

A study of impact of Existing Administrative Culture on the Growth and development of PRIs

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Introduction:

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The concept behind Panchayati Raj is that the people in the village should undertake the responsibility of governing themselves. People in the villages should actively participate in the development activities regarding agriculture, public health, education, irrigation, animal husbandry, etc. Not only the rural people should participate in the implementation of programmes they should have the authority to take decision regarding their requirements and necessities. Panchayati Raj confers on the rural people the power of decision-making regarding development activities. People through their chosen representative determine the local policies and execute their own programmes in conformity with the real requirements of the community. This is democracy at the grass roots. The people at the lowest level are associated with the governance of the country. Generally, power is located at one single center except in a federation. The process by which power is transferred from a higher level to a lower level is called decentralization. Decentralization is not only a device for the delegation of dispersal of administrative authority, but it is also a democratic method of devolution of political authority. The underlying idea behind democratic decentralization is to widen the area of democracy by granting both authority and autonomy to the people at lower levels.

The political approach underscores the essentially political character of decentralization. Initiatives to decentralize and willingness to pass on powers and functions to decentralize units, and to allow these units to actually operate within a framework of autonomy, are politically determined. Creation of field units of government, away from central headquarters, exemplifies. Decentralization, in the shape of devolution to local self-governing bodies makes an attempt to set autonomous governments at the level of the locality,

Administrative culture is a sub culture of the culture of its people of the society. Administrative culture, therefore, can be seen in the manner in which its functionaries operate. The culture of administration depends on the rule perception and performance of their functionaries.

The administrative approach to decentralization is motivated by efficiency criterion, enhancement of administration rationality has become a necessity in a modern State, when field administrative units are set up through a process of de-concentration, the measure is considered appropriate for field level decision-making and prompts problem solving. In this process, administrative units might come up many levels between the locality and the central headquarter. With more and more demand for specialized functions, multiplicity of function and department would appear at the field level based administrative demands and specific function centred claims of particular functional departments is gradually presented in the administrative situations. In order to promote such operational principles, conscious attempts are needed to readjust from time to time conflicting claims of area and functions in de-concentrated field administration.

Finally, the dual-role approach as Fesler puts it is a kind a rehearsal of the area function dichotomy in a new setting. Decentralization is placed large context of development and change, as distinguished from maintenance of status quo. Conceived in administrative terms, the dual-role approach seeks to highlight the conflict in field administration between tradition and change. Almost all the developing countries that have inherited the colonial field system are seeking to bring about speedy social and economic change. As a result, the functions of field administration have undergone changed over the years. Naturally, resolution of conflicts between two different orientations in field administration calls for adaptation of decentralization to changing circumstances. This theme of decentralization is not unfamiliar to Indian administration in general and the district administration in particular. Thus, there are four different types of decentralization viz. administrative, functional political and geographical one.

To conclude, the concept of democratic decentralization implies the devolution of sizeable powers and responsibilities by the central government through properly enacted legislative measure to the democratically created territorial units. Under this arrangements, the units of local government 'sentative democracy' enjoy, more or less, complete autonomy within the territorial and functional jurisdiction that is thus delimited to them.

II

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts enacted are the instruments, which not only induced the state legislatures to enact such laws for their States but also provided a model guideline on the issue. The Haryana Panchyat Raj Act 1994 has entrusted duties and functions with regard to almost all the twenty nine subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule of the constitution. However the state government has only entrusted the functions of supervising and monitoring the field level activity of sixteen department of various schemes of these departments of the government also, the duties relating to planning and implementation of various schemes of these departments has been entrusted to the PRIs but the activities pertaining to funds and functionaries continued with line departments.

The village panchayats in many states have been helpless since their establishment. They do not have any real powers in exercise. These are considered administrative appendages and expected to perform only those functions approved by state level political leadership, administrative set up or the PR officials. Panchayats and their leadership administrative set up or the PR officials, panchayats and their leaders do not have any other option except to abide by those directions as they derive their finances from those agencies of authorities.

