Proceedings of the National Seminar on GRAMA SABHA

Edited by
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Government of Karnataka
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Contents

Preface

Introduction

1. The Role of the Gram Sabha in the process of Planning
   – An analytical approach
   Ramit Basu 1-22

2. Grand Design of the Gram Sabha
   Vinod Vyasulu 23-26

3. Functioning of Gram Sabha in Tamilnadu: A study in selected
   village panchayats in Sreperumbudur block, Kancheepuram District
   Nayakara Veeresha 27-50

4. Towards Participatory Planning Through Gram Sabha;
   Lessons from Kerala
   J.B.Rajan 51-63

5. Gram Sabha to Loka Sabha
   P.Lakshmanan 64-70

6. Gram Sabha in Panchayat Raj System:
   A path towards the development
   S.C.Jai Prabhakar 71-78

7. Community Participation in Environmental Protection:
   Issues and Policy Implications
   Mohd. Azam Khan and Tosib Alam 79-103

8. Rejuvenating Grassroot Democracy: An Experience from Kerala
   K.Gireesan and Jos Chathukulam 104-114
9. Gram Sabha: Challenges before us
   P. Shivashankar  
   115-117

10. Grama Sabhas in Kerala: Measures for Revitalising its Working
    Oommen John  
    118-128

11. Gram Sabha as a tool of Decentralised local governance
    – A Practitioners’ perspective
    P.C. Jaffer  
    129-134

12. Changing Role of Gram Sabha in Decentralised Governance
    – An Overview of Andhra Pradesh Experience
    M. Gopinath Reddy, Madhusudan Bandi and Ramachandra Reddy  
    135-150

13. An Action Research on Mahila Sabha (Gram Sabha by women voters):
    An Experience in West Bengal
    Suparna Ganguly  
    151-181

14. Gram Sabha experience in four districts of Karnataka State
    K. Sundar Naik  
    182-190

15. Annexure
    191-217

16. Annexure
    218-232
Preface

Decentralisation process got a fillip in the country with the 73rd Amendment providing the Constitutional mandate to the rural local bodies. Effective functioning of the Panchayat Raj Institutions depends largely on ensuring that the system is accountable to the people. Several state governments have initiated measures to ensure that the Gram Sabhas are the only means to realize this. Best practices in this field are noticed across the country in the areas of decentralized planning, social audit, identification of beneficiaries, supervision and monitoring of accounts etc..

The Abdul Nazeer Sab State Institute of Rural Development, Mysore has organized this National Seminar on Gram Sabha to provide a platform to share best experiences and initiatives to promote efficient functioning of Gram Sabha and disseminate the same. The participants of the seminar are NGO and Civil Society organizations, Senior Officers of Government from different states and Academicians.

The articles of this volume focus on some of the important areas of the functioning of the Gram Sabha especially their roles in the planning process, selection beneficiaries and other important issues. I am happy to note that this edited volume depicts the functioning of Gram Sabha in many states across the country.

I take this opportunity to express my deep sense of gratitude to all those who have contributed articles to this volume. I thank the Editors Sri. S.A. Ashraful Hasan and Dr. G.S. Ganesh Prasad for their excellent work. I also thank Sri. Wilfred D’Souza for designing the cover page and Smt. H.L. Sheela for composing the articles for this edited volume.

Dr. Amita Prasad, IAS
Director General
Introduction

To commemorate the YEAR OF THE GRAM SABHA “the Abdul Nazeer Sab State Institute of Rural Development, Mysore, is organizing a National Seminar, which focuses on the experiences from different parts of the country. The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution has envisaged that the Panchayath Raj Institutions should function as institutions of local self governance for the empowerment and development of the community. The Gram Sabha has been given a vital role to play in improving the service delivery mechanism in rural areas. It would be our endeavour in this seminar to discuss and brain-storm about the relevance of the Gram Sabha, their functioning, best practices and other related issues from across the country. With this in view, papers were invited from practitioners, implementers and academicians. These papers have been edited and a brief synopsis, which is being published, is as under -

“The Role of the Gram Sabha in the process of Planning - An analytical approach” by Ramit Basu highlights the role of the Gram Sabha in the light of the Constitutional Amendment and also analyzes the quality of functioning of Gram Sabhas in different parts of the country and efforts to strengthen the planning process at the grass root levels. The paper emphasizes centrality of Gram Sabha over centrality of Gram Panchayaths and steps to be initiated towards rejuvenating them.

“Grand Design of the Gram Sabha” by Vinod Vyasulu emphasizes the best innovations in some parts of the country and advocates that Gram Sabhas learn to make use of information on budget and accounts so that the accountability mechanisms perform in a meaningful way. This will enable the Gram Sabhas to respond to greater challenges and opportunities.

Nayakara Veeresha in his article “Functioning of Gram Sabha in Tamil Nadu: A study in selected village Panchayaths in Sreperumbudur block, Kancheepuram District” has looked into the functioning of these institutions in Tamil Nadu with specific focus on the awareness of the people, functioning of Gram Sabha and participation of youth in particular in its proceedings to ensure better governance in rural areas. The paper suggests
steps to give more publicity, success stories and inclusion of Gram Sabha practices in
the school curriculum towards strengthening its functioning.

“Towards Participatory Planning Through Gram Sabha: Lessons from Kerala” by J. B. Rajan highlights the steps initiated in Kerala towards strengthening the Gram Sabha in order to ensure active participation of the people in the planning process. It argues that active people’s participation can be ensured only if due space is provided to the Gram Sabha.

“Gram Sabha to Lok Sabha” by P. Lakshmanan analyses the powers and functions of Gram Sabha across states with specific focus on the Kerala. The paper has also highlights the role of political parties in the area of decentralization.

