



THE REAL STRENGTH OF GRAM PANCHAYATS IN ANDHRA PRADESH: A CASE STUDY OF SPSR NELLORE DISTRICT

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Abstract

Panchayat Raj Institutions Play a vital role in the establishment of democratic decentralization at the grass root level and have a tremendous potential for participation of people in democracy. All the states in India framed the state Panchayat Raj Acts in the light of the constitution 73rd Amendment Act. The structure of Panchayat Raj in Andhra Pradesh has also undergone several changes after it brought new Panchayat Raj Act in accordance with the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act. The main objective of this paper is to examine the views and perceptions of the representatives of Panchayat Raj, on adequacy of devolution of power, resources, decision making and to suggest ways and means towards strengthening the Gram Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh State.

Keywords: *Grass root level, democratic decentralization, Panchayat Raj, Gram Sabhas, Peoples Participation, Social Audit.*

Introduction

“India lives in its villages” is the oft quoted statement of the Father of the Nation. The greatest strength of grass root democracy reflected through the Panchayat Raj Institutions is its proximity to the people. It is an important step towards the realization of Gandhiji's dream of “village swaraj”. Grass root level democracy has a tremendous potential for establishing a people centred delivery system which is essential for sustainable development.

In India, Panchayat Raj institutions, which commenced functioning in the year 1959, have been increasingly perceived as important institutions and regarded as an instrument of participatory democracy for national development. Participatory democracy or grass-root democracy or democratic decentralisation for development through Panchayat Raj has drawn the attention of policy makers, programme planners, programme implementing authorities, researchers, sociologists and other professional workers. The Government of India Act, 1956, Malaviya Committee (1956), Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957), Ashok Mehta Committee (1978), Hanumantha Rao Committee (1983), G.V.K. Rao Committee (1985), Singhvi Committee (1986), etc. have dealt with the development, functioning, autonomy and freedom, weaknesses, and remedial measures for strengthening of the Panchayat Raj system. Reddy (1974) asserted that, to promote political development and social justice, people's institutions should be created. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act is a landmark legislation which has brought empowerment of the Panchayat Raj Institutions and has ensured the transfer of power from the State to the Panchayat Raj institutions to be exercised by the people. However, devolution of three Fs - Funds, Functions and Functionaries which is imperative for effective public service delivery has not yet taken place in many states.

Panchayat Raj in Andhra Pradesh

The Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, framed in the light of the Constitution's 73rd Amendment, came into effect in May 1994, setting up a three-tier PRI structure with a Zilla Parishad at the district,



Mandal Praja Parishad at the intermediate and Gram Panchayat at the village level. It also provides for the constitution of village Gram Sabhas made up of all registered voters in the village.

Gram Panchayats are local self-government at the village or small town level in India. The gram Panchayat is the foundation of the Panchayat System. A Panchayat can be set up in villages with minimum population of 300. Sometimes two or more villages are clubbed together to form group-gram panchayat when the population of the individual villages is less than 300.

The structure of Panchayat Raj in Andhra Pradesh has undergone several changes during the last four decades of its existence. Though the system was originally conceived as a institutional framework for planning and implementation of development programmes and also as an administrative set up for delivery of services at lower levels, the entire growth process was inhibited by too much party politics and favouritism coupled with bureaucratic apathy. The process of Panchayat Raj reforms, therefore, exhibits shadows of political exigencies and short-term gains. While some of the intended changes in the structure of the system were sought to be justified on some count or the other, these could hardly contribute in strengthening the system. The initial enthusiasm got exhausted within the first five years of their establishment due to slackening of political will, decline in the quality of leadership, lack of sustained interest of the State and inadequacy of resources. The bureaucracy also made occasional interventions which were not conducive to the growth of these institutions. Instead of initiating long-term strategy for the growth of democratically elected bodies, the leadership was more often contented with ad hoc remedial measures and provision of routine functions and activities covered under the centrally sponsored rural development programmes.

Need for the Study

Panchayat Raj institutions are expected to emerge as an effective instrument of participatory democracy for development. The basic philosophy of this system is popular participation in Panchayat affairs and that the people in the village should undertake the responsibility of governing themselves.

