

Panchayati Raj Institution in India: Prospects And Retrospections

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Abstract: *The concept of Panchayati Raj is unquestionably Indian in origin. Panchayati Raj bodies, which are genuine and effective democratic decentralized institutions, provide ample opportunities for a large number of rural people to take genuine and effective participation in the development and democratic decision-making process and to infuse in the minds of the rural people a spirit of self help, self dependence and self reliance and to obtain the experience in the art of local self-government. Panchayati Raj institutions have been playing an important role in order to monitor these rural development programmes. These institutions have been helpful in identifying real beneficiaries in order to get maximum benefits out of these schemes. A number of hurdles and constraints and deficiencies are also responsible for failure of these rural development programmes. In this paper, an attempt has been made to examine various issues, aspects and dimensions related to Panchayati Raj Institutions in Ghaziabad district of Western Uttar Pradesh. It has been sought to analyze changes in the rural society and its impact on socio-economic transformation due to panchayat, political participation, and political mobilization etc. There are number of factors responsible for created hurdles in performing the role of PRIs. These are castism, groupism and factionalism, which resulting to bitter infightings, allegations and counter-allegations, mutual suspicions and rivalries etc.*

Keywords: *Women, panchayati raj institution, participation, awareness, governance, knowledge.*

I. Introduction

Panchayati Raj, a synonym of democratic decentralization, was introduced in India in the late 1950s and early 1960s to restore to the erstwhile institution of Panchayat the pristine glory that it enjoyed in ancient India. It represents a political ideal and is reflected in the rural local-self government in its institutional form. The concept as such is not new to India. The plea for greater autonomy to the rural bodies received conceptual strength with the advent of Mahatma Gandhi on the national scene and his enunciation of the doctrine of the national development through autonomous rural organizations which he drive to model on the lines of Panchayat system as it prevailed in ancient India. He envisaged five-tier system of Village Panchayats, Taluka panchayats, District panchayats, Provincial panchayats, and All-India panchayats. The administrative system envisaged by him was that of a pyramid whose broad base was composed of numerous village communities of the country. The higher panchayats shall tender sound advice, give expert guidance and information supervise and co-ordinate the activities of the village panchayats with a view to increasing the efficiency of the administration and public service. But it would be the basic units that would dictate to the centre and not vice versa. In fact, the whole system would turn upside down, the village shall become the real and moving unit of administration.

Jayaprakash Narayan, having his own concept of Panchayati Raj had no place for political parties. He opined that the success of them depended upon the extent to which political parties refrained from interfering with it and trying to convert it into their hand maiden, and using it as a jumping ground to climb power. "Self-government through faction-fighting will not be self-government, but self-ruination." Nehru provided a very elaborate account of the Panchayats which worked admirably in the ancient period. They had enjoyed vast powers, including executive and judicial. Cases brought before Panchayats were expeditiously decided. It has been clearly brought out by Radha Kumud Mukerji in his book entitled "History and Culture of Indian People" that in the Mauryan Empire the village community functioned like a self-governing corporation or republic giving to the people healthy chance to run their government and manage their own local concerns and affairs. Thus, the Indian polity in those days was broadly based on truly democratic institutions.

Government's attempts to do developmental work through the institutions of Block Development Officers, in addition to nominated representatives of village Panchayats of that area and some other organizations like the cooperatives societies, failed miserably to accomplish decentralization to any satisfactory extent. Some state governments did try their best to decentralize powers but the overall situation did not improve. From 1957 to 1986, many committees including Balvantray Mehta (1957), K. Santhanam (1963), Ashok Mehta (1978), GVK Rao (1985) and L.M. Singhvi (1986) made a number of recommendations to the

center. The resulting idea was introduced as a bill (64th Constitutional Amendment Bill) in the Lok Sabha in 1989 to achieve the above stated conflicting objectives. Though this bill could not be enacted, the idea was translated into the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, which has brought about a new innovation in the grassroots politics in the country. It was hailed as a historic step in the empowerment of the people not only with a view to ensuring their more effective participation in the electoral process at the grassroots level, but also for entrusting them with a greater role in decision-making and developmental functions in matters of their immediate concern. For the first time PRIs have been admitted as the third stratum of our democracy and federal polity. The new law focused the attention of the nation on the political structures and process of rural India, their significance for the rural society and their participation in the operation of these structures.

