
Role of Panchayati Raj in Rendering Social, Political and Economic Justice: A Study of Kuturachuan Gram Panchayat, Odisha Paper

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Abstract: *Panchayati Raj plays a vital role in Indian democracy. In Panchayati Raj systems, the Gram Panchayats are the units of administration. The people's socio, political, and economic development at the grass-root level is realized through Panchayati Raj System. It is not only improving the economic conditions of the people but also aims at developing self-reliance among them. It is seen in the olden days that people used to meet together to solve village problems under the leadership of village elders. This system reflected the spirit of participatory democracy. Our Father of Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, advocated for 'Gram Swaraj' or village self-rule. The motto was the decentralization of powers. It is a well-known fact that Panchayats have existed in India for a long. During the Vedic period, Medieval Period, and In British rule, we witnessed local self-government. After independence, the draft Constitution added a mention of panchayat in Article 40 under Directive Principles of State Policy. The Community Development Programs for local development was introduced in 1950. After realizing the poor function of the Community Development Program by the study team under the chairmanship of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee, the Panchayati Raj system was launched in 1959. The 73rd amendment Act 1992 comprises provisions for the devolution of powers. Decentralisation of power became tools to design many development plans and programmes for various grassroots level scheme. The Constitutional status clear the path of the Panchayati Raj system to improve the infracturer and implementation of developmental programmes for the needy rural and tribal areas. Sustainability and inclusivity in development of the people living below poverty line and marginally poor and as a result that the deram the Millennium Development Goals can beachieved.*

Keywords: *Panchayati Raj, Development, Justice, Kuturachuan, Odisha.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Local self-government existed in the villages during the time of Rig Veda. Passing a long time and long road, the local self-government has gained its constitutional status In India after independence. With solid advocacy of Mahatma Gandhi and many prominent leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru were firm believers of democratic decentralization and political participation in the democracy. He believed that to make Indian democracy vibrant, and robust emphasis must be given to the village panchayats. Village panchayats function as democratic institutions at the grassroots level. The community development program was first introduced, and later on, Panchayati Raj System got necessary legislation one after another State by the acceptance of the Balwant Rai Mehta committee. On October 2nd 1959, the three-tier Panchayat Raj system was first launched in Rajasthan on the auspicious birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation. Only after 1992, with the passage of the Constitutional Amendment Act 73rd, Panchayat Raj was included in the Indian constitution in articles 243 to 243 O, with a new part as IX having 16 Articles in Eleventh Schedule. To act upon the path for the direct election at village level to elect their local leaders to ensure liberty, equality, fraternity, freedom of expression, freedom of thought and belief. In the truest sense, the equal representation for socio-economic transformation in the society is realized through Panchayat Raj.

Statement of the Problem

With the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 In Participatory Governance, the citizens became central to all development. Their genuine needs are heeded to, and they are incorporated into public policymaking.

Kuturachuan Gram Panchayat in Odisha: An Overview

Kuturachuan Gram Panchayat is composed up of three revenue villages, namely Kuturachuan, Kirasasan and Satkama in Kuchinda Block of Sambalpur District in Odisha. Odisha has 6798 Gram Panchayat, out of which Sambalpur District has 138, and Kuturachuan Gram panchayat is one among them with 11 Ward, which is situated in Sambalpur District. It is the western side of Odisha and plays an essential role in the socio- economic and political aspects of Odisha. The average literacy rate of Sambalpur district is 76.22 percentage. The economy of the people of Sambalpur District is dependent on agriculture and forests as our country has journeyed more than 70 years of independence and planning and implementations.

Sl. No.	Parameter	Kuturachuan Gram Panchayat	Kuturachuan	Kirasasan	Satkama
1	Total Geographical Area in Hectors	1755	275	670	810
2	Total Population	3819	789	1230	1800
3	Total Male	1871	401	592	878