The Panchayat Raj system, it is generally felt, can be made to succeed through decentralisation of authority with popular participation at the grass-root level. Participation of the people in the lower units of administration in the process of decision making through Panchayat Raj institutions is the *sine qua non* of the success of development programmes. But the Panchayat Raj institutions are confronted with several problems. Hence, there is a need for a scientific study, based on field work, to examine the awareness about the New Panchayat Raj system, current practice of participatory democracy and factors contributing to the successful functioning of the Panchayat Raj system.

Objectives

The specific objectives of the present study are as follows

- To examine the views and perceptions about functioning of Panchayat Raj System of the people's representatives of Panchayat Raj selected in the study area.
- To suggest ways and means towards strengthening of Gram Panchayats.

Sample Design

S.P.S.R. Nellore district in Andhra Pradesh has been purposively selected for carrying out an area – specific study. The district is divided into three revenue divisions, namely, Kavali, Nellore, Gudur. There are 18 mandals in Kavali division, 12 mandals in Nellore division and 16 mandals in Gudur



division. Of the 46 mandals in the district, one mandal from each of the three revenue divisions in the district were selected at random. In each selected mandal, all Gram Panchayats are selected for the micro analysis purpose. All the Gram Panchayat presidents in the selected three mandals were selected for this study.

A specific number of people representatives of Panchayat Raj who belong to the Marrispadu mandal of Kavali division, Rapur mandal of Nellore division, Venkatagiri mandal of Gudur division were selected for the present study. In all 65 Gram Panchayats, five members and Gram Sarpanch of each Gram Panchayat were selected using simple random technique.

Table 1: Sample Design of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Name of the Revenue Division	Name of the Mandal	No. of Gram Panchayats	Sample Selected		No of Sample Design Selected
				Gram Panchayat Presidents	Gram Panchayat Members	
1	Kavali	Marrispadu	24	24	120	144
2	Nellore	Rapur	21	21	105	126
3	Gudur	Venkatagiri	20	20	100	120
Total			65	65	325	390

Source: Field Data

Opinion on the Adequacy of devolution of power, Resources, Decision-making

The information on the Opinion of the respondents on the Adequacy of devolution of power, Resources, Decision-making etc. as per the 73rd Amendment of Panchayati Raj Act of 1993 has been elicited and presented in the table 2.

The table presents that 133 respondents (34.10%) opined that the power is sufficient and 257 respondents (65.90) opined that the power is insufficient. Majority of the respondents in Rapur Mandal (41.27%) opined that the power is sufficient and majority of the respondents in Venkatagiri Mandal (70.83%) opined that the power is insufficient.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents' opinion on the Adequacy of devolution of power, Resources, Decision-making etc. as per the 73rd Amendment of Panchayati Raj Act of 1993

Variables	Marrispadu	Rapur	Venkatagiri	Total
Power				
Sufficient	46 (31.94)	52 (41.27)	35 (29.17)	133 (34.10)
Insufficient	98 (68.06)	74 (58.73)	85 (70.83)	257 (65.90)
Total	144 (100.00)	126 (100.00)	120 (100.00)	390 (100.00)
Money Sanctioned				
Sufficient	59 (40.97)	46 (36.51)	52 (43.33)	157 (40.26)
Insufficient	85 (59.03)	80 (63.49)	68 (56.67)	233 (59.74)



Total	144 (100.00)	126 (100.00)	120 (100.00)	390 (100.00)
Independent Decision				
Given	32 (22.22)	47 (37.30)	39 (32.50)	118 (30.26)
Not Given	112 (77.78)	79 (62.70)	81 (67.50)	272 (69.74)
Total	144 (100.00)	126 (100.00)	120 (100.00)	390 (100.00)
Having Responsibility of Implementing only Schemes as Instructed by the State Government				
Yes	94 (65.28)	81 (64.29)	63 (52.50)	238 (61.03)
No	50 (34.72)	45 (35.71)	57 (47.50)	152 (38.97)
Total	144 (100.00)	126 (100.00)	120 (100.00)	390 (100.00)
Empowered to Participate and Implement the Govt. Schemes based on Felt Needs of People				
Given	48 (33.33)	77 (61.11)	77 (64.17)	202 (51.79)
Not Given	96 (66.67)	49 (38.89)	43 (35.83)	188 (48.21)
Total	144 (100.00)	126 (100.00)	120 (100.00)	390 (100.00)

Source : Filed Data

Note : (i) Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to total.