In the context of the changed scenario related to Panchayati Raj, it is essential to assess the impact of the above political innovations on the nature and pattern of grass roots politics in Western Uttar Pradesh. The major portion of population of Western Uttar Pradesh, as elsewhere in India, live in the villages and the working of panchayati raj institutions in this state has affected the life of the rural masses and they have realized a sense of participation in the democratic functioning of the government. It is true that a plethora of studies exist, regarding the various aspects of Panchayati Raj Institutions. But very few systematic studies have been conducted with specific reference to, rural factionalism, groupism, secret leadership, struggle and impact of reservation of seats for the women, SCs/STs and OBCs etc. It can fairly be assumed that this innovative and radical step must have influenced the process and pattern of grass roots politics.

II. Objectives Of The Study

- i. To analyse various aspects, issues and dimensions related to Panchayati Raj Institutions.
- ii. To examine changes in the rural society and its impact on socio-economic transformation due to panchayat raj institutions, socio-economic development, political participation, and political mobilization etc.

III. Hypothesis Of The Study

- i. Number of factors such as groupism, caste system, education, occupation, election, local politics, and socialization etc. are responsible to determine the effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

IV. Review Of Literature:

The Ashok Mehta Committee (1978)¹ was set up to enquire into the working of the Panchayati Raj Institutions and to suggest measures for strengthening them soon to enable centralized planning and development in order to be effective. The Committee suggested that the formation of structure, functions, and utilization of financial, administrative, and human resources on Panchayati Raj Institutions should be determined on the basis of emerging functional necessity of administration of rural development.

B.S. Bhargava (1979)² has discussed issues and problems in regard to panchayati raj movement in the country in general and Karnataka in particular. Efforts have been made to discuss major recommendations of the Asoka Mehta Committee with a view to highlight issues and problems of great significance in reforming panchayati raj. Finally, he suggested that there is a need for rural development to strengthen the rural infrastructure for development, faith in panchayati raj and timely elections to these bodies.

S.P. Jain (1999)³ has emphasized the need for action plan for awareness generation about working of Gram Sabha. He stated: "It has been observed over the years that the performance of the Gram Sabha has suffered due to lack of awareness among the people about the concept and utility of the institution of Gram Sabha, and their own role in making it successful. Any effort directed towards strengthening this institution, therefore, requires a very serious action plan for awareness generation about various aspects of working of Gram Sabhas among the people".

D.C. Shah (2002)⁴ depicted that Gujarat's experience to make its Panchayati Raj Institution self-sufficient is not contrary to dismal performance elsewhere in the country. Total income of District Panchayats, through, increase once, this increase seems to be substantial only at current prices. If we account for the price rise, we find that the total income of District Panchayats of late is stagnating. What, however, is worth noticing is the fact that, of total income District Panchayats about 70 per cent to 95 per cent accrued from grants.

Dhaka and Dhaka (2004)⁵ dealt with a case study of SC women in Haryana, study showed that many of them are not aware of their role and responsibilities in PRIs. Nor the social inhibitions and disabilities allow them to assert themselves. It is so primarily because most of them are illiterate, lack leadership quality, forced to observe *purdah* and their husbands or fathers-in-law represent them in panchayat meetings and take over functions expected of elected women members.

Manjusha Sharma (2005)⁶ emphasized Karnataka experiences indicate that women in the younger generation show an interest in the PRIs. The majority of them are married but the significance attached to marital status seems to be declining. The participation of female members in youth associations, mahila

mandals, cooperative societies, etc. was low compared to male counterparts. The women members particularly preferred family planning and health to education.

W. Waseem Ahmad *et. al.* (2008)⁷ emphasized that during the Uttar Pradesh Panchayat Elections in 2000, women have entered Panchayati Raj institutions in large numbers. Women representation in Uttar Pradesh has shown a similar trend of being weak and inefficient leaders at different places. Leadership of women in the context of Uttar Pradesh is still at a growing stage. They are still in the learning process to take up leadership role.