“Gram Sabha in Panchayath Raj System: A path towards the development” by S.C. Jai Prabakar focuses on the local governance in Karnataka and the role of Gram Sabha in the identification of beneficiaries based on wealth and vulnerability aspects of poverty. It advocates for a proper data base at the Gram Panchayath level and to develop a village level plan to combat hunger and poverty in rural areas.

“Community Participation in Environmental Protection: Issues and Policy Implications” by Mohd. Azam Khan and Tosib Alam argue for the rational use of scarce resources with the support of people and economic policies adopting strategic environmental management practices. It advocates espouses the cause of effective participation by the community to promote afforestation, wildlife conservation and strategies to be formulated to solve the problems through development process with community participation.

“Rejuvenating Grassroots Democracy: An Experience from Kerala” by K. Gireesan and Jos Chathukulam discusses the dynamics of the strategy, process and approach adopted in the area to enhance people’s participation in rural governance, resulting in rejuvenation of grassroots democracy. It devises a tool for assessing participation in Gram Sabha and for enhancing citizen participation in rural governance.

“Gram Sabha: Challenges before us” by P. Shivashankar highlights the provisions of
the Karnataka Panchayath Raj Act related to Gram Sabha and the powers conferred on it in the sphere of planning. It is an insider’s view which analyses the present scenario with respect to functioning of the Gram Sabha and steps to be initiated towards better functioning.

“Gram Sabhas in Kerala : Measures for Revitalizing its Working” by Oommen John analyses the functioning of Gram Sabha as an institution for planning, an institution for identification of beneficiaries and as an institution of Social Audit in Kerala. Discussing the present scenario in its functioning, it suggests measures towards revitalizing these Institutions.

“Gram Sabha as a tool of Decentralized local governance - A Practitioners’ perspective” by P.C. Jaffer tries to give an insight into the functioning of Gram Sabha, their assertiveness for supremacy and certain efforts to dilute their powers. It explains the evolution and changing roles of the Gram Sabha. It evaluates its actual functioning on the field. It also gives a brief comparison of the functioning of the Gram Sabha in Kerala and Karnataka based on the observations made by the author and also documentary analysis.

“Changing Role of Gram Sabha in Decentralised Governance - An Overview of Andhra Pradesh Experience” by M. Gopinath Reddy, Madhusudan Bandi and Ramachandra Reddy tries to analyze the role of Gram Sabha under the broader theoretical framework of concept and Theory of Democracy. It argues in favour of a legislative mandate from the state legislature for the Gram Sabhas in discharging their duties and responsibility in an efficient manner.

“An Action Research on Mahila Sabha (Gram Sabha by women voters): An Experience in West Bengal” by Suparna Ganguly analyses the role of the Gram Sabha and the Gram Sansad in West Bengal. It tries to understand the dynamics of women’s participation in the Gram Sansads as well as in the planning process and suggests policy initiatives for improving the performance.
“Gram Sabha experience in four districts of Karnataka State” by K. Sundar Naik analyses the functioning of Gram Sabha in different parts of Karnataka having different socio-economic conditions. It highlights the differences in its functioning and reflects the ground realities with respect to identification of beneficiaries, the role of officials and NGOs and participation of community while suggesting measures towards strengthening the Gram Sabha.

“Role of Gram Sabha in Planning Process” by Wilfred D’ Souza highlights the importance of Gram Sabha in the preparation of Development Plan at the Gram Panchayath level. It outlines the processes and procedures to be followed by rural institutions and the chapterization scheme to be followed in preparation of the plan.

In a nutshell, this volume tries to capture the essence of functioning of Gram Sabha in different states across India in the light of 73rd Constitutional Amendment. The various articles portray the ground realities in understanding the role of Gram Sabha by different players - academicians, bureaucrats, policy makers and elected representatives. A number of suggestions have been made in the articles towards strengthening the Gram Sabha and the same if implemented will go a long way in strengthening and deepening grassroots democracy in our country.

S.A. Ashraful Hasan
G.S. Ganesh Prasad
The Role of the Gram Sabha in the process of planning - An analytical approach

Ramit Basu*

Gram Sabha: What & Why

The constitutional mandate to create participatory democracy, through creating ‘institutions of self government’ and preparing and implementing plans for “economic development and social justice” need an altogether different paradigm of politics, development and culture. One of the key features of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) has been the role assigned to the Gram Sabha, ‘the assembly of the citizen voters’ as a deliberative and deciding body. In this manner an element of direct democracy is introduced at the lowest level. That is one way to broaden downward accountability as well.

As far as the constitutional obligation of creating panchayats throughout the country is concerned, except a few hick-ups here and there, this task has been more or less achieved within a reasonable time-frame. However, the real test of meaningful rural self-government is to ensure the active participation of the entire village community, to take democracy to every house or hut in every village. It is here that our rural decentralisation and local self-government falters. The reason for this is that we did not pay attention to strengthening the Gram Sabha.

Beginning with the Constitution, we find that the Gram Sabha has been defined as a collective of people in a village within the area of a panchayat who are registered in the electoral rolls. In the Panchayati Raj set up, the Gram Sabha, the general assembly of villagers has a key role for effective functioning of Panchayats. In the Gram Sabha meeting, the rural poor, the women and the marginalised people gets an opportunity to be a part of the decision making on matters affecting their lives. Active functioning of the Gram Sabha would ensure a participatory democracy

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with transparency, accountability and achievement. Gram Sabha has been given ‘watchdog’ powers and responsibilities by the Panchayati Raj Acts in most States to supervise and monitor the functioning of Panchayat elected representatives and government functionaries, and examine the annual statement of accounts and audit reports. These are implied powers indirectly empowering Gram Sabhas to carry out social audits in addition to other functions. Members of the Gram Sabha and the village panchayat, intermediate panchayat and district panchayat through their representatives, can raise issues of social concern and public interest and demand an explanation.

