

# “Growth and Evolution of Grama Panchayats in Karnataka”

\*Girish V      \*\*Dr. M. Prabhu  
\*Research Scholar,      \*\* Research Supervisor,  
\*JSS Research Foundation,      \*\* JSS Research Foundation,  
\*Assistant Professor,      \*\* Assistant Professor,  
\*P.E.S College of SAC, Mandya.      \*\*JSS College for Women, Kollegala

## Abstract

Karnataka is a state of best example for Panchayat Raj Institutions. The state has given more importance to Panchayat Raj Institutions even before 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional amendment. Both state and central government projects and programmes are effectively implemented through three tier system of local self-governments namely Zilla Panchayats, Taluk Panchayats and Grama Panchayats. There are 6,024 Grama Panchayats in Karnataka. The study was conducted to know the growth and evolution path of Grama Panchayats in Karnataka. The data collected were through secondary sources and discussions with personalities of Grama Panchayats. The study portrays how Grama Panchayats are important to the development of villages and how they made the village people to participate in the governance of local self-bodies.

## Keywords

Grama Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat, Zilla Panchayat, PRI.

## I. Introduction

Panchayats are oldest establishments for local governance in rural Karnataka. This long standing structure of local governance is also known as Panchayat Raj. These ensure proper implementation of rural development programs, while encouraging participation of people in the rural development programmes. Local self-government in India was introduced by a constitutional amendment in 1992 (73<sup>rd</sup> amendment) as per the recommendation of L M Singhvi Committee (1986) followed by many other Indian committees' studies. Presently, the Panchayat Raj system exists in all states except Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram and in all Union Territories except Delhi. Panchayat Raj in Karnataka has a three tier structural constitution and follows elected bodies at each level. Grama Panchayats at the village level, Taluk Panchayats at the taluk level (sub-district) and Zilla Panchayats at the district level. Karnataka has 30 Zilla Panchayats, 176 Taluk Panchayats and 6,024 Grama panchayats. Grama Panchayats are gross roots of local self-government or panchayat raj institutions. The present study show cases how the panchayat system evolved to consider the rural people in participation and development of rural areas.

## II. Review Literature

Anand (2009) had compared the governance, patronage and accountability in Karnataka and Kerala. It was found that the state of Karnataka supported one fourth of panchayat seats for women and made reservations for scheduled castes and tribes. No power has been devolved properly to the extent they want. Karnataka has political decentralization and less of administrative and financial decentralization. Kerala has found marginally lower rate of corruption but they not reduced corruption to a low level. Shridhar and Chandrakala (2016) deliberated three tier panchayati raj system in karnataka and enlightened the Organizational structures, human resources and functions zilla panchayats, taluk and grama panchayats. Ashok and Mahesh (2013) opined that panchayat raj institutions suffer from certain colonial hangovers. The present pattern and process of governance in the state is still at junction. Mohan and Ashok (2014) portrayed socio and political status of elected members of panchayats and found highly educated were panchayat presidents in mysuru district. Nataraju and Meenakshi (2016) found Gram Sabha is crucial to the self-governance. Active participation of grama panchayat members will make meaningful to the meetings. The study felt right mechanism to classify poor and prioritization of needs

of households before selecting the beneficiaries. Honnappa (2017) suggested that the implementation of rural development schemes and programmes should be made through the system of panchayats. This will disregard rural poverty and unemployment and makes the people to participate in development activities. Reviewing the above literature showed that there are no specific work has been carried out on growth and evolution of grama panchayats in the state of Karnataka. Hence the present study has been carried out.

### III. Objectives of the Study

1. To study the growth of Panchayat system in Karnataka
2. To study the significant of Grama Panchayat in Karnataka

### IV. Methodology

The study has used secondary data sources like books, magazines, reports, newspapers, seminar papers, articles, reports published by universities and research institutions. Apart from the published sources, study has also used discussions with different people such as officials and non-officials of the Grama Panchayats.

### V. Evolution of PRIs in Karnataka

There were five different legislations operating in different areas of the state before the restructuring of the state on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1956. They were the Madras Village Panchayat Act, 1950, the Hyderabad Gram Panchayat Act, 1950, the Mysore Village Panchayat and District Board Act, 1952, the Coorg Panchayati Raj Act, 1956 and the Bombay Village Act, 1953. Later, the Mysore Village Panchayats and Local Boards Act 1959 had replaced all the above acts which came into force in December 1960.

Mainly, the evolution and performance of PRIs can be divided into 3 phases: the first phase (1959-87), the second phase (1987-93) and the third phase is the current one (since 1993).

#### i. First Phase (1959 Act, from 1959 to 87)

In Karnataka, first Panchayat Raj Act came into existence in 1959 and rightly called Mysore Village Panchayats and Local Boards Act 1950. It was aimed at ensuring people's participation and transferring power to them through the institutions of local power. The act 1959 had followed partly the recommendations of the Balwant Rai Mehtra Committee, which recommended a three tier panchayati raj system. They were the village panchayat (VP), taluk development board (TDB) and district development council (DDC). Under the act, about 8411 village panchayats, 96 town panchayats and 175 taluk development boards were established.

#### ii. Second Phase (1983 Act, from 1987 to 93)

The report of Asoka Mehta Committee recommended a two tier system of the rural local government in 1978. Popularly, the act was called the Karnataka Zilla Parishads, Taluk Panchayat Samitis, Mandal Panchayat and Nyaya Panchayat Act 1983. This was a radical changes made by Janata Party, which formed the government in Karnataka in 1983. It was introduced to eradicate poverty and improve the rural economy through people's participation. The act provided two other statutory bodies. They are taluk panchayat samiti at the taluk or block level, which was an advisory and coordinating body with no executive function and the grama sabha (village assembly) below the mandal panchayat. Another feature of this act was reservation of upto 25 per cent was provided to women's to participate in the local political system.

