

A STUDY OF POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF WELFARE OF WEAKER SECTIONS IN PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM IN INDIA

Anil Malre

M.Phil. Dept. Of Public Administration,
Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, India
Email: brinykabir@gmail.com

Abstract: Fulfilling the essential needs of Indian population which include food, clothing and shelter was chief need of Indian Government just after independence. To keep this in notice, several measures were taken by national policy makers to alleviate poor people of rural regions. Empowerment of people through self governance and planning was although initiated nearly five decades earlier, although 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 (CAA) brought a remarkable transform in decentralisation process of power in the direction of grass root level and local people's contribution both in the process of plans and policy formulation as well as implementation. The aim of recent study is to explore either the CAA, 1992 is efficient in providing assurance, continuity and strength to Panchayati Raj System (PRS) for welfare of weaker sections of society through decentralization or not. Through PRS at village, block and district level, three-tier system is developed at village, block and district level and a uniform election at all levels and all seats and indirect elections of chairpersons at top and intermediate level is assured. Both for election of members and chairpersons of PRS reservation on rotational basis is assured for SC's and ST's in proportion to their population. For omen also one third of seats are reserved. In recent work participation of weaker sections in PRS in Haryana in general and in village Panchayats of Adaipur in Mahendragarh District in particular as a case study. After than the political participation of weaker sections are discussed. Finally the procedure of welfare activities for weaker sections through the PRS has been discussed.

Keywords: Panchayati Raj System, Constitutional Amendment, Weaker Sections, Self Governance.

1.0 Introduction

In rural regions a lot of social inequalities exist and these have persisted for centuries. The concept of social justice came into existence in Indian constitution under these circumstances, almost immediately after Independence. Therefore a serious effort was done by Indian constitution to provide equal social opportunities so as the personality of all people in society can be developed devoid of discrimination on the basis of caste, sex or race. Though, social inequalities persisted for a long time in the Indian society. A several reasons were behind these social inequalities. Education was merely the right of people from higher social strata and land was controlled and managed by them only. All income earning activities was taken by them. Other side, the people from lower caste and strata were denied to take education, and they were deprived of their right to manage and control land. Only low income earning activities was left for them. Predominantly in rural regions, people from lower caste and strata took up supportive works for the people who had taken up agricultural activities, such as Carpentry, Blacksmith, Leather work, and labour.

Just because of aforementioned reasons, in Indian society the marginalized sections i.e. SC, ST and OBC became the weaker sections. Consequently, Independent India became one among the countries where transformation at both social and economic level of people from rural region was utmost need. For improvement of living conditions of people from rural region, rural development became a specific strategy. In this direction the Indian Government made efforts to solve problems like poverty, illiteracy, ill health and backwardness of varied nature prevailing in rural areas, by giving greater attention to the uplift of the rural poor (Shivanna N. 1990) .

Further for policy makers the marginalized sections have become a central component during policy formulation and implementation due to their socio-economic dispossession in the traditional society like India. In institutions like Parliament and Assembly the participation and political involvement of upper castes and strata is still more. In state

Assemblies and Parliaments more than 15% are reserved for peoples of lower caste. Even after their reservation, very little participation and representation of the marginalized castes exists. Due to all these reasons even in recent era of development, upper castes efficiently participate and represent and are a part of political framework in India. As mostly land pattern and political system is managed by them and they do not mind and take serious formulation and implementation of welfare and developmental policies projected for the weaker sections. This is well proved from failure of different policies and programmes especially for development of lower castes. Some of them are National Extension Programme (NEP) and Community Development Programmes. In rural regions these programmes were executed by upper caste people, this was one of the main reasons behind failure of these Programmes.

2.0 Appointment of Committees from Time to Time

In 1952 after launching of Community Development Programme, strict realization of agency at village level was felt which could take a stand for the whole community, fulfil all responsibilities and make available the essential leadership for implementing development programmes. Without this actual development in rural region could not take place. Along with this in 1957, for revitalization of PRS a committee was appointed which was headed by Balwant Rai G. Mehta. In process of development this committee played a vital role. The report of committee recommended that representation and participation of people in community works must be structured via statutory representative bodies. Only when chosen representatives of community have all executing powers development of community can be real. The final recommendation of committee was establishments of statutory elected local bodies.