The end result is that in many villages the elected head, known as the Pradhan or Sarpanch, in collusion with an official usually the panchayat secretary has much more power than is healthy for rural democracy. In villages where there is a weak Pradhan, who could be a proxy for powerful persons in the village, other people control him in collusion with the panchayat secretary. In this scenario, certain officials call the shots.

In villages where the Pradhan is from a feudal or influential background, he easily becomes the most powerful person around and frequently behaves in an autocratic way. In such situations, it is quite likely that a substantial share of development funds will be cornered and shared by a few powerful persons. Villagers have a right to ask, how do they benefit from this type of decentralisation or local self-government? This was not the Panchayati Raj they wanted. Neither is this the vision of those who conceptualised Panchayati Raj.

The missing link has been the active participation of the entire village community, particularly the weaker sections. There is legal provision in Panchayati Raj for regular meetings of the village community or the Gram Sabha to discuss all important issues. The Gram Sabha is supposed to play an important role in preparing village plans and deciding development priorities in the village. But in most villages this active and important role of the Gram Sabha has not been fulfilled in reality. In many villages, Gram Sabha meetings have been reduced to a mere formality. The Pradhan gets together a few people whom he knows and passes that off as a Gram
Sabha meeting. Only an effective Gram Sabha can ensure public regulation of authority. In case the Gram Sabha does not demand transparency & accountability from the elected leaders specially the Pradhan (chairperson of Gram Panchayat) though informed discussions & decisions, the vested interest of the elected representatives will prevail. The Gram Sabha serves to keep Gram Panchayat accountable. Most of the Gram Sabha members are unaware of their rights and responsibilities as Gram Sabha members; and many of them can’t distinguish between the Gram Sabha meeting and the Gram Panchayat meeting of elected representatives only. It has also been found that villagers in general are not informed of Gram Sabha meetings. Even if informed, women may not participate because of social customs. Lack of a common venue for meetings where the Gram Sabha is too scattered also becomes a barrier to peoples’ participation in these meetings.

Status of Grama Sabha

Let us take a look at the factual situation of the Gram Sabha in a few states across the country. A study in this regard was conducted by Vision Foundation, New Delhi and the results (mentioned in a report to the Planning Commission in October 2005) have been categorised under the following six heads:

- Quality of Gram Sabha functioning
- Role played by Gram Sabha in Programme Planning and Implementation
- Attendance in Gram Sabha meetings
- Number of Gram Sabha meetings conducted
- Level of Need based dev. planning involving Gram Sabha
- Level of awareness about Development Programmes & Social Audit
- Awareness about duty of Gram Panchayat

1. Quality of Gram Sabha functioning

At the national level, functioning of Gram Sabha is divided into broadly two groups of states like,

a) Maharastra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh with higher degree
of effectiveness and
b) UP, Rajasthan, Orissa and West Bengal where Gram Sabha is not active in
the desired way

The table below gives the ground realities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures above reflects the satisfaction of the respondents based on perception that the Gram Sabha is functioning and that there is a good level of attendance in meetings and where the dominance of vested groups and Sarpanch is less.

2. Role played by Gram Sabha in Programme Planning & implementation
   
   Again we find states like Maharastra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh etc. where the Gram Sabha play a sufficiently active role in programme planning and implementation whereas it’s not the same case in UP, Rajasthan, Orissa and West Bengal (despite of West Bengal having a strong Panchayati Raj system).

3. Attendance in Gram Sabha Meetings
   
   The following table gives a picture of the situation of Gram Sabha meetings in certain states.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Probing deeper it was found that -

- In Tamil Nadu women representation and the representation of weaker section is more than 30%.
- In Orissa women representation is less than 10% and weaker section is not participating.
- The representation in the Gram Sabha meetings is low because of lack of interest by the weaker section and women especially in Rajasthan, Orissa, and Uttar Pradesh.

The socio cultural reasons, specifically the mindset of being ruled, the inability and consequences of questioning also play an important part in the low representation of the above mentioned groups. There is also a feeling among the respondents that these meetings are dominated by few people close to the Sarpanch and the benefit’s of welfare programmes are mostly distributed amongst themselves. Also, the apathy of the Government officials towards the larger village population and the tendency of adopting short cuts by limiting visit’s to the Gram Panchayats also contribute towards such a situation of promoting vested interests.

It was found that the participation in Gram Sabha is high in the states where social awakening has taken place and people are aware and exerting their rights.
4. Number of Gram Sabha meetings conducted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>No. of Gram Sabha meetings conducted in a year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>2 (4 in few villages in Warangal district)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Mostly 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Irrespective of whether states are able to conduct six Gram Sabha meetings or just two, it is yet to be established whether these meetings actually take place as per expectations or just a formality. Even if meetings take place and people participate with enthusiasm each time (which is quite a utopian situation) are the issues which are discussed or raised are actually resolved or taken up at the appropriate level.

- The Strength of the Gram Sabha is a function of strong inputs from an effective Governance / Delivery System (Supply Side) and the history, culture and mindset of the Community (Demand Side), supported by external factors like NGOs, activists, service delivery personnel etc. providing catalytic inputs.

5. Level of need based Development Planning involving the Gram Sabha

This is of particular significance to the subject of this paper. Only 40% plans are need based at the national level. In the States like Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh need based planning is done in more than 50% cases where as in
states like UP, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Orissa need based planning is done in less than 30% cases.

6. Level of awareness about Development Programmes & Social Audit

The overall level of awareness about development programmes is ranges from satisfactory to good wherein it was seen that around 70% people were aware about quite a few development schemes in the states of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh whereas only 50% people are aware in the remaining states surveyed.