Sarathi Banarjee (2010)⁸ depicted that the sacrosanct institutions of Panchayat have turned into tools in the hands of the power-managers to mobilize rural people in their quest for more power and ultimate supremacy in the state politics. Notwithstanding the process of democratization in rural society initiated by the PRIs, these institutions seem too vulnerable to fall victims to party bias (in some other state it may be caste or class bias), apart from personal corruption. The political usurpation of panchayat power by the party may be more fatal than the economic usurpation of panchayat funds as evident in the case of West Bengal.

Harendra Sinha (2011)⁹ concluded that streamlining the grassroots democratic bodies in Mizoram is essential. Development initiative for the rural people and autonomy should go together. It increases the opportunities for the popular initiative and participation in administration which ultimately strengthens democracy. The parties in power should show actual political will to introduce PRIs or bring legislation in revising the Councils.

P.K. Viswanathan and Amit Mandal (2012)¹⁰ concluded that gender mainstreaming through NREGS in India also faces a major challenge in terms of creating or devising institutional intermediations that could result in better gender participation outcomes in the scheme. In this context, those states with low levels of women participation could learn from the experience of Kerala, where the institutional intervention by the “Kudumbashree” has been quite successful in creating extremely high levels of gender work participation in the state.

R.R. Prasad (2012)¹¹ revealed that it would suffice to say that alternatives are open at every level, but they depend on a collaborative universe which brings into its orbit youth and elders from tribal communities, perceptive researchers and sensitive academicians, legal practitioners and organization behavior specialists, open administrators and conscious functionaries, proactive Panchayati Raj Institutions and vibrant communities and their organizations.

Karunakar Singh (2012)¹² revealed that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment has emerged an effective instrument to unleash the tremendous energies for social transformation in the Indian society. Strong political institutions at the grass roots level are a necessary condition for carrying out the new possibilities of the post 73rd Constitutional Amendment of PRIs. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment has aided the process of inclusion by providing reservation to Dalits and other weaker sections.

Sibtosh Bandyopadhyay (2013)¹³ emphasized that democratic institutions at the grassroots level should be free from political control and interference. Moreover, the responsibility of representatives should have original creativity apart from their political obligation. But, what is actually happening in rural West Bengal in last three decades? In addition, due to that, the rural West Bengal is turned to an open arena for political fight.

Johani Xaxa (2013)¹⁴ emphasized that an important requirement for bringing about empowerment of rural women is to bring about attitudinal change in both men and women. Therefore, they should be imparted education for bringing about social and political awareness among both. There should be increased emphasis on ensuring the participation of women in the meetings of Panchayats at all the levels.

G.R. Jayanandam & Panjala Narasaiah (2014)¹⁵ depicted that since states have been given option to formulate conformity Acts under the main Act, state governments led by regional parties have done better than the other states. This Act has thrown challenge to age old caste system, power structure and domination of ‘haves over the have-nots’. As expected empowered women and oppressed classes have been humiliated, harassed and prevented from enjoying their rights conferred on them by the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution Act.

Poonam Chauhan & Gulnar Sharma (2015)¹⁶ revealed that the grass root organization of cooperatives have been advocating policy reforms and projects that improve women’s social mobility, provides platform for social interactions and improve their active participation in community matters. These initiatives have ripple effect benefiting society and future generations.

V. Methodology

The present study has been conducted in Ghaziabad District of Western Uttar Pradesh. It is mainly based on primary source of information and data. The sample size is 300.

VI. Results And Discussions:

Results of the collected data from the study area have been discussed as follows:

6.1 Political Participation:

In this section, an attempt has been made to analyze political participation of rural people including role perception at grass roots level in the study area. Further, it has sought to examine issues, dimensions, and aspects related to political participation of rural people at the grass roots level.

Table – 1 depicted that 88.66 per cent of the respondents agreed with follow-up panchayati raj system in the village, and 11.33 per cent of the respondents felt against about it. Further, 74.66 per cent of the respondents were found to be member of various political parties, out of which 39.28 per cent of the respondents were member of the BSP, 33.92 per cent of the respondents supported to SP, 12.50 per cent of the respondents were members of Congress, 11.16 per cent of the respondents were members of the BJP, 1.78 per cent of the respondents felt communist party and 1.33 per cent of the respondents were found with other political parties for membership. Thus, majority of the respondents were attached with regional political parties.

