

## **PANCHAYAT RAJ AND LOCAL BODIES ISSUES AND TRENDS IN KARNATKA**

Dr. Govindaraj C V

Assistant Professor of Political Science and Principal Government First Grade College  
Hesaraghatta , Bangalore - 560088

### **ABSTRACT**

The paper refers the rural local governance in Karnataka and Issues and trends. India is mainly dependent on agriculture; nearly 65 per cent of the people live in rural areas. The rural people have to be involved in planning, decision making, monitoring and implementation of development programmes in order to hurry the process of development. Unfortunately the people are not actively involved in the development process. There are some difficulties in the present system, from top to substructure of rural local bodies. The dawn of 21st century is marked by decentralized governance both as a strategy and a philosophy to bring about reforms and changes in democracies. As in other parts of the Indian subcontinent, Karnataka has a long history of local governance dating right back to the Vedic ages. But over the centuries the region witnessed a gradual decline of village autonomy. This trend got accentuated with the advent of the British rule. The historical background of local self-government in Karnataka can be broadly classified into the following phases i.e., 1978-82, 1983-86 and 1986-1993. Various committees have been constituted for devolution of functions in their respective spheres to the three tiers of panchayats. The decentralization and entrustment of powers and functions to panchayats is a continuous and dynamic process. The present system is always open to the idea of delegating even more powers and functions to the rural local bodies especially the Grama Panchayats.

**Keywords: PRIs phases, Governance, functional, Financial.**

### **Introduction**

As per as financial autonomy is concerned, the panchayats in the State are well placed. Funds are provided according to the recommendations of the SFC. Each GP gets on an average Rs. 1 crore approximately. There are other problems observed in the PRIs. The GPs have joint cheque signing powers. India is mainly dependent on agriculture; nearly 65 per cent of the people live in rural areas. The rural people have to be involved in planning, decision making, monitoring and execution of development programmes in order to hasten the process of development. Unfortunately the people are not actively involved in the development process.

**I. MEANING OF DECENTRALIZED GOVERNANCE** The dawn of 21st century is marked by decentralized governance both as a strategy and a philosophy to bring about reforms and changes in democracies. This change is expected to lead the transparency, responsiveness and accountability and ensure good governance. Today decentralization is playing an important role in local governments and is the most significant theme in the development discourse. In the present context of rapid social change and development activities, debureaucratization and decentralization have been found to be much more appropriate to deal with contemporary trends of globalization, liberalization and privatization. There are several meanings attributed to decentralized governance. The following meaning is generally accepted by all; Decentralized Governance has been used

interchangeably with concepts like 'local governance', 'local self-governance', 'panchayat administration', decentralization panchayat governance' all imply the same phenomenon of decentralization as a political reform process aimed at further democratizing of the state.

**II. FEATURES OF DECENTRALIZED GOVERNANCE** Decentralization leads to the empowerment of the local people through deconcentration and devolution. Decentralized governance seeks to tap local initiatives and practices by involving grassroots organizations such as self-help groups. Representative democracy and participatory democracy both become possible through decentralized governance. An important feature of decentralized governance is interactive policy making which leads to decentralized decision making. Interactive policy is a process where government and non-governmental sectors such as private sector, non-governmental organizations, communities, grass roots organizations, pressure groups participate in decision-making so as to influence issues and suggest alternatives. Therefore, decentralized governance is an alternative strategy of development, which is people-centered, participatory and bottom-up development mechanism. Decentralized governance is good for the people. The people will have a better understanding of what the government does. It is a concept based on the right of the people to initiate and execute policy decisions in an autonomous manner. It is a more effective way of meeting local needs. It also provides a mechanism which is responsive to the variety of issues encountered from time to time. Decentralized governance enable poor people to take part in politics, which is necessary for successful implementation of antipoverty programmes.

### **III. GROWTH OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS**

As in other parts of the Indian subcontinent, Karnataka has a long history of local governance dating right back to the Vedic ages. But over the centuries the region witnessed a gradual decline of village autonomy. This trend got accentuated with the advent of the British rule. During the early years as colonizers, they were primarily interested in consolidating their territorial gains. However, during the later half of the 19th century, for administrative convenience, the concept of self governance was revived by the imperial government through attempts made by Lord Mayo, Lord Ripon and the subsequent Montague-Chelmsford Constitutional reforms of 1919 which closely followed the 1875 report on the Decentralization Commission. All these measures evolved during the pre- and post-independence era, had their impact on the new legislation, the Mysore Village Panchayats and Local Boards Act 1959. The historical background of local self-government in Karnataka can be broadly classified into the following phases.