7. Awareness about Duty of Gram Panchayat

This is a very important indicator which is directly responsible for the activeness or inactiveness of the Gram Panchayat. At the National level, around 70% people were found to be aware about the duties of the Gram Panchayat. It is the highest in the states of Maharashtra where it is 85% and lowest in West Bengal which is 65%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>% of respondents aware of the duties of the Gram Panchayat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The validation of the above percentages through in-depth Interviews and Focussed Group Discussions (FGD), revealed that -

- The perceived level of awareness of the beneficiaries / villagers about the role
of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) was limited which was because of the limited understanding of the role amongst the PRI members themselves. Hence they were not able to convey the message to their fellow villagers. Also, lack of awareness generation by the Civil Society and absence of any direct Information Education Communication (IEC) activity by the Government also contributed to the low level of awareness amongst the Gram Sabha about the role of PRIs.

- However, the ranking of awareness level among states was found to be true.

**The way out**

To the extent that some practical problems actually exist the simultaneous strengthening of ward Sabhas can help solve these problems. As the population of a ward is much smaller than an entire village, it will be possible to hold more detailed discussions at ward Sabha meetings. Once many issues have been sorted out at ward Sabha level, it will become much easier to hold Gram Sabha meetings. Solutions to practical problems are possible and the Gram Sabha can certainly play a very important role in strengthening grassroots democracy.

The government is to be congratulated for recognising the unrealised potential of the Gram Sabha. One only hopes that this initiative will be much more than a symbolic gesture and adequate support will be given to actual work to strengthen the Gram Sabha. The few success stories of social audit that happened in Kerala show that given the right leadership and institutions, the nature and character of democracy and local development can be significantly changed for the better.

The year 2010 has been declared as the ‘year of the Gram Sabha’. Even certain States have given immense weightage to the Gram Sabha vis-a-vis the Gram Panchayat. The N.C. Saxena Committee constituted by the Ministry of Environment and Forests recently in the case of mining activities by Vedanta in Orissa also recommended Gram Sabha as the final authority for deciding land use patterns. There seems to be an all out consensus and a hue and cry on the importance of
Gram Sabha in the process of development of rural India. Many activists believe that if the Gram Sabhas are activated into energetic forums, where meaningful discussions are held and developed into purposeful institutions entrusted with economic planning and social audit, it will go a long way in empowering the people, including disadvantaged sections such as women and Dalit’s, in real terms.

**Grama Panchayat or Grama Sabha**

However, it’s important to look at the other school of thought as well. What is usually emphasised is the conduct of a Gram Sabha which in simple language means the sabha meeting of a Gram Sabha. This has become so mandatory that decisions taken without the meeting of a Gram Sabha is considered null and void and in many states the Panchayats (which is an elected body by the Gram Sabha) have little role to play (in principle) if the Gram Sabha is not able to meet and decide. Not only is it mandated by the Government through its orders, ordinances and guidelines but even the Civil Society doesn’t fall short of getting onto the bandwagon of portraying the Gram Sabha as the deciding factor for all developmental work.

If this be the case then the following questions need to be answered in the proper context –

- As is the relation between the Gram Panchayat and the Gram Sabha so are the relations between a municipality and the ward Sabha, the state legislature and the state electorate and similarly the Parliament and the national electorate. Why is there so little emphasis on the participation and 100% decision making by the latter in these cases. Perhaps because there is a body comprised of the elected and the executive which is supposed to know the feel of the people and act accordingly. If this be the case then why not the same for Gram Panchayats?

- If the Gram Sabha is to take all decisions and play a leading role and also monitor the work of the Gram Panchayat, then why to have a formal institution of Local Self Governance whose responsibility is to ensure that the aspirations
and needs of a particular village or a group of villages are fulfilled in due course of time with the available resources??

- As one of the guidelines for managing panchayat office developed by the Karakulam Grama Panchayat in Kerala describes Grama Sabha as the ‘general assembly’ (of all person included in the voters list of a region) it is synonymous as any general body of an organization which meets once or maximum twice a year to review the progress and take stock of what the executive (committee) – in this case panchayat, has performed and shall perform. Why then do we stress on the meeting of the general assembly or body every month or two months or four times a year as it has been mandated in a different states?
- What shall happen if for any reason the Gram Sabha is not able to meet and plan? Isn’t it a way for Gram Panchayats and higher levels of administration to find an excuse that since people do not assemble, plan, show ownership and take control therefore there is no proper people’s plan developed in the village and hence how can proper implementation take place??
- Why do we always expect villagers to forego their wages or compromise with their livelihood to participate in a Gram Sabha every four months when it’s enough for them to decide once and for all and then the Panchayat take it forward. People in towns and cities do not meet 4-5 times a year to decide what need to be done.

Repeated emphasis of the Gram Sabha taking active part in the process of planning and decision making with participation from all sections of the village in a situation where their earlier decisions and demands have not been fulfilled and where local livelihood means have become skewed and people have to migrate has not gone down well with the very concept of participatory democracy.

We need to find ways of involving the Gram Sabha in a more productive manner without emphasising their physical presence at frequent intervals so that the Gram Panchayat on one hand has a clear mandate of performing as well as endeavour to redress the concerns and grievances of the Gram Sabha. The onus should definitely
be on the Gram Panchayat to fulfil its responsibilities as they have been elected by the Gram Sabha and is expected to know the pulse of what the people want. Wherever the panchayats convince the people of their sincerity and honesty, they face a friendly Gram Sabha and win public support for their endeavours. G. Ramakrishnan, who has served on a high-power committee appointed by the Tamil Nadu Government to consider the question of giving more powers and funds to the three-tier PRIs, there have been instances of improvement in the attendance at Gram Sabha meetings and raising of issues linked to human development other than infrastructure, thanks to the efforts by panchayat functionaries and officials. However, such instances are more an exception rather than the rule.