The table presents that 157 respondents (40.26%) opined that the money sanctioned is sufficient and 233 respondents (59.74%) opined that the money sanctioned is insufficient. Majority of the respondents in Venkatagiri Mandal (40.97%) opined that the money sanctioned is sufficient and majority of the respondents in Rapur Mandal (59.03%) opined that the money sanctioned is sufficient.

The table also shows that 118 respondents (30.26%) opined that independent decision was given and 272 respondents (69.74%) opined that independent decision was not given. Majority of the respondents in Rapur Mandal (37.7%) opined that independent decision was given and majority of the respondents in the same Mandal (77.78%) opined that independent decision was not given.

Around 238 respondents (61.03%) are having and 152 respondents (38.97%) are not having the responsibility of implementing only schemes as instructed by the State Government. Majority of the respondents (65.28%) in Marripadu are having and majority of the respondents (47.50%) are not having the responsibility of implementing only schemes as instructed by the State Government.

Moreover, 202 respondents (51.79%) are empowered and 188 respondents (48.21%) are not empowered to Participate and Implement the Govt. Schemes based on felt needs of people. Majority of the respondents, 77 each in Rapur (61.11%) and Venkatagiri (64.17%) Mandals were given empowerment and 67 percent of the respondents (48.21%) were not given empowerment to participate and Implement the Govt. Schemes based on felt needs of people.



It is concluded that 66 per cent of the respondents opined that the power is insufficient, 60 per cent of the respondents opined that the money sanctioned is insufficient, 70 per cent of the respondents opined that independent decision was not given, 61.03 per cent of the respondents are having responsibility of implementing only schemes as instructed by the State Government and 52 per cent of the respondents were given empowerment to participate and implement the Govt. Schemes based on felt needs of people.

Suggestions for Development of Power, Resources and Decision – Making

The information on Suggestions given by the respondents for development of power, resources, decision – making as per 73rd Constitutional Amendment has been collected and furnished in the table 3.

Table 3 :Distribution of respondents by Suggestions for Development of power, Resources, Decision – Making as per 73rd Constitutional Amendment

Suggestions	Marripadu	Rapur	Venkatagiri	Total
Power to be given as per Constitutional Amendment of PRIs	64 (44.44)	23 (18.25)	28 (23.33)	115 (29.49)
Maintaining transparency and Accountability	8 (5.56)	15 (11.91)	11 (9.17)	34 (8.72)
Avoid intervention of bureaucrats and politicians in the Panchayat Raj Administration	26 (18.06)	9 (7.14)	-	35 (8.97)
Timely release of funds	33 (22.92)	21 (16.67)	15 (12.50)	69 (17.69)
District planning process to be democratic	28 (19.44)	18 (14.29)	16 (13.33)	32 (15.90)
Allocation of funds on the basis of hamlet – wise population	14 (9.72)	-	8 (6.67)	54 (13.85)
Officials may guide and educate the elected representatives	13 (9.03)	-	41 (34.17)	22 (5.64)
Ensure people’s participation	21 (14.58)	13 (10.32)	18 (15.00)	52 (13.33)
Direct election of Mandal Parishad and Zilla Parishad	20 (6.25)	34 (26.98)	27 (22.50)	81 (20.77)
Remove joint account operation	16 (11.11)	12 (9.52)	14 (11.67)	33 (8.46)
Provision for implementation of village Panchayat Raj schemes under the guidance of upper bodies	9 (6.25)	13 (10.32)	11 (9.17)	33 (8.46)
No idea	6 (4.17)	-	9 (7.50)	15 (3.85)
Total	144 (100.00)	126 (100.00)	120 (100.00)	390 (100.00)

Source : Filed Data

Note : (i) Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to total.

(ii) Responses in multiple mode.