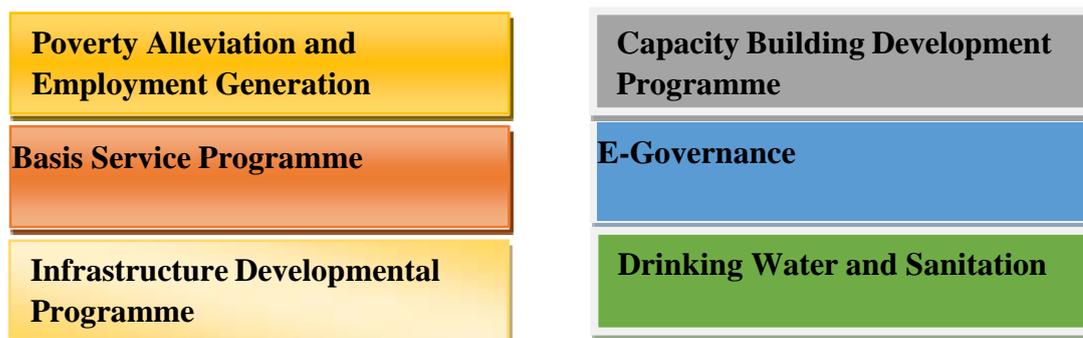
4	Total Female	1948	388	638	922
5	Total Schedule Castes	833	154	129	550
6	Total Schedule tribe	1548	418	736	394
7	Total Literates		473	731	
8	Total Agricultural labour	970	191	301	478
9	Total Agricultural labour male	495	104	170	221
10	Total Agricultural labour female	444	87	131	226

Source: Census Report 2011

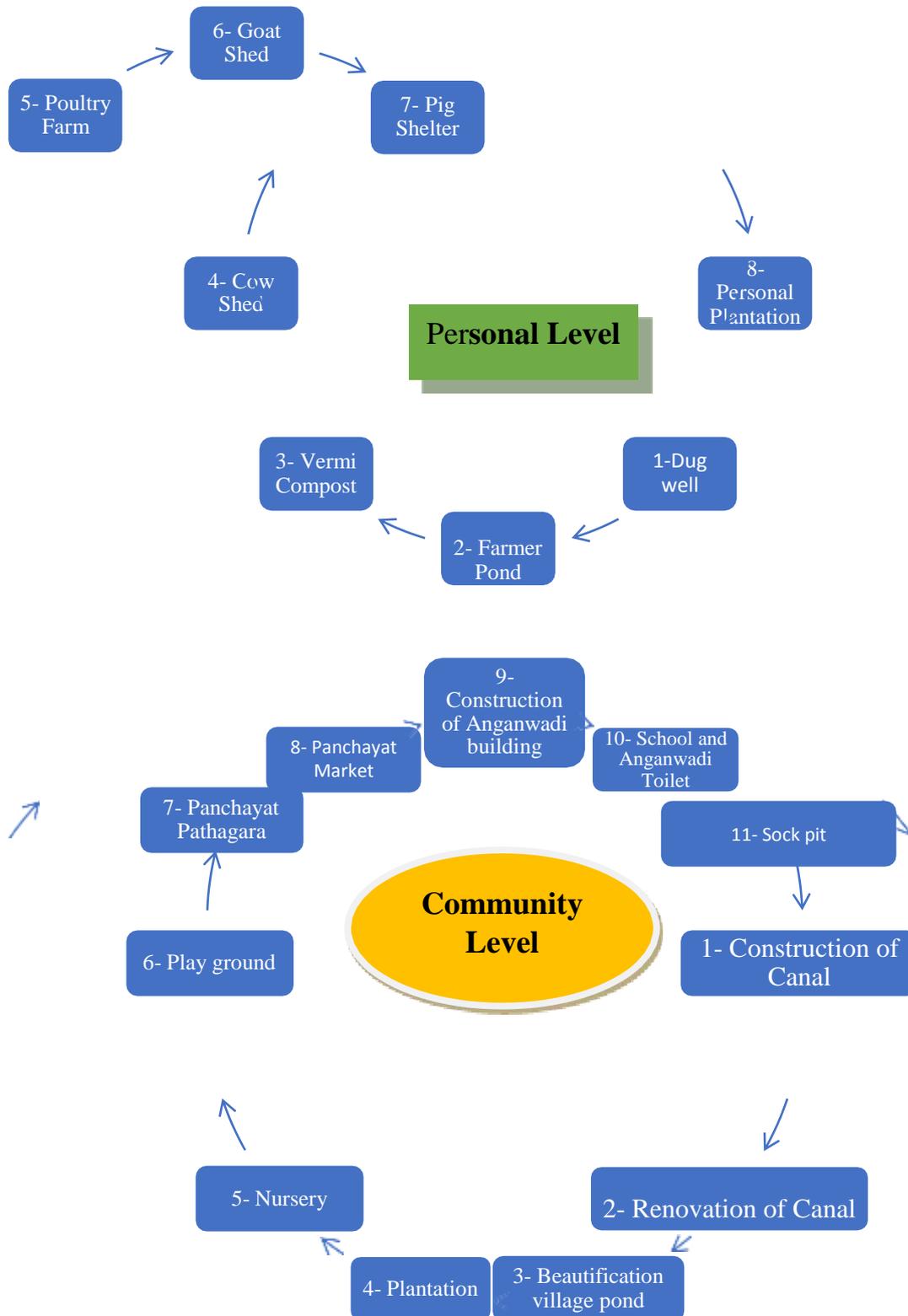
Strengthening of Panchayati Raj as units of Local Self Government

