



OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE OF SARPANCH IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

*** Dr. Thippeswamy S**

Assistant Professor Sidhartha Law College, Kalaburgi, Karnataka State

*“Greater the Power of Panchayats the better for the People”
Mahatma Gandhi*

ABSTRACT: In India, the panchayati raj system stands for functional and efficient rural self-government. As the sarpanch heads of the village or gram-panchayat, they can implement various programmes from the state and central government. The visions of the sarpanch and his or her dedicated efforts have a huge impact on the development of the village community. Sarpanch and panchas' understanding of their roles within the framework of the Panchayati Raj constitution is a key factor in any Gram-panchayat's ability to succeed. For the growth of the village, the sarpanch and the members of the Gram-panchayati must understand their responsibilities and how to carry them out effectively. Millions of rural people's everyday lives are directly impacted by how the Gram-Panchayat and Sarpanch function. As a consequence, the sarpanch's function is crucial for both overall inclusive development and for strengthening democracy through participatory governance. The chapter attempts to explore sarpanch and panch's role in rural development and faces challenges for the implementation of schemes with the help of the community.

Key words: Panchayati Raj, Sarpanch's duties and responsibilities, challenges,

I. Introduction:

Mahatma Gandhi remarked that "India has in its villages" Since the time of the Vedic, a village has been considered an administrative division in India. To tackle local problems, the institution of local administration at the village level has existed through different periods of Indian history. As consequence, the concept of Panchayat Raj has been recognized to India even before it became independent for a very long time. Even during the freedom movement, the idea of having local self-government was brought up, particularly when Gandhi argued for self-sufficient village administration to address problems affecting people in rural areas. After India gained independence, the Panchayat Raj System was established in accordance with the drafters of the Indian constitution read Article 40.

The Panchayati Raj is a decentralized form of rural local self-government. It is an interconnected, interdependent, federal, and democratic set-up that runs into village, block, and district levels based on decentralization, the revolution of power, and responsibility. Considering 68.84 percent of India's population lives in villages, effective self-governance in rural areas is essential. In India, the Gram-

Panchayati, a legal body for local self-government at the village level, is governed by the Sarpanch. The Sarpanch decides on significant issues affecting the Gram- Panchayati with the assistance of the elected representative. When it comes to maintaining proper order in a village for its regular growth and improvement and providing essential services vital to rural people's health and well-being, the authority of the Sarpanch plays a crucial role.

By deciding to do so, the sarpanch may lead the village towards growth and contribute to the advancement of the country. He put forth a lot of effort towards putting our country's planning policy, which gave agricultural and rural development first priority, into action. The first five-year plan's proposed policies had a significant impact on how quickly the rural economy expanded. He is a leader in the community and an important advocate for water and sanitation issues. The most important job is that of an advocate, motivator, facilitator, and influencer who help people understand fundamental difficulties with water sanitation and hygiene, takes action on those issues, and is in charge of the overall development of the village community.

II. Objective of Research: The main object of research conducted in India was the panchayat raj systems, which stand for functional and efficient rural self-government, as the sarpanch heads of the village's vision and dedicated efforts have a huge impact on the development of the village community. The main objectives of this research paper were the following:

1. To examine the role of Sarpanch for rural development.
2. To identify the problems and challenges faced by Sarpanchh in rural development
3. To study the effective implementation of schemes for rural communities and their efforts for development.

III. Research Methodology:

The method of research paper is descriptive, historical, and completely based on secondary sources of data for the completion of the research paper. The data was collected from government records, books, journals, and the official website.

IV. ROLE OF PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM

The panchayati raj system's origins can be traced back to its long history. When the British arrived in India, they damaged our village's economy and took advantage of it for their own profits. Since that time, agriculture, infrastructure, education, health, and administration have not flourished in rural areas. This approach was implemented to put the rural economy back on its growth-engine trajectory. The panchayati raj system is the third tier of a governmental institution. By means of transferring power at the local level, the crucial aim is to transform the village economy both socially and economically. Its main objective is to ensure the needs and aspirations of village people and to build trust and faith among them. This system is not futuristic, but the idea of gramaswaraj was first propounded by our great nationalist Mahatma Gandhi.

