



ROLE OF PANCHAYATS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Poornima U.Kotehal* Dr.Prakash B.Yaragol**

*Research Scholar, Department of Management Studies and Research, Nagarjuna College of Engineering & Technology, Mudugurki(V), VenkatagiriKote (P), Devanahalli (Tq.) Bengaluru Rural District.

**Department of Management Studies and Research, Nagarjuna College of Engineering & Technology, Mudugurki(V), VenkatagiriKote (P), Devanahalli (Tq.) Bengaluru Rural District.

Abstract

India continues to live in rural areas, in spite of growing urbanization. The paper deals with the issue of over urbanization and how panchayats, the government sectors, and the non-government sectors can actually help to build a sustainable model of transformation. If the farm activities and the non-farm activities are synergized, then it can bring in a silent revolution at the grass-root level.

Key words: Development, Panchayat, Rural.

Introduction

India's decentralized governance experiment has completed twenty five years. In 1992-93, the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution had envisaged the objectives of local 'social justice' and 'economic development'. The radical decentralization Acts of 1983, with respect to NyayaPanchayats, MandalPanchayats, TalukPanchayatSamithis and Karnataka ZillaParishad Acts, complete 35 years. The decentralization reforms had the motive of empowering people and thereby bring in development through participatory measures.

Concept of Development

Does development mean the provision of adequate infrastructure or the implementation of the latest technology? No. It implies the spreading of awareness on people's surroundings, formulation of suitable programs, enhancement of decision making capabilities, improving the standards of living, and identification of problems, for fulfilling the needs, goals, and aspirations of people. Apart from raising the quantum of infrastructure and the flow of income, development must also bring about significant changes in people's attitude (Singh, 1986).

Though the concept of development has been analyzed in different ways, it can generally be stated that it is about the provision of basic amenities like drinking water, housing, sanitation, etc., provision of healthcare, education, and employment, elimination of poverty, and the provision of infrastructure and facilities. Such a situation results in the improvement of economic and social conditions of people and places. Improvement in economic conditions of a place can happen only when the merits of development are extended to the poor, landless and marginal farmers, resulting in equality. Development is not only the implementation of government plans, but requires collaborative efforts of various departments of both government and non-government agencies. Development is better applicable in a rural setting. HowarZiftft has quoted "Small acts, when multiplied by millions of people, can transform the world."

Local people can exploit various complexities of situations through empowerment and decentralization. According to the U.N. report on rural development (1966), the cultural, social, and economic conditions of a nation can be improved through people's collective efforts, which emphasize on the significance of rural development and Panchayat raj. The country's governance went through a paradigm shift due to the Indian Constitution's 73rd and 74th Amendments. A novel level of governance termed as local government was carved out of the two existing levels of national government and state government. Each of the local governments comprised of village assemblies or Gram Sabhas.

The political, economic, and social development of India is incomplete without rural development, wherein the major issues are as follows

- i. Provision of affordable credit
- ii. Development of rural infrastructure



- iii. Land reforms
- iv. Investment in rural areas' human capital
- v. Development of other occupations, apart from agriculture

Apart from developing the rural areas, the standard of lives of the rural population must be transformed in such a way that the people identify themselves as a part of self-sustaining and self-reliant communities (Mishra & Sharma, 1979).

Hurdles for rural development

The economic and the social fabrics of the rural Indian society are comprised of agricultural activities performed by a sizeable number of people, who cannot be adequately accommodated by the service sectors, the manufacturing sectors, or the urban cities. The absorption of rural people is not accomplished by the urban regions, after the shrinking of rural employment in the year 2005. Slum areas have sprung-up in urban areas due to the overcrowding of unemployed people in towns and cities. The rural livelihoods are affected due to the excessive utilization of natural resources, such as forests, water, and land. This scenario has resulted in rural people getting attracted to the urban glitter and greed of unwarranted development.

Lack of literacy and lack of awareness about environment, recent happenings, and government schemes, coupled with the rural people's traditional thinking constitute the major hurdles for development. The rural people do not have the right frame of mind to think about development, due to the lack of basic requirements, such as electricity, water, education, and communication.

Furthermore, the Indian rural development encounters other significant hurdles like political interference, group conflicts, cultural and social differences, lack of interest, lack of self-confidence, and lack of motivation.

Role of Panchayat Raj in development

Panchayat raj institutions strengthen the democracy at the grass roots level and strive for rural development by alleviating poverty, generating employment, creating better opportunities for income generation, and building the necessary infrastructure facilities. Various issues, such as low production, unemployment, and rural poverty, can still be found existing, despite the various efforts undertaken by the concerned authorities. Elementary facilities like roads, medical facilities, education, sanitation, security of livelihood, etc. are still not being met. The infrastructure in the rural areas is vastly different from the one in the urban areas. It is obvious that rural people and villagers migrate to urban areas to seek better opportunities of living. It is believed that social unrest in India can only be avoided through the creation of approximately 10 million job opportunities annually. The solution probably lies in an integrated rural development.