Table – 2 revealed that 59.82 per cent of the respondents were actively participated in political activities and 40.17 per cent of the respondents did not participate actively in political activities. Further, that 62.00 per cent of the respondents attended party meetings regularly, 25.00 per cent of the respondents did not attend any party meeting and 13.00 per cent of the respondents rarely attended party meetings. Out of which (who attend the party meeting regularly), about the issues regarding discussion in party meeting, 24.73 per cent of the respondents were felt about increasing of member, 30.10 per cent of the respondents were agreed with to work according to party meeting, 21.50 per cent of the respondents felt priority to panchayat work, 16.12 per cent of the respondents felt about reservation in panchayat and only 7.52 per cent of the respondents were found agreed with encouraging to dalits & minorities class about the issues discussion in party meetings. Thus, majority of the respondents actively participated in political activities and the take part in political meetings.

Table – 3 revealed that 64.00 per cent of the respondents participated in an election campaign, out of which 47.91 per cent of the respondents participated in panchayat elections campaign, 13.02 per cent of the respondents were participated in state legislative elections campaign and 10.41 per cent of the respondents were actively participated in Lok Sabha election campaign. Thus, majority of the respondents had participated at grass roots level elections campaign.

6.2 Factors Related to Rural Development

Table – 4 revealed that 72.66 per cent of the respondents felt that gram sabha has been playing an important role in rural development programmes in the village. 26.14 per cent of the respondents supported the programmes i.e. construction of roads and sanitation works. 28.89 per cent of the respondents supported another programmes on health and education. 24.77 per cent of the respondents felt that panchayat has started small saving schemes for the rural people. 20.18 per cent of the respondents supported the programmes of hand pumps. 60.66 per cent of the respondents were written to the panchayat to solve these problems, and 39.33 per cent of the respondents did not write to panchayat about the same. 42.85 per cent of the respondents agreed with panchayat have solved these problems and 57.14 per cent of the respondents felt that the panchayat did not solve their problems. Thus, panchayat has been playing an immense role to solve their problems of the people.

Table – 5 revealed that 44.00 per cent of the respondents felt that MNREGA has been implemented by the government. 19.00 per cent of the respondents agreed with surva shiksha abhiyaan, 16.00 per cent of the respondents supported to national agriculture development programmes, 12.33 per cent of the respondents agreed with Indira Awas Yojana and 8.66 per cent of the respondents expressed their opinion that national rural health mission plan has been implemented by the government.

Further, the Table depicted that 24.33 per cent of the respondents felt that these schemes were successfully implemented, 75.66 per cent of the respondents did not agree about this. Out of which, 40.52 per cent of the respondents expressed their views castism is the main problem to implement these schemes. 26.43 per cent of the respondents indicated as lack of awareness is the main problem in this regard. 12.33 per cent of the respondents supported to favourism is the main problem. 12.33 per cent of the respondents agreed with corruption is the main problem and 8.37 per cent of the respondents felt that red tapism is the main problem. Thus, panchayat have been playing an immense role to implement various programmes provided by the government for rural development, and also panchayat faced various problems to successfully implement in these programmes.

Table – 1
Views of the Respondents About Political Awareness According to age groups

Age of the Respondents (in completed years)	Do you follow-up Panchayati Raj System in your village?		Are you member of any political party?		If yes, tell name of political party					
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Congress	BJP	Samajwadi Party	Bahujan Samaj Party	Communist Party	Others
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
18-25	21 (7.00)	04 (1.33)	17 (5.66)	06 (2.00)	02 (0.89)	02 (0.89)	07 (3.12)	06 (2.67)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)
26-45	106 (35.33)	14 (4.66)	93 (31.00)	29 (9.66)	12 (5.35)	11 (4.91)	30 (13.39)	37 (16.51)	02 (0.89)	01 (0.44)
46-60	110 (36.66)	11 (3.66)	91 (30.33)	27 (9.00)	11 (4.91)	10 (3.33)	31 (13.83)	36 (16.07)	01 (0.44)	02 (0.89)
61 and above	29 (9.66)	05 (1.66)	23 (7.66)	14 (4.66)	03 (1.33)	02 (0.89)	08 (3.57)	09 (4.01)	01 (0.44)	00 (0.00)
Total	266 (88.66)	34 (11.33)	224 (74.66)	76 (25.33)	28 (12.50)	25 (11.16)	76 (33.92)	88 (39.28)	04 (1.78)	03 (1.33)

Note: Percentage Indicated in the parenthesis.