The table denotes that 115 respondents (29.49%) suggested that power is to be given as per Constitutional Amendment of PRIs, 81 respondents (20.77%) suggested for direct elections for Mandal Parishad and Zilla Parishad, 69 respondents (17.69%) suggested for timely release of funds, 22 respondents (5.64%) each suggested for allocation of funds on the basis of hamlet –wise population and officials may guide and educate the elected representatives, 35 respondents (8.97%) suggested for avoiding intervention of bureaucrats and politicians in the Panchayat Raj administration, 34 respondents (8.72%) suggested for maintaining transparency and accountability and 33 respondents (8.46%) suggested for removal of joint account operation and provision for implementation of village Panchayat Raj schemes under the guidance of upper bodies. It is concluded that 29.49 per cent of the respondents suggested that power is to be given as per Constitutional amendment of PRIs.

Opinion on Additional Power Required

The information on the opinion of the respondents on power required additionally for Panchayat Raj Institutions has been elicited and presented in the table 4.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by Opinion on Power Required Additionally for Panchayat Raj Institutions

Opinion Power required of PRIs	Marripadu	Rapur	Venkatagiri	Total
Power to monitor PDS, primary Schools, noon-meal,	31 (21.53)	6 (4.76)	19 (15.83)	56 (14.36)
Power to issue certificates of community/income/ gas connection and to obtain benefits from welfare schemes	18 (12.50)	8 (6.35)	13 (10.83)	39 (10.00)
Provision of power and resources to ZP and Mandal Parishad as in the case of Gram Panchayat	5 (3.47)	5 (3.97)	7 (5.83)	17 (4.36)
Prevent unnecessary interference of officials and redtapism	27 (18.75)	21 (16.67)	9 (7.50)	57 (14.62)
Power to mobilize local resources to avoid Govt. interference	44 (30.56)	19 (15.08)	69 (57.50)	132 (33.85)
Provision of power as that of revenue department	52 (36.11)	13 (10.32)	15 (12.50)	80 (20.51)
Power limit state sponsored schemes	8 (5.56)	-	12 (10.00)	20 (5.13)
Power to give tender only to Mandal Parishad conversion not for other contractor	4 (2.78)	-	13 (10.83)	17 (4.36)
Adequate power to deal with local problems as in the case of DRDA	12 (8.33)	-	10 (8.33)	22 (5.64)
Provision of power to elected representatives	13 (9.03)	21 (16.67)	13 (10.83)	47 (12.05)
Power to reform the tax systems	15 (10.42)	-	7 (5.83)	22 (5.64)
No idea	52 (36.11)	44 (34.92)	12 (10.00)	108 (27.69)
Total	144 (100.00)	126 (100.00)	120 (100.00)	390 (100.00)

Source : Filed Data



Note : (i) Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to total.
(ii) Responses in multiple mode.

The table explicitly shows that 132 respondents (33.85%) opined that additional power is required for PRIs to mobilize local resources to avoid Govt. interference, 108 respondents (27.69%) have no idea, 80 respondents (20.51%) opined for provision of power as that of revenue department, 57 respondents (14.62%) opined for preventing unnecessary interference of officials and redtapism, 47 respondents (12.05%) opined for provision of power to elected representatives and 39 respondents (10%) opined for power to issue certificates of community/income/ gas connection and to obtain benefits from welfare schemes. It is concluded that one third of the respondents opined that additional power is required for PRIs to mobilize local resources to avoid Govt. interference.

Opinion on Independent of Panchayat Raj Institutions

The information on the opinion of the respondents on independence of Panchayat Raj Institutions has been elicited and presented in the table 5.

The table presents that 268 respondents (68.72%) opined that PRIs are functioning as the units of local self-government and 122 respondents (31.28%) opined that PRIs are not functioning as the units of local self-government. Majority of the respondents (81%) in Rapur Mandal opined that PRIs are functioning as the units of local self-government and majority of the respondents (46%) in Marrispadu Mandal opined that PRIs are not functioning as the units of local self-government.

Similarly, 330 respondents (84.62%) opined that permission is required from Government for every decision taken and 60 respondents (15.38%) opined that permission is not required from Government for every decision taken. Majority of the respondents (64.23%) in Rapur Mandal opined that that permission is required from Government for every decision taken and majority of the respondents (17%) in Marrispadu Mandal opined that that permission is required from Government for every decision taken.

