



VETRII IAS GATEWAY

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Introduction:

- Panchayat Raj was started in India on the premise that at the local level there should be some kind of democracy which would people in the process of governance.
- If the people are to the involved they have to the given responsibilities in the functioning of the institutions & development programmes of the government. This is the only way democracy reaches the masses.

Evolution

- The Dream of Mahatma Gandhi came true after 43 years of India becoming the Republic.
- The Idea of swaraj & Gana Rajya, the self-Governed People's republic was part of our freedom struggle and is embedded in debates of constituent assembly during the genesis of constitution.
- However, the constitution couldn't as much support this like Gandhian view as required & placed it in DPSP.
- The devolution story in India began by path-breaking 73rd & 74th Constitutional amendments.

IMPACT

- It ensures equitable participation of all section of society which further enabled the system to deliver better results at the grass roots levels.
- The roots of democracy have depended as result of PRS making its way through villages across the country & their holistic impact has led to the formation of representational dynamics at the local level.
- Given severe social & Political constraints like social inequality, caste system, patriarchy, feudal setting, the PR has opened a new character in local governance.
- The Village panchayats leaders have demonstrated positive examples of ensuring economic development & social justice across the country.
- Being Physically close to the people & so easily accessible, Panchayat members are expected to respond to various demands from the locals, as well as from external agencies including state & central governments.

Financing Panchayats

- According to recommendation of finance commission the grant is provided into two parts: Basic & Performance grant.
- **BASIC GRANT** -The Basic grant is provided to be used to support and strengthen the delivery of basic services including water supply, sanitation including sewage & Solid waste Management & other basic services within the functions assigned to them under relevant legislation.
- The basic grant will be released to rural local bodies with 90% weightage to 2011 Population & 10% weightage to the area.
- The FC advised that the cost of technical & administrative support towards operational & maintenance, capital expenditure should not exceed 10%.

The Performance Grant:

- Designed to serve the purpose of ensuring reliable audited account.
- The Eligibility conditions for availing performance grant is that panchayats shall submit audited accounts & show increase in their own resources.
- The State may issue further eligibility criteria for the Panchayats to be eligible for the performance grant.

Plan Plus Software

- The current planning system largely involves preparation of scheme wise plans at the district level often leading to lack of convergence with other ongoing schemes of the government.
- To address these concerns, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has conceived a software viz, **Plan plus**, the software application facilitates the consolidation and integration of all plans of all planning units.
- The GPDPs prepared by the Panchayats are uploaded on the software and the citizens can also view the activities being planned in their respective areas.

Challenges:

- There is high underutilization of funds allotted to panchayats.
- According to data of plan plus software, there is possibility of under reporting of funds used.
- The Most states titled the grant to the priorities decided by the state, not on basis of local panchayat needs.
- The Most recent economic survey Report also highlighted this concern where it stated that Panchayats were not generating their own resources to the tune of even 5% of their total revenue income.

Way Forward:

- Fiscal decentralization and the trust-based approach have empowered our Gram Sabhas and Gram Panchayats to address the local needs. The devolution of funds has also had an impact on the effectiveness, responsiveness and quality of the public services delivered in rural areas.

WOMEN

- To Make women of socially & economically empowered & to make them to participate in social, economic & Political activities of the country. 73rd Amendment Act 1992 provided one- third reservations for women in PRI

Challenges:

- Due to patriarchy & perceived threat of male losing their domination of the political system.
- Lack of co - operation from Line / Sectoral departments.
- Majority of EWRs enter into public life for the first time & do not have enough knowledge & skills to handle affairs of panchayats.
- Electoral representatives in general and specially EWRs face resistances from community if they want to remove encroachment from panchayat land.

- State Norms- few states are continuing with the two-child norm for contesting in panchayat elections, in rural areas women hardly have any say in the number of children in the family.

Steps taken by Govt:

- Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Yojana
- Panchayat Mahila Evan Yuva Shakthi Abhiyan.
- Capacity building component of backward region grants land (BRGF).
- Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyaan.
- These Schemes also have strong component of capacity building of EWR's.
- Ministry of women & child development in collaboration with the MOPR has undertaken a country wide programme of training the EWR's in various areas.
- MOPR has organised special events like orientation of women sarpanch at national Level.

Way Forward:

- Recruitment of women as Panchayat secretaries at all the three levels of PRI's will create a comfortable working environment for EWR's.
- Imparting Functional literacy to all EWR's within a couple of months of their election, ensure capacity building of EWR's.
- Network of EWR's may be treated at block & district level. Their regular meeting will facilitate exchange of experiences in overcoming challenges.
- Regular Survey of the status of EWR's & their performance in different parts of the country has to be conducted so that it will help to identify issues & concerns of EWR's.

RGSB

- Is an effort towards fulfilling vision of "Sabha Sath, Sabha Gaon, Sabha Vikas" to reach out to marginalised groups in rural area through strong panchayat & effective people's Participation?