Table – 2
Views of the Respondents About Political Awareness and Activities in Political Parties According Groups

Age of the Respondents (in completed years)	If you are member of any political party, tell nature of participation		Do you go to party meeting?			If yes, tell issues regarding discussion in party meeting				
	Active	Passive	Yes	No	Rare	Increasing of membership	Priority to panchayat work	Encouraging to dalits & minorities class	To work according to party manifesto	Reservation in panchayat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
18-25	10 (4.46)	07 (3.12)	15 (5.00)	05 (1.66)	03 (1.00)	03 (1.61)	02 (1.07)	01 (0.53)	06 (3.22)	03 (1.61)
26-45	55 (24.55)	38 (16.96)	74 (24.66)	29 (9.66)	15 (5.00)	18 (9.67)	17 (9.13)	05 (2.68)	23 (12.36)	11 (5.91)
46-60	54 (24.10)	37 (16.51)	76 (25.33)	28 (9.33)	14 (4.66)	19 (10.21)	16 (8.60)	07 (3.76)	21 (11.29)	13 (6.98)
61 and above	15 (6.69)	08 (3.57)	21 (7.00)	13 (4.33)	07 (2.33)	06 (3.22)	05 (2.68)	01 (0.53)	06 (3.22)	03 (1.61)
Total	134 (59.82)	90 (40.17)	186 (62.00)	75 (25.00)	39 (13.00)	46 (24.73)	40 (21.50)	14 (7.52)	56 (30.10)	30 (16.12)

Note: Percentage Indicated in the parenthesis.

Table – 3
Views of the Respondents About Political Awareness and Activities in Political Parties according to Age Groups

Age of the Respondents (in completed years)	Did you participate in election?			If yes, tell which level of participation?			
	Yes	No	Rare	Lok Sabha	State Legislative Assembly	Municipality	Panchayat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
18-25	12 (4.00)	07 (2.33)	04 (1.33)	03 (1.56)	02 (1.04)	02 (1.04)	05 (2.60)
26-45	77 (25.66)	27 (9.00)	10 (3.33)	07 (3.64)	09 (4.68)	22 (11.45)	39 (20.31)
46-60	84 (28.00)	21 (7.00)	12 (4.00)	08 (4.16)	11 (5.72)	25 (13.02)	40 (20.83)
61 and above	19 (6.33)	17 (5.66)	10 (3.33)	02 (1.04)	03 (1.56)	06 (3.12)	08 (4.16)

Total	192 (64.00)	72 (24.00)	36 (12.00)	20 (10.41)	25 (13.02)	55 (28.64)	92 (47.91)
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Note: Percentage Indicated in the parenthesis.

Table – 4
Views of the Respondents About the Major Development Programmes According to level of Education

