

PANCHAYAT RAJ: ANALYSIS OF ISSUES FACED AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

The establishment of panchayati raj systems since the 90s has enhanced substantial thrust to the course of decentralization and has a greater implication on India's system of governance. With the evolution of the democratic process, the traditional community's metamorphosis has always been linked with disputes. In 1992, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment gave the panchayats the status of local self-government; they are implemented to ensure economic progress and social justice is carried out. These institutions look forward to elevating infrastructural amenities, authorizing the weaker sections to commence the development process in rural India. In contemporary times, panchayati raj's concept is occasionally laced with a political agenda for strategic and economic reasons. Panchayati raj's institutions have been benevolent in recognising actual beneficiaries to obtain paramount advantage out of these schemes.

Women are making significant gains in the political sphere where increased participation is rapidly empowering women, boosting their confidence, changing perceptions regarding their contribution, and improving their status and position in society. For instance, political participation and grassroots democracy have been strengthened considerably by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments that have created new democratic institutions for local governance.

In the light of this background, attempts have been made in the present paper to analysis the extend and pattern of Role of women and issued faced by women in panchayati Raj election.

Keyword: Panchayati Raj, self-government, Women, Constitutional Amendment

INTRODUCTION

The state of Arunachal Pradesh like other states also has undergone a drastic change in terms of grass root politics and development after the introduction of Panchayati Raj Institutions. One of the most significant developments after independence was the introduction of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the state. It has connected the tribal politics to the mainland Indian politics. Like other states in India, political evolution started in Arunachal Pradesh too.

Before the implementation of Panchayati Raj Institutions, the social and political affairs of the tribes were regulated through traditional self-governing institutions, called as village councils. Panchayati Raj Institutions is an age old Indian indigenous politico administrative institution for village autonomy and development in mainland India, but it was absent in this tribal area, instead they were guided by village councils. To ensure proper democratic decentralization in the state, the government of India passed the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) Panchayati Raj Regulation, 1967 on the recommendation of Daying Ering committee report and Panchayati Raj system was implemented in 1969 in the state.

Panchayati Raj Institutions have played a pivotal role in transforming the socio-economic dimensions of rural India. The effectiveness of these bodies is determined based on the communities' active involvement, contribution, and participation. It is significant for achieving human welfare through 'Social Justice' and 'Empowerment of weaker sections based on various development initiatives. Through active engagement, the democratic principles and notions of decentralization paved the way to the process of nation-wide development can be achieved through the working of an effective system of local government. The notion of 'Gram Swaraj'

as envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi is the true spirit of democracy. It is now instrumental in the development and rural reconstruction.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. Provide an overview of issues faced in Panchayat Raj Institutions.
2. Examine the role of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions in East Siang

ISSUES FACED IN PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS

The Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh will provide a sound basis for political and economic growth of the people of the area. Secondly, it will provide a workable medium through which the rural people would be able to express themselves on various problems of the area and also evolved an integral community approach for solutions of problems that concerns the entire agency.

A detail enquiry was carried out from the members of PRI's whether they have been experiencing any problems from different group of people in the functioning of the Panchayat activities and its meeting. Discussing with respondents we found that a well proportion of male participants among the members of PRI's, general public and the representatives of Gram sabha unnecessarily interfere over the matters of discussions and making decisions on certain issues with their sole intention of and willing to dominate in the proceeding of the meetings and to play a role like of the opposition group in the Panchayats.

1. Lack of Computer-Based Knowledge and Infrastructure

In some instances, the lack of skills in relation to computer usage leads to quick diminishing standards of efficient working. The government initiated the e-panchayat project in about 360-gram panchayats. However, these districts lack infrastructure and have poor broadband internet connectivity. The project of e-governance is to provide citizen-centric services electronically, maintain a database on the assets of the gram panchayats, and effortlessly access gram panchayat data and services transparently

2. Poor Coordination among Different Administrative Bodies

There is a deficiency of proper cooperation and coordination between the people and the officials. In addition, the Gram Pradhans experience shortcomings due to poor coordination among different administrative bodies. The failure of officials to perform their duty effectively and efficiently has resulted in delayed developmental activities and underutilization of funds. Furthermore, The Panchayati Raj bodies experience several administrative hurdles such as politicization of the local administration, absence of coordination and differences between the popular and bureaucratic officials, lack of good opportunities, promotions and incentives for those involved in the administration etc.

3. Cultural Constraints:

The term "culture" embraces religion, language, literature, arts and also the heritage. It is generally said that the behavior of male and female is govern by culture. Heir cultural norms explain why a large number of women remain at home and very few come forward and seek or gain public and political office. In India politics is a field dominated by men and, therefore, it is a good example of arbitrary cultural exclusion of women.