The quality of lives of rural people can be enhanced through the optimum utilization of human and natural resources of a specific area by using integrated means of development. Environmental harmony, upliftment of poor people, employment opportunities, and mechanisms of production and distribution can only be improved through the optimum utilization of available resources. The development of rural areas is not complete without the development of the local communities. Creating self-sustaining and self-reliant communities will ensure that each family in a village contributes to an increased income and also to the development of the village. This can only happen with the active and participatory approach of the villagers.

The village institutional mechanisms are responsible to bring people together to discuss issues and challenges affecting their lives. However, a study conducted by the Government of Karnataka indicates that the necessary quorum of 10% population or 100 members to organize Gram Sabha meetings is usually not met. The average number of attendees is around 50 members, with 39 being the minimum and 58 being the maximum. Another emphasis of the decentralization reforms was to include the scheduled caste (SC) and scheduled tribe (ST) people and women in politics. Till then, the traditionally excluded categories were supposed to find their way into the decision making process.



Karnataka has made a steady progress in this respect when compared to the national average. According to the Ministry of Panchayat Raj, 53.4% of the electoral representatives in the three tiers of Panchayat are women, the national average being 46.14%. Similarly, 18% SCs and 11% STs are the elected members of Panchayats, when compared to 17.5% of the total SC population and 6.95% of the total ST population of Karnataka state. The number of women participating in the Panchayats has certainly improved, indicating a social diffusion of democracy to the grassroots. Still, Panchayats are not able to deliver the desired development-related outcomes. Political will, finance, and functionaries could be the reasons for the underperformance of Panchayats.

The regional imbalance in the socio-economic development is continued, resulting in the rise of poor human development indicators. India is ranked 130 in the 2018 human development index, with a score of 0.640 and is placed in the medium human development section. The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite index of per capita income, education, and expectancy of life. When the scores of the said factors are high, a country scores a high HDI.

Millennium Development Goals

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were supposed to be attained by all members of the United Nations by the year 2015. The MDGs for development were eradication of poverty, attainment of universal primary education, women empowerment, reduction of child mortality, environmental sustenance, and the formation of new partnerships.

Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations, along with 193 countries, have established a universal set of indicators, targets and goals that are collectively termed as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These SDGs are adopted by the world after meeting the deadline for MDGs. The year 2030 is targeted by countries for attaining a poverty-free, protective, peaceful, and prosperous environment through the adoption of suitable policies and agendas.

A global development vision termed as “Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” was adopted in September 2015 by 193 countries, including India. The cornerstones of this agenda are people, prosperity, peace, partnerships and the planet. Issues that are crucial for the ecology and humanity need global attention and anticipatory action in the years running up to 2030, wherein 169 targets and 17 new SDGs comprise the agenda.

Gram Panchayats and SDGs

According to the Indian constitution, the ascertainment of social justice and local economic development form the dual objectives of the Panchayat Raj system.

Various flagship programs of the central government, such as Skill India, Digital India, Make in India, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, and Jan Dhan Yojana, are at the core of the SDGs and are set to contribute to the rural areas’ development with the help of the Panchayats. The challenge related to Panchayats is to capacitate them for planning and fund absorption and for improving service delivery towards achieving sustainable development goals. It is important that the SDG targets and goals are deconstructed with the local government’s perspective and presented in such a way that they can be used for local planning and implementation.

Reflection of development

Development at a village level can be reflected by basic facilities like water, sanitation, housing, energy, health, environment, education, employment, elimination of poverty, etc. According to the Indian constitutions’ Eleventh Schedule (Article 243 G, 73rd Amendment) the under-mentioned subjects fall within the responsibilities of local governments.

- a) Maintenance of assets belonging to communities
- b) Public distribution system



- c) Welfare of weaker sections, specifically, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, welfare of the mentally retarded and the handicapped, and welfare of children and women.
- d) Sanitation and health
- e) Fairs, market and cultural activities
- f) Establishing libraries, providing vocational education, technical training, non-formal education for adults that includes primary school and secondary school
- g) Programs of alleviating poverty
- h) Distribution of non-conventional sources of energy, distribution of electricity, and rural electrification
- i) Waterways, ferries, bridges, culverts, roads, and other means of communication
- j) Fuel and fodder
- k) Drinking water
- l) Rural housing
- m) Cottage industries, village industries, Khadi industries, food processing industries, small-scale industries
- n) Minor forest production, social forestry, farm forestry, fisheries, dairy and poultry, animal husbandry, water management and watershed development, minor irrigation, land consolidation and soil conservation, implementation of land reforms, land improvement, agricultural and allied activities

Improvement in any or many of the aforementioned subjects will cause the development in rural areas.

How to bring in change?

Certain unique or random factors, such as the presence of a particular group of people or a specific weather or climate, contributes to the change, which is generally an assortment of systematic factors.

Changes occurring in inter-personal and social relations and behaviors collectively contribute towards the social change. Such a change is driven by various factors, such as technological aspects, scientific factors, economic factors, political factors, religious sentiments, and socio-cultural aspects.