Odisha Government is committed to strengthening Panchayati Raj institutions. In the year 2003, twenty-one subjects of 11 departments were assigned to Panchayati Raj institutions. All the officers were coming under District, Block and Gram Panchayat level functionaries of 11 departments made accountable to Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samiti and Gram Panchayat, respectively, for smooth and effective implementation. They are given powers to prepare and submit plans and schemes for deliberation, debate and approval in each level of PRIs.

Programmes and Schemes under Panchayati Raj:



Grampanchayat Level Schemes





Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

The table below shows the details of MGNREGS work in Odisha in 2018 to indicate the implementation of the said schemes.

Sl No	Schemes	Lunch	Source Of Fund	Matching Grants	Convergence With Other Department	Total Amount
1	Const. of AWC Building	2019	MGNREGS & W&CD and MS	60:40	W&CD and MS	7.00 Lakhs
2	Cattle Shed	2018	MGNREGS			1,13,000/-
3	Goat Shelter	2018	MGNREGS			44 ,000/-
4	Piggery Shelter	2018	MGNREGS			69,000/-
5	Poultry Shelter	2018	MGNREGS			39,000/-
6	Farm Pond	2018	MGNREGS			1,67,032/-
7	NADEP Compost Pit	2018	MGNREGS			14,000/-
8	Vermi Compost Tank	2018	MGNREGS			20,000/-
9	GPLF Building	2018	MGNREGS			12.50 Lakh
10	Multi-utility Gram Panchayat Tank	2019	MGNREGS			10 Lakh
11	Panchayat Library	2018	MGNREGS			5.00 LAKH
12	Playgrounds	2018	MGNREGS with CFC/SFC		Ama GaonAma Bikash & RWSS	5.00 LAKH
13	IHHL	2018	MGNREGS			12,000/-
14	Land Development	2018	MGNREGA			15,000/-
15	Plantation	2018	MGNREGA			15,000/-
16	Cattle-feed Supplement	2018	MGNREGA			20,000/-

17	Dug Well	2018	MGNREGA			63,000 to 1,60,000/-
18	Const. of Rural Park	2018	MGNREGS with CFC/SFC		SBM/RWSS/ CFC/SFC	

(Source Government of Odisha, Department of Panchayati Raj & Drinking Water 2010)

Besides MGNREGS, there are some other works are running under Panchayati Raj Department that are

A- Odisha Livelihoods mission:-

- Mobilizing all the poor households into functionally effective SHGs and their federations;
- Enhancing their access to bank credit and other financial technical and marketing services;
- Building their capacities and skills for gain full and sustainable livelihoods development;
- Converging various schemes for efficient delivery of social and economic support services to poor with optimal results.

B- Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY)

C- Projects and Programmes of OLM

Odisha Livelihoods Mission is implementing various National & State-funded projects on Rural Livelihoods Development. All these projects and programmes are:

- National rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) and National rural Livelihoods Project (NRLP)
- Odisha Aam Aadmi Bima Yojana (O-AABY)
- Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI)
- Odisha Rural Development & Marketing Society (ORMAS)
- PRI-CBO

Rice at Rs.1/- per kg for all beneficiaries selected under the scheme

The State Government is distributing rice at Rs.1/- per kg to mitigate hunger deprivation and to eradicate poverty at all level under various state and centrally sponsored schemes. The Table below shows the different schemes.