Moreover, 200 respondents (51.28%) opined for providing PRIs with responsibility of implementing the 29 Subjects and 190 respondents (48.72%) opined that there is no need for providing PRIs with responsibility of implementing the 29 Subjects. Majority of the respondents (84%) in Rapur Mandal opined for providing PRIs with responsibility of implementing the 29 Subjects and majority of the respondents (58%) in Marrispadu Mandal opined that there is no need for providing PRIs with responsibility of implementing the 29 Subjects.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents by Opinion on Independence of Panchayat Raj Institutions

Nature of Empowerment of PRS	Marrispadu	Rapur	Venkatagiri	Total
PRIs functioning as units of local self-government				
Yes	78 (54.17)	102 (80.95)	88 (73.33)	268 (68.72)
No	66 (45.83)	24 (19.95)	32 (26.67)	122 (31.28)
Total	144 (100.00)	126 (100.00)	120 (100.00)	390 (100.00)
Permission required from Government for every decision taken				



Nature of Empowerment of PRS	Marripadu	Rapur	Venkatagiri	Total
Yes	119 (82.64)	106 (84.13)	105 (87.50)	330 (84.62)
No	25 (17.36)	20 (15.87)	15 (12.50)	60 (15.38)
Total	144 (100.00)	126 (100.00)	120 (100.00)	390 (100.00)
Providing PRIs with responsibility of implementing the 29 Subjects				
Yes	61 (42.36)	81 (64.29)	58 (48.33)	200 (51.28)
No	83 (57.64)	45 (35.71)	62 (51.67)	190 (48.72)
Total	144 (100.00)	126 (100.00)	120 (100.00)	390 (100.00)
Expecting funds from state Government				
Yes	144 (100.00)	124 (98.41)	107 (89.17)	375 (96.15)
No	-	2 (1.59)	13 (10.83)	15 (3.85)
Total	144 (100.00)	126 (100.00)	120 (100.00)	390 (100.00)
Power to modify schemes to suit local conditions				
Yes	28 (19.44)	34 (26.98)	18 (15.00)	80 (20.51)
No	116 (80.56)	92 (73.02)	102 (85.00)	310 (79.49)
Total	144 (100.00)	126 (100.00)	120 (100.00)	390 (100.00)

Source : Filed Data

Note : (i) Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to total.

Likewise, 375 respondents (96.15%) are expecting funds from state Government and 15 respondents (3.85%) are not expecting funds from state Government. Hundred per cent of the respondents in Marripadu Mandal are expecting funds from state Government and majority of the respondents(11%) in Venkatagiri Mandal are not expecting funds from state Government.

Regarding power to modify schemes to suit local conditions, 80 respondents (20.51%) required power and 310 respondents (79.49%) required no power to modify schemes to suit local conditions. Majority of the respondents (27%) required power in Rapur Mandal and majority of the respondents (81%) in Marripadu required no power to modify schemes to suit local conditions.

It is concluded that 69 per cent of the respondents opined that PRIs are functioning as the units of local self-government, 85 per cent of the respondents opined that permission is required from Government for every decision taken, 51.28 per cent of the respondents opined for providing PRIs with responsibility of implementing the 29 Subjects, 96.15 per cent of the respondents are expecting funds from state Government and 79.49 per cent of the respondents required no power to modify schemes to suit local conditions.



Perception on Religion / Caste and politics

The information whether the respondents have the perception that Religion / Caste and politics affect the performance of Panchayat Raj Institutions and their suggestions for prevention has been elicited and presented in the table 6.

The table denotes that 172 respondents (44.10%) opined that Religion / Caste affects the performance of PRIs and 218 respondents (55.90%) opined that Religion / Caste do not affect the performance of PRIs. Majority of the respondents in Marripadu Mandal (53%) opined that Religion / Caste affects the performance of PRIs and majority of the respondents in Rapur Mandal (61.11%) opined that Religion / Caste does not affect the performance of PRIs.