The Standing Committee of Parliament remarked in December 2002 that it was constrained to note that even after the lapse of nine years of coming into force of the Constitution (73rd amendment) Act, most of the states were yet to fully and conscientiously implement Article 243-G of the constitution on the PRIs. It related to powers, authority and responsibility to be devolved by the state governments on the Panchyats. The Committee said it was unhappy to note that very few states tried to actualize devolution of functioning and finances. This is despite the fact that the Ministry of Rural Development claimed to operationalize administrative decentralization of funds, functions and functionaries with regard to the subjects specified in the Constitution by 31st March, 2002.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Mahipal(1994) in his article entitled CentralisedDecentralisation Haryana Panchayat Raj Act 1994,illustrates that in order to make the panchayats institutions of self-government the leadership at the grass roots level has to be strengthened. This cannot happen when Panchayats Acts as in Haryana accord as major role to the centralized bureaucracy. It is clear that state level political leaders and bureaucracy have a major role to play in the functioning of the panchayat raj system in the state. This is due to lack of political will on the part of the state level leaders to transfer power to the people. The past experience show that in place of people's raj Deputy Commissioner's raj prevailed in the state. going through the provisions conduct of bussinessduties functions and powers finance and taxation and control one finds several sections which empower either bureaucracy or government and therefore undermine the role of Gram Panchayat, PanchayatSamiti and ZilaParishad.

Hoshiar Singh (1994) states that the concept of panchayati raj has undergone changes since its inception is expending to cover areas of rural development and economic planning but it is still suffering from a number of shortcomings. First the present concept does not consider panchayati raj bodies as a agencies that can play an important role in the overall development of rural areas that is not as planning and implementation agencies for various rural development programmers. Second, there is no clarity about the relationship between Panchayati Raj bodies and development administration because the former has no separate ender ofadministration. The dual responsibility of the central administration towards state departments and Panchayati Raj bodies creates confusion and complications. Finally, no clear trend is emerging on decentralization ofpower.

A.P Barnabas (1998) in his article entitled Good Governance at local level focus on role of PRIs in bringing about good governance at the cutting edge level in rural area.The author identifies problems pertaining to perception of role of PRIs inadequacy of resource support problematic administrative structure etc. There are confusions regarding functions in PRIs as there is no delineation of functions between the three tiers. At the district and block level there is little autonomy for planning as national and state plans have to be accommodated. The social structure and the administrative system are hierarchical. Hence there has been little scope for a culture of decentralization.

RachnaDuttGoswami (2000) states that the implementation of decision to a large extent depends up on the bureaucrats the ideas attitudes emotion and sentiments or in one word –the culture of the bureaucrats of the country. After interviewing senior civil servants of Haryana in her study,to know about their attitudes about political aspects of Indian statements and social issues,he comes to the conclusions that illiteracy is a big hurdle in democracy,politicians do hot protect

sectarian interest, common man had no apathy towards national /state issues and there is a cordial relation between the civil servants and political executive /ministers.

Research methodology:-

Research methodology is a way to solve the research problem systematically. While designing the research work the following methodology will be adopted.

Objectives of the study:

The specific objectives of the present study are given as:

1. To find out what kind of decentralisation PR leaders expect and the nature of perception of PR officials on such expectations decentralization.
2. To observe whether officials appreciate elected members viewpoint or not?

Hypothesis of the study:

1. It seems that there is lack of cooperative attitude towards elected panchyat members
2. It seems that the administrative officials tend to centralize the authority, which is resulting into malpractices.

Research design

The present research study was conducted in the Panipat and Kaithal districts of the Haryana state. It includes ZilaParisad of both the districts. Two blocks of each sampled districts and two villages from each sampled blocks. The Gram Panchayats and PanchayatSamitis were selected purposive sampling method.

Primary Data

During the course of the study, primary data was collected with the help of separately prepared structured interview schedules for each category of respondents, observations and discussion methods were also used.

Secondary data

The secondary data was collected from various books reports, research studies and other relevant sources. The appropriate statistical tools of data analysis were applied to analyze the information collected during the empirical investigation of the study.