According to him, under the existing framework the powers of panchayats, which are accountable to the Gram Sabhas, were limited. They could not deal with several major issues that confronted the people in their day-to-day life, such as education, health, nutrition, agriculture and livestock maintenance. “Under such circumstances the people seem to be least interested in attending Gram Sabha meetings,” said Ramakrishnan. If the Gram Sabha and other PRIs were to function as instruments of social transformation as originally intended, panchayat institutions should be given more powers to deal with subjects that had a bearing on the people’s actual needs and there cannot be any debate regarding the same.

Panchayat institutions can serve their purpose only through democratic decentralisation of powers and planning. Ramakrishnan recalled the Kerala Government’s initiative as part of the “People’s Campaign for the Ninth Plan” (Frontline, March 7, 1997) to involve the Gram Sabha in preparing the village plan, prioritising the people’s needs at the village level, mobilising resources including labour and integrating the village plan into the district plan and then into the State plan. The Kerala experiment made a big impact on resource mobilisation and people’s participation in planning. Its system of evolving and training “core groups” helped in identifying nearly 30,000 technically competent persons outside the government
system at the village and panchayat ward levels, who could contribute to the development of their own localities in one way or the other.

One of the immediate ways of making Gram Sabhas more active is to rejuvenate the working of the Gram Panchayats and needless to say it requires more devolution of funds and functionaries and absolute clarity of roles. A unilateral focus on the Sarpanch and the Secretary in the name of training and empowerment of panchayats have led to a transition from Panchayati Raj to ‘Sarpanch’ Raj. It’s has literally become a one man show especially if he or she gets elected term after term and there is no one to challenge his or her position. Hence there has to be every effort initiated to build capacities of all those who constitutes the Gram Panchayat and not just focus on the Sarpanch and the secretary. Ward members representing varied groups and standing committees need to be activated and oriented and constantly assisted so that they are able to play their roles effectively. An active ward member who are able to raise the issues of his / her constituency at the appropriate level almost resonates the views of the people represented and hence there might not be a necessity of the people visiting the panchayat office regularly or even participating in routine Gram Sabhas.

The technocrat turned panchayat president in Tamil Nadu, Mr. Ilango, therefore, recommends a shift in emphasis: panchayat functionaries have to be motivated by the State and non-governmental organisations along with providing them the necessary resources to ensure effective performance, which, in turn, will ensure absolute cooperation from the Gram Sabha. A friendly Gram Sabha not only serves as a watchdog but helps ensure the total involvement of the people in developmental initiatives. “The relationship between the Gram Sabha and the panchayat is like the mother-child relationship,” says Ilango.

As per contemporary beliefs, the Gram Sabha is supposed to be - a medium to empower people especially women and those from the economically and socially backward sections, a platform to promote and train people in healthy democracy,
fosters harmonious relationship between officials of various line departments, provide an opportunity for social audit of development schemes, panchayat functioning etc. While the above stands good even today, the Gram Sabha is expected to evolve and prove to be a support to the Gram Panchayat in order to enable it function better. One of the areas where the Gram Sabha can take a decisive stand and make it binding on all is to pay taxes to the Panchayat. This will make them have a say in decision making, create a permanent source of untied funds and will also hold the Panchayat accountable to the Gram Sabha. It will necessarily establish the rationale of a local self governing institution. The other area where the Gram Sabha can play a role is to identify a support group amongst themselves which would associate itself with the Gram Panchayat and be a source of motivation and support at all times. Strengthening of the standing committees and holding the members responsible for their actions are also issues wherein the Gram Sabha can play a vital role.

Accordingly, the scope of deliberations in the Gram Sabha meetings can be enhanced to make these more participatory, interesting and meaningful such as:

a) Information sharing on programmes, schemes, good practices and matters of common interest for which assistance from the State and Centre is available through different policies and programmes.

b) Issues like quality of life and Millennium Development Goals, social security, gender justice, female feticides, substance abuse (alcohol, tobacco and drugs), hygiene, nutrition, sustainable development, diversification of agriculture, better cropping practices, opportunities for improving incomes, drought/flood management, soil & water conservation, infrastructure development, food security etc.

c) Participation in planning, implementation and performance review of various schemes viz. BRGF, NREGA, NRHM, SSA, ICDS, IWMP, RKVY etc. In preparing plan and shelf of projects, realistic assessment of resources should be made. All programme guidelines and line departments should clearly articulate the role of Gram Sabha in their Policy/Programme/Scheme.
Grama Sabha in Schedule V areas

In 1955, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had addressed an All India Conference of Tribes in Jagdalpur, Bastar district of Chhattisgarh (then Madhya Pradesh) and had said: “Wherever you live, you should live in your own way.” Later on, in order to supplement the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, the Government of India, in 1996, passed another Act known as Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act – commonly known as PESA, which extended the provisions of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act of 1992 to the tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan. PESA is covered by the Constitution’s Fifth Schedule, which enables adivasis to govern themselves through Gram Sabhas. This came into force on 24th December 1996. Under the Act, Gram Sabha has been vested with powers for:

- Ownership of Minor Forest Produce
- Preparation of plans for social and economic development and their approval
- Selection of beneficiaries under various programmes
- Consultation on land acquisition and Relief and Rehabilitation
- Manage minor water bodies
- Control mineral leases
- Regulate/Prohibit sale of intoxicants
- Prevent alienation of land and restore unlawfully alienated land of Scheduled Tribes
- Manage village markets
- Control money lending to Scheduled Tribes
- Grant of Utilization Certificates.
- Control institutions and functionaries in all social sector.

Despite repeated assurances by the political fraternity over the last few decades, rights guaranteed to the tribals by the Constitution, embodied in the PESA, are flouted routinely today. According to Mani Shankar Aiyar, former Union Minister of Panchayati Raj, this could broadly be interpreted to mean that the two principal
colonial causes of tribal disaffection — the failure to recognise community propriety rights over land of tribal communities in the Indian Forests Act, 1927 and the many glaring oppressive features of the 19th century Land Acquisition Act — could and should be amended to bring them in line with the letter and spirit of PESA which stresses the role of the tribal community in matters affecting the land they live on and the duty of Gram Sabhas in Fifth Schedule areas to ensure that tribal land is not alienated except with their consent.