Sl No.	Name of the Scheme	Total beneficiaries covered	Amount of Foodgrain	Price per killo
1	BPL	36,90,027	25 killo Gram	Rs.1.00
2	KBK APL	5,32,133	25 killo Gram	Rs.1.00



3	AAY	12,53,164	25 killo Gram	Rs.1.00
4	Rice for Differently-abled persons - RDP	76,534	25 killo Gram	Rs.1.00
5	St/Sc Hostel	5,14,357	25 killo Gram	Rs.1.00

Annapurna Scheme:

The people who have not covered in Natonal Old Age Pension Scheme are provided food grains free of cost. The Table below shows the details about the scheme.

Sl No.	Name of the Scheme	Total beneficiaries covered	Amount of Food grain	Price per kilo
1	ANNAPURNA	63,759	10 KILLO GRAM	Free of cost

D- Rural Housing Odisha

Government of Odisha is assuring houses to all. The Panchayati Raj Department Government of Odisha under various housing schemes providing houses to houseless and pucca house to Kuchha house holders. The schemes are as follows:-

- 1- Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Grameen
- 2- Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana
- 3- Pucca Ghar Yojana – Mining
- 4- Nirman Shramik Pucca Ghar Yojana

E- Social Security & Empowerment of Persons With Disabilities Department (SSEPD)

The Panchayati raj Department Government of Odisha under various pension schemes distributing pension under the following heads.



Literature Review

Mehta, (1957) According to him finding the weaknesses of the community development program, a committee was appointed by the government. It is known as the Balwant Rai Mehta Team. The Team studied and recommended for active participation of both the government agencies and the common people is the need for successful working of development programs.

Aiyar (2010), in his scholarly article he has mentioned that the Local self-government is always a fascinating subject in India. The need for Panchayat Raj (an elected village government) was concept of Mahatma Gandhi before Independence. His intention and goal were to democratize both the polity and society. According to him there should be empowerment of “the weakest and the progress of the poorest”. When Mahatma Gandhi was asked about his vision for India in the context of “India of My Dreams,” he stated that “I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country, in whose making they have an effective voice”. Gandhi advocated for elected village governments. For a more significant cause, he advocated for “village republics”. In which the power will be in the hands of the village community and to look after their own will. The dreams of Mahatma Gandhi for essential requisites were fulfilled within a short time.



Bhandari, L. (2014), in his report titled “*Survey in 23 States for the Panchayat Strengthening Index 2013-14*”, the author has presented a brief account of panchayats’ structure in context with the context of the state of Odisha. Odisha got new provincial status by the Government of India Act 1956 which made provisions for a Provincial Assembly. Thus, in 1948 the Odisha Gram Panchayat Act was passed by the Assembly. It was the first legislation prescribing constitutional power to Gram Panchayats in Odisha. The current version of the act is the Odisha Gram Panchayats Act, 1964.

Many Panchayat laws of Odisha were amended so as to follow the provisions of the 73rd Amendment Act 1992 and PESA Act 1996 (Provisions of Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas Act). Odisha conducted Panchayati Raj Election as per PESA Act 1996 for the first time in India in 2002. The reservation of seats for STs/ SCs in Scheduled Areas have been reserved. Now Gram Sabhas and Palli Sabhas are given more powers in making their function effective under PESA Act 1996.

Rituraj Neog, (2014) “Panchayat and Rural Development: A Case study of Amguri under Sivasagar District, Assam, India” considered that the Gram Panchayat is the key to rural development. He found out that his study area provides several developmental programs for the upliftment of the rural people, like PMGSY, IAY, and NREGA. They are bundled with state and national programmes. Apart from this, some significant programmes do not yet have a supporting role, for example, Rajiv Gandhi Gramin Vidyutikaran Yojana, Total Sanitation Schemes, Training of Rural youth to make them self-able to get employment. After a detailed study, it was found out that these schemes have yet to achieve target of the success rate.

In his paper, Tame Ramya (2014) studied “The role of Panchayat Raj Institutions in rural development in general and a tribal village of a backward district in Arunachal Pradesh”. According to the author, since independence, the priority is to provide a good government and overall development. The focus on development was shifted and emphasized on Agriculture, Commerce, Industry, Education and Health with the passage of 73rd Amendment Act 1992 through devolution of powers to Panchayat bodies.

Bishnu Prasad Mohapatra (2018), in his scholarly article “Panchayats under the PESA Act in Odisha – A Study of Two Gram Panchayats”, found out that in the state of Odisha the PESA Act 1996 came in to force in 1997 with the passage of Odisha Panchayati Raj amendment Act 1997, Odisha Panchayat Samiti Amendment Act 1997 and Zilla Parishad Amendment Act 1997 this made the Gram Panchayat more effective and vibrant in providing the Social, Economic and Political Justice to all.