The table also shows that 182 respondents (46.67%) opined that politics affects the performance of PRIs and 208 respondents (53.33%) opined that politics does not affect the performance of PRIs. Majority of the respondents in Marripadu Mandal (58%) opined that politics affects the performance of PRIs and majority of the respondents in Rapur Mandal (59%) opined that politics does not affect the performance of PRIs.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents by Perception that Religion / Caste and Politics affect the Performance of Panchayat Raj Institutions and their Suggestions for Prevention

Factors affecting the performance of PRIs	Marripadu	Rapur	Venkatagiri	Total
Religion / Caste				
Yes	76 (52.78)	49 (38.89)	47 (39.17)	172 (44.10)
No	68 (47.22)	77 (61.11)	73 (60.83)	218 (55.90)
Total	144 (100.00)	126 (100.00)	120 (100.00)	390 (100.00)
Politics				
Yes	83 (57.64)	52 (41.27)	47 (39.17)	182 (46.67)
No	61 (42.36)	74 (58.73)	73 (60.83)	208 (53.33)
Total	144 (100.00)	126 (100.00)	120 (100.00)	390 (100.00)
Suggestions to remove adverse effect of caste and politics				
Legislative measures	38 (45.78)	29 (55.77)	28 (59.57)	95 (52.20)
Avoiding caste politics	49 (59.04)	18 (34.62)	22 (21.28)	89 (48.90)
Unanimous selection of candidates	14 (16.87)	12 (23.08)	10 (21.28)	36 (19.78)
Imparting education on secularism	5 (6.02)	-	4 (8.51)	9 (4.75)
Prohibition of political parties	-	-	6	6



Factors affecting the performance of PRIs	Marripadu	Rapur	Venkatagiri	Total
			(12.77)	(3.30)
Formation of peoples' committee from all section of population	19 (22.89)	22 (18.33)	13 (27.67)	54 (29.67)
Total	83 (100.00)	52 (100.00)	47 (100.00)	182 (100.00)

Source : Filed Data

Note : (i) Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to total; (ii) Responses in multiple mode. Regarding suggestions to remove adverse effect of caste and politics, 95 respondents (52.20%) suggested for legislative measures, 89 respondents (48.90%) suggested that caste politics are avoided, 54 respondents (29.67%) suggested that for formation of peoples' committee from all section of population 36 respondents (19.78%) suggested for unanimous selection of candidates.

It is concluded that 56 per cent of the respondents opined that Religion / Caste does not affect the performance of PRIs and 53.33 per cent of the respondents opined that politics does not affect the performance of PRIs. Moreover, 52.20 per cent of the respondents suggested for legislative measures for removing adverse effect of caste and politics on the performance of PRIs.

Suggestions for effective functioning of Panchayat Raj system

The suggestions from the respondents for effective functioning of Panchayat Raj system have been received and presented in the table 7.

Table 7: Respondents Suggestions for effective functioning of Panchayat Raj system

Suggestions	Marripudu (144)	Rapur (126)	Venkatagiri (120)	Total (390)
Timely release of funds	82 (56.95)	61 (48.41)	73 (60.83)	216 (55.38)
Organizing State level workshop /conferences for reviewing schemes	48 (33.33)	43 (34.13)	35 (29.17)	126 (32.31)
Providing training allowances	98 (49.49)	52 (41.27)	48 (40.00)	198 (50.77)
Preventing political interference	28 (19.44)	16 (12.70)	15 (12.50)	59 (15.13)
Establishing linkage Among PRIs	5 (3.47)	6 (4.76)	14 (11.67)	25 (6.41)
Officials should co-operate with elected representatives	27 (18.75)	61 (48.41)	18 (15.00)	106 (27.18)
Govt. should accept resolutions passed by the PRIs	36 (25.00)	12 (9.52)	9 (7.50)	57 (14.62)
Joint account operation may be removed	23 (15.97)	8 (6.35)	12 (10.00)	53 (13.59)



Suggestions	Marripudu (144)	Rapur (126)	Venkatagiri (120)	Total (390)
Bringing primary education under the control of PRIs	31 (21.53)	26 (20.63)	22 (18.33)	79 (20.26)
Kerala, Karnataka and West Bengal model of PD MAY may be followed.	44 (30.55)	45 (35.71)	46 (38.33)	135 (34.62)
Two-tier PRS gives more efficient administration than three-tier system	21 (14.58)	9 (7.14)	19 (15.83)	49 (12.56)
Police department should cooperate with PRIs in effective maintenance of law and order in rural areas	37 (25.69)	28 (22.22)	35 (29.17)	100 (25.64)
The District Collector may not dissolve the local body. Gender bias should be removed	25 (17.36)	14 (11.11)	27 (22.50)	66 (16.92)
Educated and experienced leaders may be elected	12 (8.33)	15 (11.90)	10 (8.33)	37 (9.49)
Recruit additional staff to attend to administrative work	9 (6.25)	12 (9.52)	14 (11.67)	35 (8.97)
Allotting funds based on population	35 (24.31)	32 (25.39)	21 (17.50)	88 (22.56)
PRIs should be considered as unit of local self-Government and not only as an implementing agency	33 (22.92)	9 (7.14)	35 (29.17)	77 (19.74)

Source : Filed Data

Note : (i) Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to total; (ii) Responses in multiple mode.