- It fulfils much awaited need of the panchayats by providing infrastructure & required manpower while enable locals to plan for their local needs.

Objectives of the RGSA:

The main objectives of the RGSA are:

- Develop governance capabilities of PRIs to deliver on the SDGs.
- Enhance capabilities of panchayats for inclusive rural governance with focus on optimum utilization of available resources and to address issues of national importance.
- Enhance capabilities of panchayats to raise their own sources of revenue.
- Strengthen Gram Sabha's to function effectively as the basic forum of people's participation with focus on marginalised groups, transparency and accountability within the panchayat system.
- Support creation of enabling provisions for effective implementation of development programmers.
- Promote devolution of powers and responsibilities to panchayats according to the spirit of the constitution and PESA Act 1996.
- Develop a network of institutions of excellence to support capacity building and handholding for PRIs.
- Strengthen institutions for capacity enhancement of PRIs at various levels and enable them to achieve adequate quality standards in infrastructure, facilities, human resources and outcome-based training.
- Support panchayats for local economic development and income enhancement with a view on processing and marketing of local products.
- Promote e-governance and other technology driven solutions to enable good governance in panchayats for administrative efficiency and improved service delivery.
- Recognize and incentivize PRIs based on performance.

Funding:

- To all states & UT, even in areas which are not mentioned in IX part are included.
- It has both state & Central Component.

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- In central component – 100% funded by central Govt., in state component it is 60: 40 & 90:10 to North East & hilly states.
- 100% central share of all UT's.

Condition to avail Funds:

- Regular Conduct of elections to panchayats in union part IX areas under superintendence of state EC. Not less than one third reservation for women in panchayats or other local bodies.
- Constitution of state finance commission (SFC) every five Years, and placement of action taken report on the recommendations of the SFC in the state legislature.
- Constitution of District planning committees (DPCs) in all districts, and issuing of Guidelines / Rules to make these functional.
- Preparation and submission of detailed annual state capacity Building plan for PRIs to Ministry of Panchayati Raj
- Co – location of common service Centres (CSCs) with the Gram Panchayat Buildings.

Way Forward:

- It is empathized that making panchayat's capable they not only need training but also support mechanism in the form of requisite personal & infrastructure, thus RGSA addresses all this issue at cutting edge level.
- How effectively the RGSA would be implemented is depend on activeness on the part of elected representatives of panchayats.

Drawback:

- Although the constitution empowers the states to devolve powers to the panchayats to discharge their functions as institution for rural self- govt, the position with regards to empowerment of these constitution with respect of triple F's (Function functionaries & fund) is not encouraging as the studies of devolution of triple F's Show.
- There is lack of awareness among elected representatives about their roles, responsibilities & rights of institution of panchayats.

- The Training & Capability building of panchayat functionaries are quite challenging in terms of the sheer number of trainees, Trainee diversity (From state to state) & varying Contextual situation.
- The Delivery of government programmes through panchayats has benefitted a few, often belonging to the local dominant agriculture castes & has not empowered the poor & other disadvantages sections as desired.
- There is lack of capacity of elected representatives & lack of proper support mechanism in the form of requisite official including technical man power & Infrastructure facilities.
- Panchayats often function as political bodies. They are not functioning as institution of self-governance in true sense.
- According to planning commission gram sabha meeting were regularly held only in few places & in most cases participation in such meeting was low.
- Most state Acts & Policies have not spelt the power of Gram sabhas nor have any procedure been laid down for the functioning of these bodies.
- There is over whelming dependency of Panchayats on Government funding. But how these funds are used is not properly audited.

Way Forward:

- Panchayats should be appropriately empowered to play their constitutional roles. For that, appropriate powers & authorities must be devolved to them developing due functions, funds, functionaries.
- The quality of work done by Panchayats should be closely monitored & panchayats should be graded & fixture funds should be linked with this grade.
- Strengthening financial management & audit procedures will also strengthen accountability of the local bodies.
- Panchayats can increase transparency by holding open meetings, sharing the minutes of meetings with the community & policies naming people who fail to follow the rules (or) Pay their taxes.

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- Efforts towards better accountability and performance from local bureaucracy should so simultaneously along with building local panchayat capabilities. Thus civil service reforms that would strengthen district administration must go hand professional and responsive public administration.
- Will be an asset for both, social sector as well as for enabling panchayats to play the important role that is mandated for them.
- One should start decentralizing administrative and financial functions after putting in place some of the critical accountability mechanisms, so that decentralisation does not lead to favouritism, nepotism, and corruption, or abdication of responsibilities.

Conclusion:

- As by report of Min of Rural development, Capable panchayats can address the rural development programmes effectively.
- For the gains to percolate down to the grassroots level, the participation of rural population is must & PR System is the hast way to ensure this.
- The road ahead lies in strengthening the existing systems while at the same time initiating continuous reforms on the basis of a careful appraisal of low the system has worked so far.
- The Government are making sincere efforts to strengthen EWR's through various initiatives of capacity building, promoting network of EWR's but it has to be further strengthening.