Creation of a three-tier Panchayati Raj Structure with District Panchayat at apex and Grama Panchayat at bottom was influenced via the report of Committee. Community Development Blocks was the intermediate tier. Amendment of various laws of mostly States conform the recommendations of the committee. However, the PRS could not perform function properly because either elections were not held or were frequently postponed or they were denied funds or in most of the cases superceded. The Ashok Mehta Committee Report in 1978 was influential in bringing about a shift in emphasis between the first and second degeneration of panchayats from development *per se* to local Government in its full meaning. Originally, panchayats found a place only in the Directive Principles of State Policy. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments revitalized the Panchayats and Urban Bodies by giving them Constitutional status, providing for regular elections and reserving 1/3 seats for women and introducing representation for marginalized groups.

3.0 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act

In 1989 Late Rajiv Gandhi and then P.M. introduced Constitutional Amendment Bill (CAB) so that constitutional support to the PRS with an objective of transferring power to local people. On 10th August 1989, the bill was passed by the Lok Sabha. Although in Rajya Sabha the bill was failed and could not become the part of the constitution. After that 73rd CAB was introduced in the Lok Sabha. The attempt extending the constitutional benefits to the PRS, thoroughly the 64th CAA of 1988 and 74th Amendment Bill of 1990 did not succeed. Another attempt was made by introducing the Constitutional Amendment Bill on 16th September 1991. This matter was then referred to joint select committee of parliament, after the series of discussions in the parliament. Consequently in July, 1992 its report was presented to parliament by joint committee. Finally on December 22, 1992 the bill was finally passed by Lok Sabha and on December 23, 1992 by Rajya Sabha. On April 20, 1993 this bill was accorded by the President of India. Finally on April 24, 1993 the 73rd CAA of 1992 came into effect. (Panchayat Raj at a Glance: 1964).

There shall be three tiers of Panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels. So, only those states having population not exceeding 20 lakhs have the discretion not to constitute the panchayats at the intermediate level. Under Article 243 the president can make special dispensation for Union Territories.

3.1 Direct Elections: At every level direct elections are held to fill all seats in panchayats. For the purpose of election territorial constituencies are demarcated.

Reservation of seats: According to population of SCs/STs in a given Panchayat area, seats are reserved and not less than one- third of the total number of seats is reserved for women. Likewise, the office of the Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women, to the extent of not less than one-third of the total numbers in

the office of Chairpersons of Panchayats. In addition, the legislature of any state can make provision for reservation of seats in any panchayats at any level in favour of the backward classes.

3.2 Five Year Term: At every level, the tenure of office of panchayat shall be for five years and in case of early dissolution or on expiry of tenure, within six months the elections must be completed.

3.3 Finance Commission: By 24th April 1993, after execution of 73rd CAA, 1992 Finance Commission was constituted and thereafter at the expiration of every fifth year, a finance commission shall be constituted in every fifth year. A finance commission shall be constituted in every state to go into the governing principles of the distribution and revolution of financial resources between the state and the panchayats at every level and the measures to improve the financial position of the panchayats.

State election commission: The direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of all elections in the panchayats shall be vested in a state election commission, to be constituted by the state concerned.

3.4 Eleventh Schedule: Ultimately, the Eleventh Schedule containing 29 items has been added to the Constitution which has to make available an efficient role to PRS in the scheduling and execution of mechanism of local importance. Activities ranging like agriculture, drinking water, water conservation and land to communications, poverty alleviation programmes, family welfare, education, libraries and cultural activities, maintenance of community as sets etc. .