Level of Education	Do you want to give credit about some major development programmes to gram sabha?		If yes, tell about programmes				Did you write to panchayat about problems?		If yes, was it solved by panchayat?	
	Yes	No	Construction of roads and sanitation	Health and Education	Small saving schemes	Hand pumps	Yes	No	Yes	No
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Upto Primary	48 (16.00)	24 (8.00)	12 (5.50)	14 (6.42)	13 (5.96)	09 (4.12)	39 (13.00)	29 (9.66)	18 (9.89)	21 (11.53)
Upto Middle	44 (14.66)	21 (7.00)	13 (5.96)	12 (5.50)	10 (4.58)	09 (4.12)	36 (12.00)	28 (9.33)	15 (8.24)	21 (11.53)
Upto High School	54 (18.00)	18 (6.00)	13 (5.96)	15 (6.88)	14 (6.42)	12 (5.50)	43 (14.33)	29 (9.66)	19 (10.43)	24 (13.18)
Upto Intermediate	36 (12.00)	10 (3.33)	11 (5.04)	10 (4.58)	07 (3.21)	08 (3.66)	32 (10.66)	17 (5.66)	12 (6.59)	20 (10.98)
Graduation	24 (8.00)	06 (2.00)	05 (2.29)	08 (3.66)	07 (3.21)	04 (1.83)	21 (7.00)	10 (3.33)	09 (4.94)	12 (6.59)
P.G.	12 (4.00)	03 (1.00)	03 (1.37)	04 (1.83)	03 (1.37)	02 (0.91)	11 (3.66)	05 (1.66)	05 (2.74)	06 (3.29)
Total	218 (72.66)	82 (27.33)	57 (26.14)	63 (28.89)	54 (24.77)	44 (20.18)	182 (60.66)	118 (39.33)	78 (42.85)	104 (57.14)

Note: Percentage Indicated in the parenthesis.

Table – 5
Views of the Respondents About Implementation of Development Programmes According to level of Education

Level of Education	Some Major Development Programmes, Implement by Government					Successfully Implemented		If No, What Problems Faced by Panchayats?				
	MNR EGA	Indira Awaas Yojana	Surva Shiksha Abhiyan	National Agriculture Development Programme	National Rural Health Mission Plan	Yes	No	Lack of Awareness	Favourism	Red Tapism	Corruption	Castism
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Upto Primary	30 (10.00)	07 (2.33)	12 (4.00)	10 (3.33)	06 (2.00)	16 (5.33)	51 (17.00)	13 (5.72)	07 (3.08)	06 (2.64)	06 (2.64)	19 (8.37)
Upto Middle	27 (9.00)	06 (2.00)	09 (3.00)	12 (4.00)	07 (2.33)	13 (4.33)	50 (16.66)	11 (4.84)	05 (2.28)	07 (3.08)	08 (3.52)	19 (8.37)
Upto High School	31 (10.33)	09 (3.00)	12 (4.00)	10 (3.33)	05 (1.66)	18 (6.00)	52 (17.33)	14 (6.16)	08 (3.52)	03 (1.32)	05 (2.20)	22 (9.69)
Upto Intermediate	21 (7.00)	03 (1.00)	10 (3.33)	09 (3.00)	03 (1.00)	12 (4.00)	36 (12.00)	11 (4.84)	04 (1.76)	02 (0.88)	04 (1.76)	15 (6.60)
Graduation	15 (5.00)	06 (2.00)	06 (2.00)	03 (1.00)	02 (0.66)	07 (2.33)	23 (7.66)	07 (3.08)	03 (1.32)	01 (0.44)	02 (0.88)	10 (4.40)

P.G.	08 (2.66)	06 (2.00)	08 (2.66)	04 (1.33)	03 (1.00)	07 (2.33)	15 (5.00)	04 (1.76)	01 (0.44)	00 (0.00)	03 (1.32)	07 (3.08)
Total	132 (44.00)	37 (12.33)	57 (19.00)	48 (16.00)	26 (8.66)	73 (24.33)	227 (75.66)	60 (26.43)	28 (12.33)	19 (8.37)	28 (12.33)	92 (40.52)

Note: Percentage Indicated in the parenthesis.

VII. Critical Assessment

Grass root politics are related with certain factors that are playing an important role in determining political activities at the grass root level. These factors include: caste, occupation, education, political power, leadership, political party, mass media etc. These factors already discussed earlier have also found to have direct or indirect linkages between grass roots politics and rural leadership, participation in politics/elections, failure/successes of panchayat, voting, and rural development. It is imperative to note that rural people are not at all aware about democratic decentralization and political participation. After casting their votes in the Panchayat elections they forget their further duties and they are yet to learn to act as development participants in the PRIs and even they have been taught to think themselves as part and parcel of the grassroots governance. Therefore, party politics, specifically, the ruling party interference and dominance over the PRIs violate the very essence and philosophy of democratic decentralization and grassroots governance.