I. 1978-82 The first phase began in 1978 by building up the most important elements of district planning. To begin with, at the district level, two development planning committees were created, that is 'District Planning Committee' (DPC) and District Development Councils (DDC). DPC comprises professionals, planners, district heads of departments and other technical experts in this subject, with the Deputy Commissioner of District as its chairman. This committee prepared the draft district plans for the districts. DDC were reconstituted with people's representatives like, MLAs, MLCs MPs and

people's representatives at grassroots level, with a number around 100 people in a district. Deputy Commissioner of the district is the chairman of the Council.

II. 1983-86 The second phase of district planning starts from 1983 to 1986. In this period, more control and devolution of funds and schemes were brought according to the well wishes of state level heads and planning machinery. The district plans presented to the state government in the first phase underwent drastic changes at the heads of state planning department. This phase was major change, instead of releasing lump-sum allocation for all sectors for the district, minor-headwise outlays under each sector were provided.

III. 1986-1993 The third phase of District Planning in Karnataka starts with the implementation of the Act of 1985. The Act of 1985 received Presidential assent on 10th July, 1985 and was gazetted on 2nd August 1985. The necessary rules and orders under the relevant provisions of the Act were issued from 1985 onwards for the implementation of the Act. And finally the Act was implemented on 1st April 1987. When the Act of 1985 was implemented, there were 19 ZPs, 2525 Mandal Panchayats and 27024 Grama Sabhas covering a population of 264 lakhs by which 71 per cent of the rural population of the State came under the purview of the Act. This Act gives institutional arrangements for decision making with people's participation, administrative arrangements for delegation of power and financial arrangements for devolution of funds and schemes to the lower levels from the state for decentralized planning in Karnataka. The set-up for the district planning was changed altogether along with the change in Panchayati Raj system. In the Karnataka Zilla Panchayats, Taluk Panchayats, Mandal Panchayats, the Nyaya Panchayats Act 1983 was brought into operation from 1st April 1987. It was modeled on the Ashok Mehta Committee. It was an ex-officio body of elected bodies at the village and district levels and ex-officio body at the taluk level. Elections to these bodies were held in January 1987 establishing 2,489 Mandal Panchayats for a cluster of villages having a population between 8,000 and 12,000. A body of village elected and called the 'Grama Sabha' was intended to be a body to oversee the functioning of Mandal Panchayats was also legally established as a novel feature. One of the major responsibilities of the Department is in the realm of implementing the provisions of the Karnataka Panchayati Raj Act 1993 to achieve democratic decentralization in the governance of the state's rural areas. The Department coordinates the process of the establishment of Panchayati Raj Institutions under the above legislation and monitors their functioning in order to ensure that Panchayati Raj Institutions in the State function as viable and vibrant institutions of Local Self-Government. Karnataka has the distinction of enacting a comprehensive Panchayati Raj Act which incorporates all the essential features of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. The Act came into force from May 10, 1993, within a few days of 73rd Constitution amendment was adopted. The Karnataka Panchayati Raj Act 1993 provided for a elected three-tier system at the village (Grama Panchayat), taluk (Taluk Panchayati Samiti) and district (Zilla Panchayat) levels (KPR Act 1993). Panchayati Raj system in Karnataka has mainly a three tier structure, spatially speaking panchayat at village/group of villages level, Taluk Panchayati Samiti (TPS) at the taluk level and Zilla Panchayat (ZP) at the district

level. At present, there are 5,628 panchayats, 175 taluk panchayati Samitis and 30 Zilla Panchayats in the state. Institutional Representation: The system of local self-governance in the state had remained stagnant for quite some time following irregular elections to the local bodies and their supersession by bureaucratic control. Member of all the three tiers i.e., Grama panchayats, Taluk Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Panchayat were directly elected. But the Adhyaksha and Upadhyaksha (President and Vice president) of the Grama panchayats, Taluk panchayat samiti and Zilla Panchayats were elected indirectly from among the elected members. It is worthwhile to mention here that, compared to earlier PRIs in the state, the 1993 Act provide reservation of seats for SC and ST according to their population and for women.