#### iii. Third Phase (Since 1993)

The 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendment brought out a place to introduce the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act 1993. It was replaced the old act 1983. Greater participation of the people in the local bodies and establishment of elected bodies at the three levels- the village, taluk and district were essential features and reasons to the new act. The act also increased reservation for women from 25% to 33.33% in the participation of local bodies. The first elections to the three tiers was conducted in December 1993 for grama panchayats and in March 1995 for taluk and zilla panchayats.

- a) **Grama Panchayats:** the gross root of three tier system of PRIs are Grama Panchayats (GP). GPs are formed for a population between 3,000 to 5,000. The area covered by a grama panchayat will consist of a village or a group of villages. There will be one elected Grama Panchayat member for a every 400 persons. The Adhyaksha (president) and Upadhyaksha (Vice President) will be elected from amongst the elected members. The main function of the GPs are to promote social, economic welfare, education and health of local people. It is only the panchayat which has taxation powers in addition to government grants and other sources of income.
- b) **Taluk Panchayats:** the second tier or middle tier of panchayat raj system is Taluk Panchayats. For each taluk there shall be a taluk panchayat consisting of local representatives, from the state legislature and parliament. Members are directly voted from separate regional constituencies in the ratio of one member for every 10,000 population. The Adhyaksha (president) and Upadhyaksha (Vice President) will be elected from amongst the elected members of the taluk Panchayats. The taluk panchayat consists three committees, namely general standing committee, finance, audit and planning committee and social justice committee. These panchayats are empowered to supervise the activities of grama panchayats in their jurisdiction. Taluk parishad has no taxation power.
- c) **Zilla Panchayats:** the new panchayat raj act 1993 further stipulates that each district should have a zilla panchayat. It consists the membrs of parliament and state legislature from within the district, the adhyakshas of taluk panchayats in the district and elected members. One member will be elected from amongst 40,000 of the population. The Adhyaksha (president) and Upadhyaksha (Vice President) will be elected from amongst the elected members of the Zilla Panchayats. There are 5 standing committees in the Zilla panchayats namely, general standing committee, finance, audit and planning committee, social justice committee, education and health committee and agriculture and industries committee. Zilla parishad has no taxation power.

## VI. Grama Panchayat

Grama Panchayat is the most significant tier not only because of its vicinity to the pastoral population but also as it is directly involved in local control. Some of the key features of Grama Panchayats in Karnataka are as follows:

- Elected bodies from the people
- Legitimate Status from the 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment to the constitution
- Established for a group of villages
- One elected for every 400 population
- 33% reservation for women
- SC and ST reservation in proportion to their population
- 33% reservation of OBCs
- Reservation for the post of president and vice president
- Financial grants from state and central governments apart from own sources

Grama Panchayats are serving the following works and programmes to the development of rural areas.

### i. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

The main purpose of MGNREGA is to improve security to rural areas by providing at least 100 days of definite wage employment in every fiscal year to every family in rural places. The programmes are being more effective with the help of grama panchayats.

### ii. Poverty Alleviation

By providing self-employment activities and wage employment works in rural areas, poverty relief has been achieved by grama panchayats. Swarna Jayanthi Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) aimed at helping rural households below the poverty level through credit, subsidy, training facilities are examples.

**iii. Improvement of Rural Infrastructure**

Rural communication, housing, water supply and sanitation, watershed development and minor irrigation are being created to improve rural infrastructure.

**iv. Development of rural roads**

Construction of rural roads and their maintenance are now in hands of panchayat raj and rural development (RDPR) department. Through employment generation schemes, Pradhan Manthri Gram Sadak Yojana and RIDF, Mukhya Manthri Grameena Rasthe Abhivruddhi Yojane, roads have been developed and maintained.

**v. Rural Water Supply**

Water supply to the rural villages are made through many programmes like Jai Nirmal project of world bank, Rajeev Gandhi Naitonal Drinking Water Mission etc.

**vi. Rural Sanitation**

Through Nirmala Gram Yojane, Total Sanitation Campaign, promotions are made to create awareness amongst the rural people.

**vii. Rural Energy**

Integrated Rural Energy Programmes, Development of Biogas are made available for village people to use renewable energy.

**viii. Gram Swaraj Project**

Through these projects, service delivery of grama panchayats have been improved.

**ix. Suvarna Gramodaya Yojane**

1,000 villages have been selected every year under this scheme for all round development of villages through grama panchayats.

**VII. Findings and Conclusion**

73<sup>rd</sup> amendment to Indian Constitution has brought out many changes and reason in Karnataka to replace and introduce the new Panchayat Raj Act in 1993. The intention is to make rural people to participate more and more in rural governance. Amongst three tiers of Panchayats in Karnataka, Grama Panchayats are playing a pivotal role to implement state and central and international acclaimed institutions' programmes and projects to the betterment of rural places. Rural Karnataka is at the trust and work of "Grama Panchayats". GPs are still required to be more strengthened and motivated through fiscal and non-fiscal supports. Government should believe the rural elected people to execute the government projects while keeping them accountable. Finally it is to conclude that "GPs are connecting nerves, the village people to state and central government through which healthy blood moves to the villages in the form of basic amenities".

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