4. Male Dominance:

There is a general explanation that women's non-participation is due to women being oppressed by male domination. It must be admitted that men do not prevent women from taking part in politics and at the same time they do not support or encourage women to participate in politics. 75% of men do not encourage women even to take up jobs. The reason given by them is that the present unemployment among men is largely due to the fact that women may displace men in the political field as they have done in certain job opportunities.

5. Opponents against Reservation for Women:

- i. Women will become targets of attacks by anti- social elements when they move out of their homes or go outside their village for work, meetings, and so on.

ii. They mention that whenever women hold elected offices, the male officers are the one who “dictate” what is or what is not to be done. They take control of the entire situation and women elected representatives became the helpless victims of officialdom.

iii. These opponents contend, even if women are elected in large numbers, the power equation will never change.

Hence it indicates that all the women know about the present political parties in the society but some of them know it by name, while others by symbols. It is observed that, now women are not only confined to household activities only, but they are empowering themselves slowly and gradually. Earlier they were only aware of weaving, cooking, brewing of liquors, etc., but the implementation of the Panchayati Raj Act make them aware of the whole process of change in the society. They are playing active role in the field of Panchayats for rapid development and to strength up their unity and to assert their right.

ROLE OF WOMEN IN PANCHAYAT RAJ

The 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment has brought significant changes that promote equal access and increased engagement of women’s in politics. About one-third of total Constituencies have been reserved for women. It also ensures and enhances women’s participation in public life. It strives to achieve National policy for women at the foundational level. The commencement of the reservation system in the Panchayati raj institutions empowers women and elevates women’s economic, social, and political status in society. It enables liberalisation from the traditionally male-dominated society and brings in a fresher perspective in good governance. The reservation system encourages women’s participation in the political framework. It has brought in some positive results and better outcomes in education, health, increase in family income.

This transformation in the system had remarkable results bringing lakhs of women in Panchayats for leadership. The adoption of this Amendment has led the Panchayati Raj system to recognise women’s rights, a significant step to bring the unseen potential of women to governance. It enables women’s engagement in planning, decision-making, execution of the necessity in the village Panchayats. Women representatives have exhibited their prowess and can adapt and learn managing funds, efficient community-based development, etc. Despite such positive outcomes, women are greatly excluded from the PRI and local governance structures.

Some issues still exist, such as proxy politics, power-brokering, and gender-based discrimination. The women sarpanch have had to counter extreme violence for challenging subsisting power centres in their communities. It is also observed that the male family members utilise the position of the women in their families to stand for the polls and upon the men can control the PRI through the women.

According to Palanithurai (1994), the candidates feared that the women from upper caste and wealthy sections would oppose the reserved category women and would not like the surge in the number of women representatives from weaker sections to local government bodies in Tamil Nadu. There are about thirty types of discrimination and unsolicited practices of untouchability against schedule tribes in the four villages he chose to study. According to him, schedule tribe women panchayat leaders were not permitted to visit the gram panchayat office nor manage and control the gram Sabhas. Their husbands were managing office work as proxies.

CONCLUSION

The institution of Panchayat Raj is a milestone in the journey of administrative institutions at the grass-root level. Panchayats have played a notable role in the development of the rural areas in India. The system of Panchayati Raj has faced several hurdles that have been addressed above. However, it is high time that specific corrective action should be taken to ensure a truly representative form of governance. These issues can be combated, but it requires cooperation by the people to accept these changes. The still prevailing traditional thought system must be slowly eradicated for people to understand the meaning of this system truly. Primarily, there should be recognition of the issue that prevails in society. There must be aware of the intricacy of the problems faced; further publicity and its acknowledgement in parliament during the question hour can be considered. Funding must be adequate in order to run these institutions effectively and smoothly. There must also be accountability at all administrative levels in order to hold corrupt officials responsible.

In addition, in various states in India, PRIs is viewed as a platform to provide social justice through the mechanism of dispute resolution, making it accessible, cost-effective, participatory. The dispute resolution function of PRIs is a part of the constitutional directive to make justice accessible to everyone. It mitigates the burden on the judiciary and provides faster access to justice. Furthermore, dispute resolution forums have also been initiated at the various levels of panchayat that function under the jurisdiction of the Panchayats. Also, the focus must be on the training and development of human resources to eliminate any conceptual inconsistency. Women's role in the panchayat must be recognised and not taken over by the male family members; the reason for implementing the reservation policy would truly be a failure. Instead, they need to work towards elevating the overall participation of the community. Hence, there is a need for specific reformation in the policies and laws to truly achieve the people's participation in this system of governance.

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