### **Functions of PRIs**

This section mainly places of interest the organization and administration of rural local government in Karnataka. In 1992, the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution was enacted and it brought about a number of changes in the rural local bodies. Consequently the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act 1993 came into force with effect from 13th April 1993. Some of the important characteristics brought about by the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution and the Karnataka Panchayats Act 1993 are listed below:---

- Introduction of a three-tier system i.e., at Village level-Grama Panchayat, at block level-Taluk Panchayati Samiti and at district level-Zilla Panchayat.
- Mandatory conduct of local body election every five years.
- Introduction of reservation of seats and offices for SC/STs in proportion to their population in every local body with provision for rotation of the reserved seats and offices.
- Introduction of reservation of for women.
- Constitution of State Election Commission as an independent body to conduct elections to both rural and urban local bodies periodically.
- Establishment of State Finance Commission to recommend devolution of resources from the State Government to the rural and urban local bodies.
- Constitution of a District Planning Committee to consolidate the plans prepared by the rural local bodies in the district with a view to preparing a comprehensive development plan for the district.
- Introduction of the concept of Grama Sabha comprising all registered voters in a Grama Panchayat. Structure of Rural Local Bodies Grama Sabha means a body consisting of persons registered in the voters list of Grama Panchayat.

### **GRAM SABHA:--**

The Grama Sabha shall meet at least once in six months. Grams sabha is the grass root level democratic institution in each village. A vibrant Grama sabha is essential for the effective functioning of grama panchayats by promoting transparency and accountability in administration, enhancing public participation in the planning and implementation of schemes and paving the way for social audit. Provided that a Special meeting of the Grama Sabha shall be convened if a request is made by not less than ten percent of the members of the Grama Sabha with items of agenda specified in such request and there shall be a minimum three months period between two special meetings of the Grama Sabha. The

quorum for the meeting of a Grama Sabha shall be not less than one tenth of the total number of members of the Grama Sabha, or hundred members, whichever is less. As far as may be, at least ten members from each Ward Sabha within the Panchayat area shall attend the meeting and not less than thirty percent of the members attending the Grama Sabha shall be women. As far as may be the persons belonging to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes shall be represented in proportion to their population in the Grama Sabha.

### **GRAM PANCHAYAT:--**

Functional Devolution Various committees have been constituted for devolution of functions in their respective spheres to the three tiers of panchayats. The decentralization and delegation of powers and functions to panchayats is a continuous and dynamic process. The present system is always open to the idea of delegating even more powers and functions to the rural local bodies especially the Grama Panchayats. Grama Panchayats There are 5638 GPs in the state spread across the 30 districts and the 176 TPSs.

### **Powers and Functions of the GPs----**

Some of the important functions of GPs are:

- providing sanitary latrines to not less than ten per cent of the households every year and achieve full coverage as early as possible;
- constructing adequate number of community latrines for the use of men and women and maintaining them;
- maintaining water supply works either on its own or by annual contract by generating adequate resources;
- revising and collecting taxes, rates and fees periodically which are leviable under the Act;
- ensuring universal enrollment of children in primary school;
- achieving universal immunization of children; g) ensuring prompt registration and reporting of births and deaths;
- providing sanitation and proper drainage; i) construction, repair and maintenance of public streets;
- removing encroachments on public streets or public places;
- providing adequate number of street lights and paying electricity charges regularly;
- filling-up insanitary depressions and reclaiming unhealthy localities;
- destruction of rabid and ownerless dogs; n) maintenance of all community assets vested in it;
- maintenance of records relating to population census crop census, cattle census, census of unemployed persons and persons below poverty line;
- earmarking places away from the dwelling houses for dumping refuse and manure.
- The GPs do not need external approval for taking up works up to Rs. 5.00 lakh from their general fund. They can buy street light materials meeting the prescribed quality norms on their own.