A recent study by the Institute of Rural Management, commissioned by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj-Govt. of India, on the functioning of Panchayat Raj Institutions highlighted the violations in PESA and also reflected somewhat similarly. It quoted the century old central Land Acquisition Act of 1894, which has not yet been amended in line with the provisions of as being widely misused on the ground to forcibly acquire individual and community land for private industry.

“In several cases, like in Jharkhand which do not yet have a Panchayat Raj system but is supposed to have a strong and vibrant Gram Sabha (by virtue of PESA), the State government has been favouring corporate houses (Government of Jharkhand 2008 and IANS, 2010) by deploying the Act to ostensibly acquire the land for the State Industrial Corporation. This body then simply leases the land to the private corporation — which is a complete travesty of the term ‘acquisition for a public purpose’, as sanctioned by the Act.

“In some cases, administrations run through the motions of a PESA consultation, but in no instance has the opposition expressed by tribal communities to acquisition resulted in a plan for industry being halted, suggesting the disempowerment of the Gram Sabha.”

Leaving aside the 19 most seriously affected Left Wing Extremist districts covered by PESA, the full-fledged implementation of PESA will give Rs 50,000 crore to tribal communities to develop themselves. Nothing would deal a bigger
blow to the Maoists than participative development by, for and of the tribal communities.

Most recently the Central Government has realised that the political willingness of enforcing PESA by respective State Governments is nothing more than lip service and all have been equally guilty of denying to their Fifth Schedule tribal populations the full range of PESA rights notwithstanding each one of them having long years ago passed the required conformity legislation. However, despite of so much of hard-talk one still need to wait to see things happening on the ground. The question is just not of seeking consent for exploitation of resources and alienation of land by the Gram Sabha but more importantly planning for essential amenities like schools, health centres, child care and rehabilitation centres, hostels, roads etc. which they have been deprived of since ages. The opportunity of planning for untied funds under BRGF was also not adequately utilised which would otherwise have provided them some sort of necessary infrastructure. The need of the hour is certainly to provide untied funds to the panchayats and motivating the Gram Sabha to not only plan against those funds but also to plan for sustainable commercial use of forest produce as has been provisioned under the Forests Rights Act.

Role played by the Grama Sabha in Planning

Given the fact that there are two different school of thoughts as discussed earlier, it is still important to understand the significance of Gram Sabha and as E.F.Schumacher says – ‘Small is Beautiful’, it becomes all the more important for people to have a complete understanding of issues and efforts that are been carried out in their area. This is perhaps an advantage of a village or a ward (which is comparatively smaller in size in most places) as compared to a town or a city (with unmanageable and expanding boundaries) where the inhabitants can have a say and control over the developments. However, keeping in fact the inability and inconvenience of people participating in a single Gram Sabha due to a variety of reasons such as geographical, social, economical etc., there have been efforts to
promote people’s assemblies below the Gram Sabha such as Ward Sabha, Mahila Sabha and Bal Sabha. Formation and federation of Self Help Groups, Youth groups and other CBOs also expedite the process of strengthening these sub-Gram Sabha level meetings. Many a times such groups like the Kudumbashree of Kerala would in particular facilitate in rolling out specific targeted development programmes like the proposed National Rural Livelihood Mission. According to M.A. Oommen, the proven outcome of the effective linkage between the Kudumbashree, the local governments and the community-based organizations of the poor women show that, unless the poor are fostered as the agents of their development, the linkage between decentralization and poverty reduction could not be firmly established. In this pattern, the local government acts as the facilitator of the self-help initiatives of the poor. Being located nearest to the people, the local government has a comparative advantage in developing a synergistic relationship between the government and the community-based organizations for strengthening poverty alleviation efforts.

As per Article 243-G, Panchayats are constitutionally mandated to prepare plans for economic development and social justice. Thus every Panchayat has to prepare a plan taking into account local needs and local conditions. The whole process develops a framework of agreement within the Gram Sabha about development priorities. Villagers sit together to prioritize community problems, prepare a list of resources available, and ask the Gram Panchayat to implement the plan. Since the plan is annual, it provides a rigorous framework for the Panchayat to be accountable to the Gram Sabha. But a plan can also be a perspective plan (for say 5 years) where the Gram Sabha draws the bigger picture and lays down along term mandate and then the Gram panchayat extracts activities which can be performed over a year. So the Gram Sabha every year keeps on checking the list of tasks completed or is undertaken as per the prioritization. A plan facilitated by local organizations and local community groups like youth and women’s groups, allows villagers to scrutinize and judge the performance of their Gram Panchayat.
These organizations and the Gram Sabha play a constructive role in augmenting Panchayat resources by enabling Panchayats to mobilize internal resources as well as to negotiate effectively with the government to provide resources to implement the village plans.

However, the philosophy behind bottom up participatory planning wherein village plans are accommodated in district plan is something easier said than done. There have been many instances where not only under different Government programmes but even initiatives led by development agencies have led to preparation of village plans involving the same Gram Sabha and yet not fulfilling bulk of the demands or aspirations or even the basic needs expressed and prioritised by the Gram Sabha. Multiple planning exercises by different agencies for similar purposes is merely a mockery and a means to confuse people and waste their precious time thus implying an opportunity cost. This has led to a situation where people do not have any faith in attending Gram Sabhas for planning and hence bottom up participatory plans becomes nothing more than a farce. Recently, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has strongly advocated that in the case of forest villages, microplans for development and conservation of forests to be integrated with planning process under Panchayats and DPCs. Such should be the case while planning for all programmes wherein the agencies take out their bit out of the larger annual or perspective but integrated plans.