4.0 Review Of Related Literature

Across the globe a plenty of studies and literature have been done on empowerment of weaker sections and to know the issues, which can causes foray of this weaker sections into local government. However several researches have been done to find out the Political Dimensions of Welfare of Weaker Sections in Local Self Government in India. Some of studies related to our topic are:

1. Abdul Aziz (2000) discussed about the evolution of local governance system in rural region of Karnataka. He also discussed about the recent structure of local governance and various problems faced in local governance. He also suggested various ways to make PRS and their policies more efficient. The major problem about PRS pointed by him was distribution of powers, mostly powers are limited only to higher level politicians.
2. Aiyar, M. S. (2002) supported participation and empowerment of women in local political framework so that women can be a powerful part of local Indian governance. Additionally he mentioned the benefits to make process of decision making more autonomous. He also focussed on requirement to alter social structure, historical subjugation, to be an important feature for Women Empowerment.
3. Bhola Nath Ghosh (2008) book named 'Women in Governance in Tripura' revealed that a long way progression from its traditional structure to present dat structure is observed in Panchayati system in Tripura. In 1949, Tripura merged with the Indian Union. It was a princely state. Traditional village level institutions which were primarily based on traditional customs were observed there and these traditional level institutions took key decisions in all matters relating to tribal communities. But these institutions could scarcely be described as democratic, depending as they did on the social legitimacy conferred on them by the existing powers structure and social order. In these village councils women were deprived of the right to participate.
4. Chetia, M., & Gogoi, D. (2013) mentioned that for equal participation of women in politics it is necessary to enhance the interests of women into politics and to ensure change and justice. They measured representation and active participation of women in politics as an excellent indicator for women empowerment. Some hurdles recognised by them to a healthy and general neutral political framework are family burden and environment of their family and society.

5. Kumar Prem (2015) carried out a study on all women councillors of Municipal Councils of Haryana. The focus of recent work was to get knowledge about socio-economic status of women councillors. His work revealed that mostly respondents were from high family having high income and society. Father of mostly women councillors were more educated than their mother. He also found that mostly women in very young age entered in politics. So his study concluded that mostly women in PRIs are from good socio-economical status.
6. Mahi Pal (2004) revealed about the future tasks bone by Indian government for deepening grass roots democracy so that in rural regions of India socio-economic transformations can be done. Major objectives of 73rd CAA was to provide assurance, stability and strength to the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The experiences of the functioning of the panchayats reveal that while elections have been held regularly, barring a few states, the states have been slow in devolving power to the panchayat bodies. What should be the future line of action for further deepening grass roots democracy to bring about socio-economic transformation in rural India?
7. Rachana Kaushal (2010) discussed regarding representation and participation of women in PRIS. She found that the marginalized representation and participation of women in PRIs has negative impact on democracy. With her work the point to be noticed is that yet women are politically marginalized world over. Whatever may be the reasons for this, there is a need to make special provisions to include women in the democratic governance at different levels. The initiative taken by Indian government for women empowerment and for their participation in government is known as PRIs in which provision of one –third reservation to women is mentioned. The main subject of recent study is implementation and execution of this policy framework.
8. Sitakanta Sethy (2002) reviewed about the effects felt after enactment of the Constitution 73rd Amendment Act, 1993, the weaker, excluded and disadvantaged sections of society are empowered to participate in the local level development decision-making process. People's participation in local level decision-making and development process has become a challenging task for the stakeholders because here both the actors and the agencies participate in different capacities. This article is an attempt to analyse the issues in the context of decentralised multilevel planning and development.
9. Shubham Chaudhuri (2003) overviewed about the extent to which decentralization of powers is actually implemented. He concentrated mainly on fourteen states of India. On certain fronts, not enough time has passed and in others, we simply do not know enough to say much about what the impacts of these reforms have been or are likely to be in the long run. Finally, as the title of the paper indicates, the assessment is limited to the efforts to revitalize rural local governments, which is to say that it is concerned primarily with the state-level responses to the 73rd amendment. It should be noted as well that the overview provided in this paper is very much a midterm assessment, one that is likely to become outdated within the near future. That is because the reform initiative is an ongoing process in two essential respects: first, though nine years have passed since the amendments went into effect, individual states continue to pass legislation in this area and there continues to be a debate about the need for further formal institutional reform. Second, the dynamics and longer-term consequences of even the first set of reforms are still playing out.

5.0 Objectives

Major Objectives of the recent study are:

1. To examine the status of weaker sections in village Panchayats of Adaipur in Mahendragarh District of Haryana State.
2. To compare the status of weaker section's representatives with the representatives of other castes in Panchayati Raj System in village Panchayats of Adaipur in Mahendragarh District of Haryana State.
3. To identify the education level of weaker sections representatives in Panchayat Raj System of Mahendragarh District.