The Panchayati Raj Institution is expected to be crucial to rural development in India after independence. History demonstrates that India has consistently carried out development initiatives since gaining

independence with the aim of enhancing the social and economic circumstances of its citizens. After years, several committees were formed to reform the existing state of affairs of the village society; the recommendations made were regarded as a vehicle for fulfilling the demands of the people. The committees are:

Table No.1 Types of Committees constituted for strengthening PRIs

1.	Balwant Rai Mehta Committee,	1957
2.	V.T. Krishnamachari	1960
3.	Santhanam committee Report	1964
4.	Takhatmal Jain Stud Group	1966
5.	Ashok Mehta committee,	1978
6.	GVK Rao Committee,	1985
7.	LM Singhvi Committee,	1986
8.	P.K. Thungon Committee	1989
9.	S. Mohinder Singh	2013

However, these discussions ultimately found practical expression when the parliament passed two amendments to transform panchayati raj systems into local self-government entities. Part 9 of the constitution, which covers Articles 243-243, was added by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, which also added the eleventh scheduled. With the help of this modification Article 40, which directs states to give power to the local government to organise village panchayats and the power of decision-making. The act provided direct elections at the village level to choose their local leader and mandated all the states to adopt the system. This act has transformed the whole democracy of India.

Table No. 2. Total No of Panchayati Raj Institution in India (Panchayat Statistics- 2022-23)

Sl. No.	Panchayatis	No of Across the Country
1.	No of Gram-Panchayats	2,55,600.00
2.	No. of Block Panchayat's	6,697.00
3.	No. of District Panchayat's	665.00
4.	No. of Elected member Panchayat Raj Institution India	30.45. lakhs
5.	No. of Elected Women	13.79. Lakhs
6.	Total Representatives	45%

Source: Thirty First Report Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj) Lok Sabha Secretariat New Delhi March, 2023/Phalguna, 1944 (Saka) (2022-23)

V. Role of Sarpanch for Rural Development

Gram-Panchayat is a grassroots organisation that is crucial to the Panchayati Raj administration. The concept of panchayati Raj, or local self-governance, is founded in India on participation by the

community and collective decision-making at the local level. The sarpanch and members understanding of their responsibilities within the framework of the panchayati Raj institution is a key factor in any Gram panchayati's success. The Grampanchayat's members must understand their roles and how to carry them out effectively if the village is to progress. Millions of rural people's everyday lives are directly impacted by how the Grampanchayati functions. As a result, the sarpanch plays an essential function in strengthening democracy through democratic governance as well as in promoting overall inclusive development. The sarpanch is overall responsible for the development and welfare of the people in village Panchyati by exercising the following duties and responsibilities:

1. To develop inclusive plans to address the water supply and sanitation needs of the households in the villages and GP.
2. To make provision for prioritising water and sanitation on facilities in the Gramme Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) and mobilise resources to fulfil the water and sanitation demands.
3. To encourage the VWSC/village team to participate in training and capacity-building programmes.
4. To strengthen the capacity of village-level functionaries', such as swachhagra and barefoot technicians, and review their performances.
5. To coordinate village-level information, education, and communication (IEC) activities for all concerned stakeholders
6. To mobilise the community for collective action in the creation and maintenance of water and sanitation facilities. The following activities were conducted by sarpanch and pancha's participate in voluntary work; develop soak pits, composting, and biogas plants for SLWM; practice waste segregation at source and solid for managing solid waste; encourage the use of toilets by every person in the village; make judicious use of water and avoid waste; advocate advocating to adopt safe water storage, handling practices, and personal hygiene; protect water sources and sanitation facilities; participate in their O&M; and actively participate in grama-sabhas held on issues of water and sanitation facilities.
7. To monitor the status of general cleanliness, protection of water sources, regular use of toilets by everyone, and SLWM activities at all times. This can be planned through a regular surveillance mechanism involving the VWSC, *nigrani samiti*, and *swachhagrahis*.
8. Review and maintain prescribed account books, and undertake audit procedures for transparency.
9. Ensure facilities in institutions and public places, e.g., markets and bus stands, are operational.

VI. Problems and challenges faced by the Sarpanch

Gram-Panchayt is the cornerstone local government in itself in the Panchayati Raj System at a small town or village level. A sarpanch is the elected head of the village panchayat. They have a lot of responsibility, and both are elected to work for the development of the village, which includes infrastructure, social and economic activities and above all, trying to maintain harmonious relations in the villages. They are expected to work honestly and keep themselves away from the situation even after someone has voted

against them or in their favour. Sarpanch responsibility list along with functions of gram-panchayat are given below, and they not only have big responsibility for the village but also some way have authoritative power to work and perform their duties, but at the same time they are facing difficulties and challenges for implementation and successfully completing the welfare of village people due to many reasons.