Research Gap Identified

The literature review mentioned above is exhaustive and considers the overall picture of Local Self Government at the Indian level and, later on, deals with Local government at the State level. This review identifies and finds a huge gap in research done on Local Self Government in Odisha in general and Sambalpur District in Particular. No study has been done on Kuturachuan Gram Panchayat of Kuchinda Block. The researcher found some studies at the



state level, but they are not exhaustive and consider only certain aspects of Panchayat Rural Institutions and Urban Local Self- government. There is a dearth of studies on the effectiveness of various aspects of development both at village level and urban level.

Research Objectives

- To measure the impact of Panchayat Raj Institution on the Social, Economic and Political development of people in Katurachuan Gram Panchayat.
- To sketch the best practices adopted by the Panchayats in Poverty eradication.
- To evaluate as to what extent women empowerment has gained roots in Katurachuan Gram Panchayat.
- To suggest some suitable measures to strengthen the working of the Panchayati Raj Institution.

Research Questions

- What is the background of the adoption of Local Self Government in India?
- What is the history of PRI's in Odisha with particular reference to Katurachuan village?
- Have we been able to reap the fruits of the success of Local Self Government?
- To what extent women empowerment has gained roots in Katurachuan Gram Panchayat?
- Why are the people of the study area not yet elevated to a better standard of life after so many years of implementation of many development programs?
- How the Local Self Government has contributed to the overall development of the country?

Scope and Relevance

This study shall highlight the best practices of administration in strengthening the Panchayat Raj Institutions and bring to the fore the strengthening measures and administrative practices that have led to Good Governance at the Local level in Katurachuan Gram Panchayat in terms of Women Empowerment, Education of children under Right to Education Act and Poverty elevation programs. This study will provide inputs for recommendations in order to improve the functioning and strengthening of Gram Panchayat.

Hypotheses

H₀: Panchayati Raj Institutions in Katurachuan Gram Panchayat in Odisha does not affect the overall socio-economic development of the region and its people.

H₁: Panchayati Raj Institutions in Katurachuan Gram Panchayat in Odisha positively affects the overall socio-economic development of the region and its people.

Findings:-

The decentralization of powers is now achieved in a true sense by the Panchayati Raj System's successful working as per the 73rd Amendment Act 1992. The more critical steps among them are a representation of people through direct election, five years term, adequate representation of women, reservation of seats for weaker sections of both male and female. Odisha has brought a great change in rural local self-government by emphasizing women's empowerment and all sections of people in general. Still, more financial allocation and freedom to prepare an action plan to realize the local issues is highly required. Unnecessary interference



by public and government officials is needed to ensure and protect democratic values and social justice. Provision of reservation for SC/ST/OBC and Women helped empower these sections of the society.

Suggestion:-

- 1- Successful working of Panchayati Raj System depends on the good and harmonious relationship between elected members and officials. Periodical Training can make them efficient and sincere in their duties.
- 2- Excessive control of government officials will kill the initiative of the local people.
- 3- Allocation of more funds is necessary.
- 4- The educational qualification of the elected members is a crucial issue before the Institution. So necessary steps to be taken by the government to ensure minimum educational qualification.
- 5- Panchayats should be free from political bias.
- 6- The Goal of Empowerment of Women is now being achieved to a greater extent by providing reservation to SC/ST/OBC and even general women in panchayat bodies, but a long way is to be crossed for in future.
- 7- The Role of Gram Panchayat in the field of CLIMATE CHANGE and GLOBAL WARMING should be an active one. Panchayati Raj Department Government of India may prepare policies to participate the Gram Panchayat actively in saving and Solving Environmental Issues.

2. CONCLUSION

Panchayat Raj has changed the socio, economic and political conditions of the people through implementing a number of development Programmes. So far as the economic standard the buying capacity of every one has increased substantially. The living condition of the people and economic condition of the villages has strategically going upwards. Schemes and Programmes like health, sanitation, rural connectivity, power supply, market linkage, simplification of banking, agricultural support, migrant labour management, various housing schemes, poverty eradication programmes and many more has made Panchayati Raj an instrument bridging the gap between Rural and Urban. More over many miles to go so far as the development and realisation of Rights for the rural people for our country in general and Kutchachuan Gram Panchayat in particular.

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