6.0 Database And Methodology

The purpose of recent work is to analyze the involvement of weaker sections representatives in Panchayati Raj System (PRS) in Adampur in Mahendragarh District of Haryana State. It also intends to measure the attentiveness, devotion, capability and problems of participants from weaker sections in the procedure of implementing the welfare policies for SC, ST and OBC. Methods employed in present study are analytical, descriptive and historical.

7.0 Political Participation of Weaker Sections

The generally believed point is that the nature of leadership is determined through investigation of Caste, education, age, family structure, land holding, income, party affiliation, occupation etc. The data relating to socioeconomic background of elected respondents of Panchayati Raj System were collected in percentage study to get an insight into the emerging pattern of rural leadership in village Panchayats of Adampur in Mahendragarh District of Haryana State.

The social life, performance and behaviour of an individual are determined mainly through the socio-economic conditions of that individual. Pattern of interaction of an individual in the society is directly affected via the socioeconomic status of that individual. Hence to analyse a the socio-economic background of a leader is essential. In a developing society like India where forces of relationships and caste influence the social life and acute disparity in the standard of living and sub culture among various groups and regions are existing, a study of the socio-economic conditions of SC, ST and OBCs respondents would help reveal sociologically significant dimensions.

The socio-economic, educational and political background of the leaders would also enable us to anticipate as to what they are capable of doing, what we should expect from them and how well they are equipped to discharge the responsibilities developed upon them by the electorate. Knowledge of socio-economic background of a community is an indispensable prerequisite, for the understanding of the thought or behaviors of its members. This holds good for all human communities, and more so in the case of SC/ST and OBC communities, which are intrinsically more traditional in their structure.

Table No. 1: Distribution of Respondents by Nature of Members

S.NO.	Institution	Frequency	%
1	Village Panchayat	44	58.67
2	Taluk Panchayat	23	30.67
3	Zila Panchayat	8	10.67
4	Total	75	100

Table No. 1 reveals about the basic position and institutions belonging to members in the study area. It is obvious from the data shown in table that three types of members are there in study area:

1. First one are Village Panchayat members which in number are 44, 58.67% of total.
2. Second are Taluk Panchayat members which in number are 23, 30.67% of total.
3. Third and last one is from Zilla Panchayat. The numbers of them are 8 and they are 10.67% of total.

Table No.2: Distribution of Respondents by position in PRS

S.NO.	Position	Frequency	Percentage
1	Presidents	10	13.33
2	Vice-Presidents	17	22.67
3	Members	48	64
4	Total	75	100

Table No. 2 is projected to give information regarding the position of respondents in the PRS of Adairpur in Mahendragarh District of Haryana State. The response and the study area have been grouped into three categories:

1. 10 respondents are presidents which constitute 13.33% of total.
2. 17 respondents are vice – presidents, constituting 22.67% of total.
3. 48 respondents are members of PRS, which is 64.09% of total.

Table No. 3: Distribution of Respondents by sex

S.NO.	Sex	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	49	65.33
2	Female	26	34.67
3	Total	75	100

Table No. 3 is intended to discuss the sex wise division of respondents in the study area. It is obvious from the table that 75 respondents are present in recent study, out of which the highest number 49 are male, which is 65.33% of total and only 26 respondents are female which is merely 34.67% of total.

Table No. 4: Caste-wise Distribution of Respondents

S.NO.	Caste	Frequency	Percentage
1	SC	25	33.33
2	ST	10	13.33
3	OBC	40	53.33
4	Total	75	100

Table No. 4 discusses about the caste wise distribution of the respondents in the study area. It is evident from data given in the table that total numbers of samples are 75. Out of the total samples, 25 respondents belongs to SC category, which constitutes 33.33% of total, 10 respondents are STs, which is 13.33% of total and OBCs are 40 which are 53.33% of total.

Table No. 5: Distribution of Respondents by Age

S.NO.	Age	Frequency	Percentage
1	18-25	22	29.33
2	26-35	34	45.33
3	36-45	8	10.67
4	46 & Above	11	14.67
5	Total	75	100

Table No. 5 analyses the distribution of respondents by age in selected study area. It is very much clear from data given table that the age group of the respondents has been grouped into four categories:

1. Among these the highest numbers of respondents are from age group of 26-35, the number of them is 34 constituting 45.33%.
2. The age group of 18-25, has 22 numbers of respondents constituting 29.33%.
3. The lowest number i.e. 8 respondents are from the age group of 36 – 45 which is 10.67% of total.