- 1) **Limited Resources:** The basic infrastructure required for development usually remains lacking in village communities in developing countries. In order to provide basic amenities like roads, water, power, and healthcare facilities, the sarpanch has to do with limited funds. Another formidable obstacle funds continue to be underutilised as a result of financing delays, poor coordination between several administrative bodies at the state and federal levels, negative attitudes among villagers, and inadequate assistance from secretaries appointed by the government in each panchayat.
- 2) **Lack of Manpower:** Sarpancha experience a lack of manpower with them as there are various parallel schemes running at village level, and they find themselves helpless to efficiently execute many of them at the parallel level. Thus, more manpower is required to work faster and cover the implementation of schemes at the grass-roots level.
- 3) **Illiterate Representatives:** The most significant issue is that the sarpanch and panchas, who are elected members of the panchayat, are illiterate. They are unable to effectively represent their panchayat body and lack exposure prevents them from knowing how to bring the issues of the people to the attention of higher authorities. We must educate panchayat representatives since they are illiterate and undereducated. Additionally, most residents of the village are not aware of state and federal government programmes and policies that are beneficial to them. The sarpanch's duty is to inform and create awareness among the villagers about government initiatives and policies.
- 4) **Lack of awareness:** The Panchayati Raj was established with the intention of promoting rural development through citizen involvement. Many programmes and schemes are directly implemented in village panchayats by the sarpanch and panchs' for the development and well-being of the village people. The dysfunction of the Panchayati Raj can be controlled if every individual is aware of the system because of administrative delays, political interferences, economic considerations, and social pressures. If people are aware of the system, the construction and welfare projects that the government provides to the panchayats and the running body, i.e., Panch's and Sarpanch's, can raise the level of the villages, increase every native's faith in the nation and national integration, and may make their participation in the government work. Their awareness could help them in choosing suitable members of society as their leaders.
- 5) **Gender Discrimination:** Women face numerous challenges while representing up at least one-third of all elected representatives in the Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI). It is challenging for them to assert or even openly voice their opinions due to a lack of leadership abilities. According to a recent study, 77% of women in PRIs think they have difficulty carrying out tasks on the ground. Even after being elected, their husbands still handle the majority of the work in the panchayats (Sarpanch Pati

system). Another issue is the general absence of female representatives from panchayat meetings as a result of family members' negative views.

- 6) **Attitude of Villagers:** There are times when the villagers' attitudes towards government programmes and their implementation for the benefit of the rural community are rather casual. For instance, in one village, several families did not even attempt to collect the cheques for the "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan" toilet construction projects at their residences. They were reluctant to accept the cheques when the Pradhan repeatedly asked them to do so because they had to put in a small amount of money to have the bathrooms built. They desired free access to it. It reflects the villagers' negative attitude for initiatives taken by government.
- 7) **Lack of Computer based Infrastructure:** To bring all the panchayats together on one platform for routine operation, day-to-day operations, tracking progress, and facilitating monetary benefits, digital platforms are being created. The process takes a long time and is quite tedious. The work of the sarpanchs becomes stuck since they generated their IDs but are still unaware with the technical aspects of this infrastructure that are operated by computers.
- 8) **Poor Coordination among different Administrative Bodies:** A major issue is the lack of horizontal and vertical convergence of action at the Gramme Panchayat level. Because they are allocated to different departments and schemes, each with a particular set of responsibilities, vertical integration is also not ensured. The poor approach and insufficient availability of these officials in villages, for instance, puts the Sarpanch in difficult situations while working on activities like the construction of roads that require coordination with other departments. Activities are delayed as consequence, and funds are not utilised as quickly as they should be.
- 9) **Poor infrastructure:** Gram- panchayats face with poor infrastructure since they lack an adequate building to conduct their day-to-day operations. As a result, they hold meetings in schools. Additionally, some panchayats have buildings without toilet, and electricity etc.

VII. Conclusion:

The local self-government institutions known as panchayati Raj are formed up of elected representatives from rural areas. The elected representatives are making an effort to promote the welfare of the people and the community's overall development. Sarpanch, the elected head of the village panchayat, is in charge with addressing problems with sanitation and water and acting as a role model for the people of the village. Advocates, motivators, enablers, and influencers play a vital role in supporting people in understanding the fundamental issues relating to water, power, sanitation, and hygiene and in taking the necessary action. The sarpanch governs the village's overall growth and is crucial in ensuring that rural people have access to the services they require for their health and wellness, such as drinking water. Instead, sarpanch faces many challenges and problems while performing daily work. The significant issue is the limited funds used for development and construction work in villages due to a lack of financial support from the concerned authorities, a lack of manpower supporting and implementing schemes, and illiteracy. Major challenges for village people to understand and educate themselves about the schemes and programmes of the government are not showing interest in participation. Local bodies are necessary

steps to enrichment and needed for awareness programmes to representatives of panchayat and village people for the implementation of state and federal government schemes and policies for the welfare of people.

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