Thus, it is clear that a number of factors have been influencing grass roots politics in the PRIs. These factors are: democratic consciousness, participation in elections, welfare of the masses, satisfaction on the functioning of panchayats, education, rural banks, and voters. And related to these are other factors such as: majority caste domination, property, land, religion, affiliations of political leaders and different parties, politicalisation, and socialization of rural masses. This is a fact that these factors have been playing a pivotal role in determining the level of grass roots politics in functioning and responsibilities of the panchayat leaders and panchayat system in rural society.

Various development programmes were started by the government for rural development in India, these programmes have been helpful in eliminating poverty, unemployment, inequality, raising educational facilities, agricultural development, infrastructure development, development in small scale and cottage industries etc. These programmes have been found to be very helpful for the upliftment of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes people, women and children living in rural areas. The devolution of power to panchayats for organizing and executing various programmes of socio-economic development and providing adequate financial support for the purpose will be making the plan formulation and their execution through people's participation more realistic and efficient. The strengthening of panchayati raj institutions through specific provisions in the constitution will greatly help this process of transfer of planning functions from the state level to the district and panchayat level.

It is true that panchayati raj structures set up in our country are not doing very well and that there is a need to revitalize them. There is basically a need to evolve a comprehensive concept of panchayati raj, which clearly spells out as to what kind of roll is expected from it. It is also important to realize that representative participation may not lead to mass participation in our kind of socio-economic rural power structure. Changing this structure or at least strengthening the position of the poor against exploitation is an important requirement for the success of panchayati raj. The emerging scenario of the dynamics of development and the thrust on decentralized planning opened new vistas of development. In sum, institutional, structural, and functional contours of Panchayati Raj have to be in conformity not only with the accelerating pace of development but also with the developmental strategies and policies that have evolved over a period of time.

VIII. Conclusions And Suggestions:

The study concluded that the panchayat system has fragmented the rural society in Uttar Pradesh. It has created cleavages and generated tensions leading to castism, groupism and factionalism. This leads to bitter infightings, allegations and counter-allegations, mutual suspicions and rivalries which generally result in clashes leading to long drawn out litigations. The factionalism starts with different groups among panchayat leaders. The ex-leaders and defeated panches, pradhans and up-pradhans play an important part in fomenting groupism. This generally happens within the members of same economically dominant castes and classes.

The study further concluded that the activities of village panchayat have been indicated useful and helpful about rising political awareness, feel political power, expectation for good life, fight for the rights, take interest and participate in village work and develop new horizon at village level to justice and welfare for rural people in the society. The study also revealed that the majority of the respondents have been consulted and influenced by different categories of the people like caste leaders, local panchayat leaders, party works, friend and relatives. Finally, it is imperative to note that rural people are not at all conscious about democratic decentralization and political participation. After casting their votes in the Panchayat elections they forget their

further duties and they are yet to learn to act as development participants in the PRIs and even they have been taught to think themselves as part and parcel of the grassroots governance.

Panchayati Raj institutions have been playing an important role in order to monitor rural development programmes. These institutions have been helpful in identifying real beneficiaries in order to get maximum benefits out of various schemes. Under the schemes priority has been given to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, women, weaker sections and the upliftment of backward areas. A number of hurdles and constraints and deficiencies are also responsible for failure of these rural development programmes.

Further, in order to strengthening the panchayati raj institutions in India there are need to the elected representatives of the panchayats should exercise superintendence and control over government officials, i.e. serving the Panchayats instead of playing a subordinate role. Thus, there is an urgent need to educate local leadership about their legitimate role in nation-building and the governance of the country. The Gram Sabhas should be fully involved in the plan formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the development works to be undertaken by the Gram Panchayats. The NGOs of repute may be assigned the job of creating awareness among the members of Gram Sabha. The presence of the women should also be ensured in particular. Since women for the first time have entered into Panchayati Raj politics at a large scale, proper training for them is highly essential. In this connection it may be recommended that for women representatives two types of training be given, i.e. one exclusively for them and another a combined one with their male counterparts.

Acknowledgements

The authors express heart full thanks to Mr. Harit kasana, Scientist at National Institute of Biologicals, Noida for his continuous support and encouragement throughout the work.

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