The Indian rural economy contributes more than half of the country's industrial production. More than half of the Indian construction sector is accounted by rural people. Around one-fourth of the total services output is contributed by rural services. Over the past two decades, the rural agricultural output has accounted for less than half of the country's aggregate (Chand, Srivastava& Singh, 2017).

Nearly a century ago, Ambedkar had written: "In short, strange as it may seem, industrialization of India is the soundest remedy for the agricultural problems of India. The cumulative effects of industrialization, namely a lessening pressure (of surplus labor) and an increasing amount of capital and capital goods will forcibly create the economic necessity of enlarging the holding. Not only this, but industrialization, by destroying the premium on land, will give rise to few occasions for its sub-division and fragmentation. Industrialization is a natural and powerful remedy..."

The labor force have shunned the less productive and traditional sectors in favor of more productive and modern sectors, resulting in the successful development of several nations. However, the existence of both traditional and modern economies is evident in some countries like India, which has resulted in such nations being in the non-transitional stage. People are able to shift to more productive activities due to the Asian development model. Countries like India can either increase the productivity levels of the traditional sectors or shift to the more productive modern sectors. According to Diao, McMillan and Rodrik (2017), labor productivity can change either within one sector or among several sectors during the people's transition from the traditional sectors to the modern sectors.

If the country decides for industrial agriculture, then more number of rural people will be displaced. If educated villagers seek the towns and the cities for jobs, career growth and development, then the agriculture sector will be affected. The economy would be in a precarious position if the urban areas are converted into slums, resulting in decreased standards of living and scarcity of food, thereby proving to be detrimental in the long run.



Given the challenges, there is a need to improve livelihoods through farm and non-farm activities. Providing support for the primary sector-related activities in micro, small, and medium land, establishing agriculture as a profitable venture, developing micro, small, and medium sized enterprises on the basis of farm and non-farm activities will prove to be the only probable and sustainable solution.

Social entrepreneurship, public private partnership model, and the formation of collectives out of an informal economy can all be the means of implementing the aforementioned solutions. It is a relevant and powerful idea that businesses be the vehicles to create an economic value and simultaneously contribute to building a fair and equitable society through inclusive growth.

People can take control of productive assets as a solitary element, attain a better standard of living, and have more control over their lives. The Panchayats can draw resources from the government sectors and the non-government sectors to make this a reality. The government must then focus on developed policies by considering the sustainable models of transformation. However, the developmental processes initiated by the government organizations, non-government organizations, and the Panchayats can only be totally successful, if the rural people willingly and actively participate in such programs.

References

1. Chand, R., Srivastava, S. K., & Singh, J. (2017). Changing Structure of Rural Economy of India: Implications for Employment and Growth.
2. Chigbu, U. E. (2012). Village renewal as an instrument of rural development: evidence from Weyarn, Germany. *Community Development*, 43(2), 209-224. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15575330.2011.575231#preview>.
3. Chigbu, U.E. (2012). Village Renewal as an Instrument of Rural Development: Evidence from Weyarn, Germany. *Community Development*, Vol. 43 (2), pp. 209-224.
4. Diao, X., McMillan, M., & Rodrik, D. (2017). *The recent growth boom in developing economies: A structural change perspective* (No. w23132). National Bureau of Economic Research.
5. Handbook on Sustainable Development Goals and Gram Panchayats.
6. Mishra, S.N. & Sharma, Kaushal (1983): Problem and Prospects of Rural Development in India, Uppal Publishing House, New Delhi. Mishra, S. N., & Sharma, K. (1983). Problems and prospects of rural development in India. Uppal Publishing House, New Delhi.
7. Moseley, Malcolm J. (2003). Rural development : principles and practice. Moseley, M. (2003). *Rural development: principles and practice*. (1. publ. ed.). London [u.a.]: SAGE. p. 7. ISBN 0-7619-4766-3.
8. Pellissery, S. (2012). "Rural Development". *Encyclopedia of Sustainability*. 7:222–225.
9. Rajvanshi, A. K. (2016). Roadmap for rural India. *Current Science*, 111(1), 39-43.
10. Ramesh, J. (2014). Three profound transformations: Panchayats, women's self-help groups and the rural roads scheme are transforming rural India
11. Rural development research : a foundation for policy (1. publ. ed.). Westport, Conn. [u.a.]: Greenwood Press. 1996. ISBN 0-313-29726-6. |first1= missing |last1= in Authors list (help)
12. Singh, K. (1986): Rural Development: Principles, Policies and Management. Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi
13. Van Assche, K., & Hornidge, A. K. (2015). Rural development. *Knowledge and expertise in governance*. Wageningen Academic Publishers, Wageningen.
14. Ward, N., & Brown, D. L. (2009). Placing the rural in regional development. *Regional studies*, 43(10), 1237-1244.
15. World Bank. (1975) Rural development. Sector policy paper. Washington, DC: The World Bank. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/522641468766236215/Rural-development>.