Tools of analysis

In order to achieve the various objectives mentioned, the data collected were entered, arranged and presented using Microsoft excel and SPSS 13. All information collected for the purpose of the study has been arranged in cross sectional tables, depending upon the requirements of the analysis. The tabulation encompasses absolute figures supported by simple percentage and subjected to statistical analysis through the use of Average, Standard Deviation and independent T-test

Analysis and interpretation

Table 1.1

Opinions of Sampled Respondents of Some Perspectives of Functional Devolution

Sr. No	Variables	Responses	Pnchayat Raj Leaders			Panchayat Raj Officials		
			Panipat	Kaithal	Total	Panipat	Kaithal	Total
1	Distribution of Grants	Elected Representatives	57	78	135 (64.25)	12	10	22 (39.28)
		Both Elected Members and Administrative officials	35	29	64 (30.47)	17	17	34 (60.71)
		Administrative officials only	---	---	---	---	---	---
		Uncertain	4	7	11 (5.22)	---	---	---
		Total	96	114	210 (100.00)	29	27	56 (100.00)
2	Selection of Sites	Elected Members	86	98	184 (87.61)	22	20	42 (75.00)
		Both Elected Members and Administrative officials	5	7	12 (5.17)	7	6	13 (23.21)
		Administrative officials only	---	---	---	---	1	1 (1.78)
		Uncertain	5	9	14 (6.66)	---	---	---
		Total	96	114	210 (100.00)	29	27	56 (100.00)
3	Redressal of Public Grievances	Elected Members	8	10	18 (8.58)	1	---	1 (1.78)
		Both Elected Members and Administrative officials	83	94	177 (84.27)	28	25	53 (94.64)
		Administrative officials only	---	3	3 (1.43)	---	2	2 (3.57)

	Uncertain	5	7	12	—	—	—
				(5.70)			
	Total	96	114	210	29	27	56
				(100.00)			(100.00)

It is evident from the data in table 1.1(1) that majority of PR leaders (64.27 per cent) opined that elected members should have the power of distribution of grants whereas another major segment (30.47 per cent) of respondents felt that both elected members as well as administrative officials should be responsible for it. Few of them (5.22 per cent) were uncertain which might be due to their lack of knowledge about the system. Thus leaders do not wish that grant should be distributed but the administrative officials.

However, the officials although could not claim that this authority to disburse grant should be endowed to them however, more than half of them (60.71 per cent) expressed that both elected members as well as administrative officials should have joint power of distribution of grants. Another large segment (39.28 per cent) expressed their view that this power should be given only to elected representatives. It indicates that the officials although support political decentralization in terms of distribution of grants but they wish their own collaboration in it.

Regarding second question, the data in table 1.1 (2) reveals that the overwhelming majority of PR leaders (87.61 per cent) were of the opinion that only elected members should have the power for the selection of sites for development works. A small number of them (5.70 per cent) expressed the view that it should be the responsibility of both elected members and administrative officials. This view point of leaders is well supported by a large majority of officials (75.00 per cent) as they agreed that only elected members should have the final say to select the sites for development works. However, 23.21 per cent of officials felt that both elected members and administrative officials should have this power. A negligible number of officials (1.78 per cent) opined that this power of selection of site should be vested with administrative officials only. Thus, it is concluded that this kind of authority should be vested in elected leaders as they are aware of ground realities, needs of local people and answerable to their electorates.

Third question asked was to state who should be responsible for redressal of public grievances? This was enquired to find out the primary of responsibility for redressal of grievances. The data in table 1.1(3) reveals that an overwhelming majority of PR leaders (84.27 per cent) were of the opinion that both the elected members and administrative officials should be responsible for redressal of public grievances. But some of the respondents (8.57 per cent) opined that it should be the responsibility of elected members only and a very few (1.43 per cent) viewed that only administrative officials should be responsible for it where as a small segment of respondents (5.70 per cent) were uncertain about it. This viewpoint is further strengthened by almost all of the officials (94.64 per cent) as they also favour the argument that both elected leaders and administrative officials should be responsible for redressal of public grievances. Very few of them (1.78 per cent) expressed that it should be the responsibility of elected leaders and an equal percentage (3.57 per cent) opined that this should vest with administrative officials only. Thus, it is quite interesting to note that both elected leaders and officials agree that popular and administrative experiences are essential to redress citizen grievances. Further there is not any significant difference between leaders and officials regarding the primacy of accountability of undertaking development/redressal of grievances either by elected leaders or in collaboration with official. It is interesting realization and if practiced can ensure harmony and effectiveness in PR working.