## **TALUK PANCHAYAT SAMITI**

The next higher tier is the Taluk Panchayat Samiti (TPS), constituted for each taluk and consists of members directly elected through ballot by all the residents in the non-urban areas of the taluk. The strength of the TPS varies depending on the population, taluks, with population of less than one hundred thousand can have 15 members and these, having one hundred thousand and above, can elect 19 members. Seats are reserved for scheduled castes on the basis of their population and for women, the number being not more than two. Members of Legislative Assembly (MLA) whose constituencies lie within the taluk and members of the Legislative Council (MLCs) are entitled to take part in the proceedings and also vote in the meetings. The presidents and vice-presidents of TPSs would be elected from among members only. The term of all directly elected members is five years. The MLAs and MLCs hold office till the end of their tenure in the state legislature. There are 176 TPS in the State.

Powers and Functions Some of the important functions of TPS are:

- (i) Construction and augmentation of water supply works to the level of not less than 40 litres per capita for day;
- (ii) filing half-yearly report regarding the activities of Grama Panchayats within the taluk regarding:
- (iii) holding of Grama Sabha;
- (iv) maintenance of water supply works;
- (v) construction of individual and community latrine
- (vi) collection and revision of taxes, rates and fees;
- (vii) payment of electricity charges;
- (viii) enrollment in schools; and
- (ix) progress of immunisation.
- (x) Providing adequate number of classrooms and maintaining primary school buildings in proper condition, including water supply and sanitation;
- (xi) acquiring land for locating the manure pits away from the dwelling houses in the villages.

## **ZILA PANCHAYAT**

There are 30 ZP in the State. It is an advisory body. The functions are as follows:

- The TPS and ZP are only monitoring and supervising the developmental works.
- Therefore, the GPs as independent democratic units have been allowed to function without any capacity building thereby leading to less efficient productivity.
- Funds are provided according to the recommendations of the SFC. Each GP gets on an average Rs. 1 crore approximately.

## **SOME OTHER IMPORTANT WORK OF PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTION IN KARNATKA**

- Rural Drinking Water and Sanitation
- Supply of adequate and safe drinking water to all the 59,774 rural habitations of the State is given utmost importance in order to improve the living Standards of the rural

masses. It is programmed to provide 55 liters of drinking water to each person per day as per the NRDWP guidelines -2013. As declared by the Hon'ble Chief Minister in the budget speech, water supply schemes are being programmed to provide 85 liters of drinking water to each person per day. Potable drinking water is being supplied to rural areas through the Borewells fitted with Hand pump, Mini Water Supply Scheme, Piped Water Supply Scheme, and Multi Village Water Supply Schemes

#### **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)**

➤ The Rural Development Commissionerate is responsible for implementing and overseeing the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme [MGNREGS], which provides employment in rural areas. The MGNREGS was initiated with the objective of "enhancing livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year, to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work". Another aim of MGNREGS is to create durable assets (such as roads, canals, ponds and wells). Employment is to be provided within 5km of an applicant's residence, and minimum wages are to be paid. If work is not provided within 15 days of applying, applicants are entitled to an unemployment allowance

#### **Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural)**

➤ Karnataka has been the forerunner in putting forth concerted efforts to implement total sanitation in the rural parts of the State. The State has been implementing a number of sanitation programmes right from 1985, with the assistance of Central Government and external agencies like Danida, Royal Netherlands, World Bank, UNICEF and other development partners. With a view to give special emphasis to rural sanitation, "Nirmal Grama Yojane" has become operational in 1995 and was implemented for 8 years. Afterwards the Centrally sponsored scheme of "Total Sanitation Campaign" was in operation from 2005 to 2012 and this scheme was renamed as Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan from 1st April 2012 and it was again rechristened as "Swachh Bharat Mission" with effect from 2nd October 2014

## **CONCLUSION**

It is well documented that the success of democratic transference depends on adequate power devolution, sufficient financial resource devolution, efficient administrative capacity of the decentralized institutions and effective answerability mechanisms. But a major problem encountered in effecting decentralized governance is the propensity of power holders to not give up power and authority to lower level institutions. The PRIs in Karnataka suffer from certain colonial hangovers. For example the ZPs have been given only administrative roles. The hangover thus continues even today. A strong decentralized authority is needed at district level, in order to strengthen panchayat administration in the state. Karnataka government has undoubtedly taken a number of steps to grant greater responsibilities, powers and financial resources to the PRIs. Thus, the needs of decentralized governance in the state have now begun to germinate. But the present pattern and process of governance in the State is still at junction and has a long way to go before it attains maturity.

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