To reverse such a trend where the Gram Sabha considers it a waste of time and money to participate in preparing plans which are seldom implemented, the panchayat need to be provided with all necessary resources to start meeting the demands of the people as per the set priorities on the other hand and the the Gram Sabha (through the Gram Panchayat) need to be communicated about the broad order of resources or commonly known as the resource envelope as a total under various sectoral programmes. The resource envelope containing the tentative resource earmarked under major heads like drinking water, sanitation, education, food security etc. which is supposed to be spent in the Gram Panchayat should be able to guide
the villagers to decide on which are the works to be taken up as per priorities and
the available resources. So ideally, if there are provisions for drinking water supply
from say three Central Government programmes and two State Government
programmes, then the Gram Panchayat should be informed about the total amount
available under drinking water which can be made available to them against a set of
demands properly ratified by the Gram Sabha. The Gram Sabha has every right to
know about every penny that is been spent in its region and hence a resource envelope
is a pre-requisite to enthuse them to participate in the planning process.

Despite of this understanding, not many districts across the country has been
able to map the entire flow of resources under all development programmes and
even where they have been able to do so, they have not been able to communicate
the same to the Gram Sabha through the Gram Panchayat. In the absence of such an
effort, a wishlist gets generated by the Gram Sabha which is certainly not in sync
with what the resource availability is and hence the block or the district either
overlooks the priorities or gets an opportunity to disregard the plans prepared by
the community thus killing the entire spirit of participation. Apart from devolving
the funds to the panchayats corresponding to the works to be implemented at that
level, what can enthuse the Gram Panchayat and the Gram Sabha is the provision of
untied funds which can be used depending on local priorities.

I firmly believe that now it is for the Gram Panchayats to perform with adequate
resources (human as well as financial) so as to prove their efficiency and win back
the lost confidence of the Gram Sabha.

There are examples though not very many where Gram Sabha participation has
led to effective plans. One of the example where the Gram Sabha have been pretty
much involved in identifying issues and participating in the planning process has
been in the case of village micro-planning exercises initiated by the District
Administration and UNICEF in around 17 districts in 13 states. Supported by NGOs
it has been able to engage the community in identification of issues related to human
development especially those affecting the growth and development of a child in areas like education, health, nutrition and sanitation, using the norms of participatory rural appraisal techniques.

The intensive process has helped increase the engagement between community members, NGOs and the district delivery system and support the State in strengthening its implementation of the initiative for women and children. Micro-plans for all the villages in Guna are ready and the district response team has worked out an action plan which is responding to the needs of the community. Another important aspect of this intervention has been the creation of social capital wherein the Gram Sabha has been able to nominate a team of young and dedicated people (usually two men and two women) to volunteer as facilitators. These facilitators enjoy the support of the community and have been instrumental in mobilizing them to participate in the initial 3-5 day issue identification and planning exercise. Later they have contributed towards behavioural changes, awareness generation about basic Government programmes, mobilising the educated youth against social evils etc. These village facilitators along with the support of the NGO and its functionaries developed a four-point action plan to hasten the pace of work in the district:

- To periodically review the village plans with the various stakeholders, namely the Sarpanch, Secretary of the Panchayat, Anganwadi worker, school teacher, ANM and others.
- To support progressive community-monitoring by using various charts jointly with the members of the community.
- Collate accurate village-level statistics in the areas of concern and use the same to advise people at the village level during the block and district task force meetings.
- ‘Their problem first’: community problems rank first and to help in addressing the said problems, the village facilitators will promote community-level dialogue, listen to the problems and concerns of the community first and help in the redress of the problems.
All these initiatives over the last 4-5 years have resulted in empowering the community and enabling them to raise concerns related to human development in Gram Sabhas. This has also sensitized the Gram Panchayats and many of these village facilitators have even gone ahead contesting panchayat elections with the support of the community and have become successful and motivated Sarpanches with a better zeal, understanding of issues and enthusiasm to work.

**Conclusion**

India has set an example of deepening democratic decentralization but giving powers to the people at the grassroots level to elect their own government and decide about how they would like to develop their lives and surroundings through the elected government. If we believe in the higher levels of Government in carrying out development related activities and bringing about change through appropriate resources of all kinds, then we also need to award equal importance to the government at the lowest level.

Where on one hand the electorate at that level is the closest to its elected government and interacts with it almost every day – something which can’t be thought of at the town or metropolitan level, it also need to have a certain degree of trust on the same and the panchayat should be held accountable to its actions only when it is provided the necessary wherewithal to function and it fails to deliver. Emphasising on the centrality of Gram Sabha over the centrality of Gram Panchayats might empower or force the former to take charge of the latter’s work but will certainly weaken the latter’s sense of responsibility and accountability. So a mix of approaches are required to not only strengthen the Gram Panchayat to plan, implement and monitor but also to make the Gram Sabha realise about its own responsibilities to strengthen the institution it has elected from amongst itself.
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The Grand Design of the Gram Sabha

Vinod Vyasulu*

For those who dream of direct democracy, the Gram Sabha is perhaps the answer in India. It became a part of the Constitution after the amendments of 1993. It consists of all the eligible voters in the gram or village, and its periodic meetings have legal sanctity. Decisions affecting the local community, such as those who are to receive benefits from various government schemes, have to be approved by a majority in the Gram Sabha. To ensure that old prejudices do not distort decisions, there are provisions for the participation of minorities, of women, of the scheduled castes etc. Dr B.R Ambedkar was rightly worried at one time about the villages which were dens of inequity. Based on his insights steps have been taken to control these tendencies. Progress over the many years since has also awaked people to their rights. While discrimination still exists, it is now contested and fought. The very fact that we can think of gram sabhas is an indicator of the progress our society has made.