The table explains that 216 respondents (55.38%) suggested for the timely release of funds, 198 respondents (50.77%) suggested for providing training allowances, 135 respondents (34.62%) suggested that Kerala, Karnataka and West Bengal model of PD may be followed, 126 respondents (32.31%) suggested for Organizing State level workshop /conferences for reviewing schemes, 106 respondents (27.18%) suggested that officials should co-operate with elected representatives, 100 respondents (25.65%) suggested that Police department should cooperate with PRIs in effective maintenance of law and order in rural areas, 88 respondents (22.56%) suggested for allotting funds based on population, 79 respondents (20.26%) suggested for bringing primary education under the control of PRIs and 77 respondents (19.74%) suggested that PRIs should be considered as unit of local self-Government and not only as an implementing agency. It is concluded that timely release of funds, providing training allowances, following the Kerala, Karnataka and West Bengal model of PD are the three major suggestions offered by the respondents for effective functioning of Panchayat Raj system.

Suggestions

- The Government needs to convene meetings and hold seminars for bureaucrats and political parties about their supportive role for Panchayat Raj..
- Annual financial statements (financial budgets) of the State and Central Governments should clearly indicate outlays for panchayats. There should be no reappropriation of funds for expenditure by Panchayats by the governments.



- Panchayats should be encouraged and empowered to identify new avenues of rising resources, enabled to appropriate the bulk of revenue resources raised by them. With incentives built into the norms of transfer which would encourage the Panchayats to mobilize their own resources.
- Self –governance should be operationalised by enabling Panchayats to create, manage and control their own functionaries. Consideration should be given to place all district level officers including officers of the Central and State Services under the administrative control of the relevant tier of Panchayat.
- With the transfer of the schemes and subjects as provided in the Eleventh Schedule the funds in the state budgets for these schemes should also be fully transferred to the Panchayats of the concerned levels.
- Devolution of powers, finance and personnel to be made simultaneously and more effectively. The State Government has to define precise powers for each tier of Panchayati Raj.
- There is a need to provide women with specific kinds of support systems, which go beyond technical training. They need support to build solidarity amongst women, through strengthening links between women's organisations and elected bodies.
- There is a need for Geographic Information System (GIS), which can provide all information to meet the requirements of every villager and planner. The GIS can provide the needed connectivity for bottom up planning and development from the village to the district level. GIS would be able to provide the latest information about the village lands, water bodies, and forest wealth, and shrinking natural resources, so as to enable Gram Sabha to decide as to how the village biodiversity and natural resources of the area can be preserved and, if possible restored.
- In many states Gram Panchayats do not constitute viable administrative units due to their geographical areas and physical distances from potential growth centres and sheer inaccessibility due to lack of proper infrastructure such as roads and connectivity. Delimitations on the basis of population distances and access need to be done in some states.
- Social audits at PRI level have shown that peoples participation is both qualitatively and effectively resolving local problems. They should be continued in true spirit.

Conclusion

Grass root level democracy has come to stay in India through the instrumentality of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment. While on the one side of the spectrum there are very active and strong PR Institutions, at the other end we have a large number of PRIs which are not in a position to perform effectively, The performance levels of the PRIs have been directly proportionate to levels of transfer of 3 'Fs' Viz., Functions, Functionaries and Funds. Since the devolution of the powers and the State Government and the Act does not make it mandatory for full-fledged transfer of powers, the functioning of PRIs have not been uniform across the country. With the implementations of more rural development programmes in the budgetary outlays, the resource base of the PRIs has increased. It can be concluded that the system of Panchayat Raj in the State has the necessary potential to transform the rural areas but it requires a political will for fruitful utilisation of decentralisation process for development of all sections of society.

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