Table 1.2
Incidence of Appreciating PR Leaders View Points.

Indicate	Responses	Panchyat Raj Leaders			Panchyat Raj Officials		
		Panipat	Kaithal	Total	Panipat	Kaithal	Total
Distractive Officials do not appreciate elected members view point	Agree	26	17	43 (20.70)	-----	-----	-----
	Party Agree	16	23	39 (18.57)	10	7	17 (30.35)
	Disagree	50	67	117 (55.70)	19	20	39 (69.64)
	Uncertain	4	7	11 (5.22)	----	----	-----
	Total	96	114	210 (100.00)	29	27	56 (100.00)

The data in table 1.2 reveals that more than half of the PR leaders (55.70 per cent) were of the opinion that the officials of PR appreciate their viewpoint. Another segment having some sizeable proportion (18.57 per cent) partly agreed that they do not appreciate the viewpoint of elected members and nearly the same number of respondents (20.70per cent) agreed about the statement . A few of them (5.22 per cent) were uncertain. In turn, majority of officials of PR (69.64 per cent)disagreed that they do not appreciate viewpoints of elected members whereas nearly one-third of them (30.35 per cent) partly agreed about the statement. Thus, the culture of cooperation between PR leadership and officials for smooth functioning has been well accepted in the State. It is a positive indicator for democratic decentralization process.

Lastly, there is a viewpoint that bureaucracy is urbanite in character and therefore, it remains unconcerned to rural people and their leadership. Therefore, to have an understanding this viewpoint, information was collected and tabulated in table 3.

Table 1.3
Perceptions about urbanite character of PR bureaucracy

Indicat	Responses	Panchyat Raj Leaders			Panchyat Raj Officials		
		Panipat	Kaithal	Total	Panipat	Kaithal	Total
Urbanite therefore unconcerned	Agree	12	22	34 (16.19)	----	-----	-----
	Party Agree	24	19	43 (20.47)	4	2	6 (10.70)
	Disagree	54	67	121 (57.60)	25	25	50 (89.28)
	Uncertain	6	6	12 (5.70)	-----	----	-----
	Total	96	114	210 (100.00)	29	27	56 (100.00)

The data in table 1.3 reveals that more than half of the PR leaders (57.60 per cent) disagreed that the officials who are urbanite in their thinking and background are least concerned to the development of rural population where as one fifth of them (20.4 per cent) partly agreed and some of them (16.19 per cent)fully agreed to the statement. A few of the respondents (5.70per cent) were uncertain ,what to say about it . Thus, there have been minimum chances of friction between PR leadership and bureaucracy. In other words, functional devolution is very much possible if state political leadership and administrative leadership is ready to do so, because, it is they who hesitate to devolve powers to PRIs in the state.

Conclusion

Thus, it is concluded that officials that non officials are like both sides of a coin. The principal is that while elected representatives lay down guidelines, rules and norms, the bureaucracy working under the supervision and control of elected body is held responsible for their implementation. Powers and functions at each level are delegated or given to the elected body and not to in any single individual. While the officials functions under the supervision and control of the elected body, they also have the duty to point out to the elected body, wherever necessary, about the legal provisions so that decisions are fair and free from individual bias .

The logic of democracy being what it is, the elective wing should never reduce to a subordinate position .The professional role of bureaucracy in planning, execution of programmes and to render aid, assistance and advice will always be there. It is never a question of democracy or bureaucracy, it is one of democracy with bureaucracy. Therefore, in order to have positive results both the sides will have to interact in a participative manner in planning and implementation of the rural development programmes.

Therefore it is concluded that elected political leadership wishes to retain financial power and to select the areas of development for them it is in accordance with political accountability. Not only that, they are also ready to redress citizen grievances with the help of professional administrative set up. In total, panchayat raj leadership is ready to perform the centralised political responsibilities and hence functional decentralization is possible if polity wishes to do.

Finally, it is stated that the administrative officials tend to centralize the authority but the functional devolution, empowerment of PR leaders political patronage to PR leaders, and political interventions have been influencing the administrative functioning. However, there is an overall a tendency to centralize the authority by formulating policies and programmes by the apex level government and in the name of ensuring uniformity In administration.

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