Table No. 6: Distribution of Opinion by Caste about the Objectives of Panchayat Raj System

S.NO.	Opinion	SC	%	ST	%	OBC	%	Total	%
1	Yes	19	76	5	38.46	10	27.03	34	45.33
2	No	6	24	8	61.54	27	72.97	41	54.67
3	Total	25	100	13	100	37	100	75	100

Table No. 6 reveals that the caste wise distribution of respondent's opinion about the objectives of PRS. Data from the table reveals that out of the total 75 respondents, the highest number of respondents across the castes has no knowledge about the objectives of PRS. Only 25 respondents are from SC when opinion is taken caste wise. Among these the highest number 76% of respondents are responsive of the objectives of PRS. Merely 24% SC respondents have no knowledge about objectives of PRS.

The ST category respondents have quiet different opinion than respondents from SC category. The highest number 61.54 % respondents out of 100 do not have any knowledge regarding objectives of PRS and where as 38.46% of respondents are responsive of the objectives of PRS.

When keep in notice OBC respondents, out of the total 40, the highest number 30 respondents have no knowledge about the objectives of PRS. Taken as a whole data from table reveals that majority of SC respondents have knowledge regarding objectives of PRS. And on the other hand majority of respondents from STs and OBC are not aware of the objectives of PRS.

Table No. 7: Distribution of Respondent's Opinion by Education about the Objectives of Panchayati Raj System

Opinion	Illiterate	%	Up to 10 th	%	PUC	%	Degree	%	Total	%
Yes	9	37.5	5	17.24	3	20	7	100	24	32
No	15	62.5	24	82.76	12	80	-	-	51	68
Total	24	100	29	100	15	100	7	100	75	100

Table No. 7 evident about the education wise distribution of representative's opinion about the objectives of Panchayati Raj System. The table shows that 24 respondents are illiterate, out of these 24 illiterate respondents, 15 respondents have no knowledge regarding the objectives of Panchayati Raj System, which constitutes 62.5% of total. Merely 9 respondents have knowledge about the objectives of Panchayati Raj System, which is only 37.5%. Among the total, 29 respondents who are studied up to SSLC, the highest number 82.76% are not known about the objectives of Panchayat Raj Institutions, only 17.24% are known. The respondents who have studied up to PUC are 15 in total, among these the highest number 80 % respondents does known the objectives of Panchayati Raj System. It is evident from the table that the respondents who are studies up to degree are 7 in total and these respondents have understood the objectives of Panchayati Raj System.

The overall observation of the table is that most of the respondents with lower educational level such as illiterates, studied up to 10th and pre University education (PUC) are not understood the objectives of Panchayati Raj System in the study area. On the other hand the graduation as the level of education of the respondents are fully understood the objectives of Panchayati Raj System.

8.0 Conclusion

In most of rural regions social inequalities existed and continued even for centuries. Due to all these situations, just after Independence the thought of social justice came in the framework of Indian constitution. Therefore for the development of personality of whole society not merely upper castes peoples, Indian constitution made an attempt to provide equal social opportunities, devoid of any discrimination on the basis of race, sex or caste. Consequently, Independent India was one among the countries which went in for social and economic transformation of the rural population. As a preferred situation, for improvement of the living conditions of the people from rural region rural development became a definite strategy. To keep this in notice the Indian Government made efforts to tackle problems such as illiteracy, poverty, ill health and backwardness of varied nature prevailing in rural region, through

giving greater consideration to the uplift of the people from rural region. With the help of recent study, one point is keenly clear that the representatives belonging to weaker sections are more interested in formulation and implementation of welfare policies for the development of SC, ST and OBC in the study area. Illiteracy and ignorance of weaker section's representatives are major reasons behind non implementation of several welfare policies intended for the welfare of SC's, ST's and OBC's in the PRS and suggest for effective implementation of these policies for the welfare of weaker sections and bring them to the main stream as well as equal opportunity as stipulated in the Constitution of India.

9.0 References

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