchayat level especially Panchayat Secretary. From different states the study reveals that in majority of the panchayats there is hardly any relationship between Panchayat Secretary and gram panchayat. During study, the respondents opined that the Secretaries are supposed to play role of catalytic agents between blocks and the panchayats but they are doing opposite to it which has created an adverse impact in effective functioning of the panchayats.

They said that Panchayat Secretaries never discharge their duties effectively. In every few occasions they visit to the panchayats, even in some cases they do not visit for months. In most of the cases they only attend the gram panchayat and gram sabha meetings which is not regular. As

mentioned earlier that due to their absence the meetings are also cancelled. Very often they disseminate information to the Panchayat members. In many places he controls the panchayat and exercise power on people. While in the discussion and the decision-making process, Panchayat Secretary influence the members and the members follow the decisions taken by Secretaries. From the state studies we found that in some states like Gujarat, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh there is nexus between the Pradhans and the Panchayat Secretaries. In most of the cases decisions are taken by these two whether it is a case of selection of beneficiaries or income and expenditure of the panchayat. They select the beneficiaries either from their friends and relatives.

Case 2: Who is responsible?

A case from Himachal Pradesh, a Panchayat called Lahat where a person got a financial assistance of Rs 22,000 under IRDP scheme. The Secretary withdrew that amount from the block office and when gave it to the beneficiary it was only Rs 17,000. So, when that person asked the reason for less amount, he simply said that this much of amount was given by the block office. As the person is poor and illiterate, he did not go against it.

Case3: Attitude of Panchayat Secretary towards women

While another case in Himachal Pradesh we found that a Panchayat which is headed by Suman Sunita of 24 years of age. a woman from Schedule caste has been elected for the first time. During election with she contested for the post of Pradhan, Panchayat Secretary strongly protested against her and formed a clout of some influential people who created several problems in her path for not to contest in the election. The reason however we found that she is young and a female from the backward caste. So the Panchayat Secretary did not want to work under her supervision. In spite of their obstacles she won the election through community and family support. During our conversation with her we found that at present Secretary does not co-operate her in any activities and create lots of problem in her work.

While discussing the relationship between the Gram Panchayat and other tiers such as Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad, we found that there is hardly any kind of support and co-operation between these tiers.

Conclusion

The 73rd constitutional Amendment has made an impact in the Gram Panchayat and establish it as an institution of local self-governance. However, we found that the Panchayats are still not achieved the desired expectations and able to create people's participation in the whole process of development.

The study reveals that there is need for democratic decentralisation at the grass root level democracy where "people should operate and government co-operate". However, from the facts and findings we come to a conclusion that we have to go miles before we strength the institution of local self-governance.

From our analysis we found some emerging issues which has affected the effective functioning of the Panchayats and certainly weaken the backbone of the Panchayats.

Following four factors have created hurdles in the functioning of the Panchayats.

In spite of reservations made for the women and the backward community in the 73rd Amendment, the result has shown very little impact in the process of grass root democracy. the reservations are certainly achieved the targets in terms of percentage or number but it has really made any impact in the democratic process. The representation of women and the weaker sections has shown in

terms of number not in terms of participation in the pluming and decision-making process. Caste and class factors certainly predominant in this process

- The duties and responsibilities have been given to the Panchayats but which is not equated with powers in terms of finance and administration. Still the major share of power is in the hands of bureaucrats and politician. They do not want to delegate their power to the people and the Panchayats to make the institution self-reliant.
- Lack of people's participation and involvement in the Gram Panchayat has made this body weaker.

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