But the functioning of the gram sabha also tells us that we still have much to do as a society. There are reports from across the country that there are flaws in the functioning of the gram sabha. The agenda is too big for a two hour meeting. Information is not shared with the public. Attendance is poor. Officials do not turn up. Registers are circulated for signature. And so on.

There have been innovations. Maharashtra has introduced a mahila gram sabha of women which is held before this constitutional gram sabha. Andhra Pradesh used a janmabhoomi gram sabha which was different from this constitutional one. Whether these are efforts to improve the functioning of the institution of gram

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sabha or to bypass it is a different question, but one that must be answered.

We are up against the past, when the Gram Sabha was used to legitimize decisions taken elsewhere. People remember that decisions taken were later modified or not implemented. And so they see no point in wasting time in these rituals. But we must note that making an institution of direct democracy work in a system of representative democracy is not going to be easy. We have to learn from this experience and change our attitude and expectations from the GS. I list below a few ideas in this regard.

While the GS is defined as the collective of all voters, it is necessary to understand its scope for various purposes. The law has begun to do this by distinguishing between the ward or vasathi sabha and the gram panchayat sabha. There are times when the settlement is the relevant body. There are other times when the larger body is the appropriate forum. Yet it may not be practical to call the larger body, which may cover many revenue villages, to a meeting. Over time our gram panchayats have to deal with this and find their own solution. It should not be a matter of legislation, but one of convention based on local experience. With patience and good will, it can be achieved.

The GS is not an executive body. It is a repository of people’s power, but it responds to the agenda set by the gram panchayat. It is the gram panchayat that has to make plans and design programmes. It is for the gram panchayat - and by this I refer to the elected body, not the officials posted there - that has to identify the poor who are to benefit from the plans made. It is for the gram panchayat to place before the people the choices that have to be made when resources are scarce - as they usually are. It is the task of the GS to deliberate on this plans and programmes, seek such further information as may be necessary, and then approve these plans or suggest modifications that the gram panchayat has to make. Unless there is an active and vibrant gram panchayat, the GS really cannot function.
The GS is part of the accountability mechanisms that exist in a democracy. Decisions of the gram panchayat have to be ratified. Accounts can be scrutinized. Jamabandi reports can be followed up. Audits - financial and social - can be discussed. Together with the Right to Information Act, the GS can act as a check against the abuse of power if properly held.

Officials have to learn to respect that GS: it is from here that democratic power flows. Officials report to their seniors in an upward hierarchy. They must balance this requirement against respect for the GS. And for this, it is essential that the elected representatives are treated as voices of the people, not as ‘non officials’ who ‘interfere’. Elected representatives have a right - from election - to inspect schools, health centres, or any work funded by the tax payer. Officials must defer to this and facilitate proper and honest implementation. This is not to deny that such interference - in the sense of intervention that may counter law by elected representatives - does not take place. It does. But it has to be checked as per law. After all, there is corruption in the bureaucracy as well. This too has to be dealt with by law. No one is above the law, and all have to change and work according to it. Again, patience, good will and education have to play a part in building tradition and convention.

The Centre for Budget and Policy Studies has been working with accounts at the gram panchayat level. Workshops on the results of these studies are held for elected representatives and officials. Skills to maintain and utilize such information has to be built up. These are today in poor shape across the country because such information is not used in decision making. Kerala and Karnataka are not exceptions. But with inputs from the Comptroller and Auditor General, improvements are being made. Once Gram Sabhas learn to make use of such information, they can hold their representatives and officials accountable in a meaningful way. We hope that this will evolve into a Budget Information System that is useful to citizens. This kind of action does not mean punishing people. It means that errors can be corrected, so that the desired ends of poverty alleviation, literacy, improved health etc and
better provided to citizens. Today money is often spent, but services are not delivered. The GS can help bridge this gap.

A great deal in India is based on tradition. Our people have ways in which things are done, and this is wisdom from the past. If we can draw on what is positive in the past and modify what is not, the local areas will improve.

In India’s evolving democracy, the Gram Sabha is a great opportunity and a great challenge. It remains to be seen whether we as a people are up to this challenge.
Functioning of Gram Sabha in Tamilnadu: A study in selected village panchayats in Sriperumbudur Block, Kancheepuram District

Nayakara Veeresha*

“Local institutions constitute the strength of nations. A nation may establish a system of free government but without local institutions, it cannot have the spirit of liberty”

-Alexis DeTocqueville

India has a long ancient tradition of having self-governing institutions right from the beginning of Vedic period to the present modern local government system in the form of Panchayats and Municipalities. India’s first independent Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurated the Panchayati Raj System in Rajasthan on 02.10.1959 to involve the rural people in the process of governance. After passing many ups and downs Panchayats and Municipalities got the constitutional status in the year 1992-93 as the third-tier of governance structures in the democracy at the local level. As per the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts-1992-93, Panchayats and Municipalities are defined as ‘institutions of self-government’ in the rural and urban areas respectively. Gram Sabha is the soul of the Panchayati Raj System where people can directly participate and exercise their rights, obligations and concerns about their own development process.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are as following:

1. To understand the level of awareness of the people about Gram Sabha in the two Village Panchayats of Sriperumbudur, Block

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2. To examine the performance of Gram Sabha as a participatory structure
3. To analyze the extent of understanding and involvement of youth in the Gram Sabha meetings
4. To describe the role of Gram Sabha in the rural governance

Research Queries
- To what extent people are aware about the importance of Gram Sabha?
- How far the institution of Gram Sabha, in practice, functioning as per its design specifications?
- How successful is the Gram Sabha in establishing inclusiveness in the society?
- What is the level of understanding of Gram Sabha in the rural youth?
- What is the role and prospectus of Gram Sabha in providing better governance for the rural people?

New Panchayati Raj System in Tamil Nadu
The New Panchayati Raj System came into being in Tamil Nadu after enacting a new legislation for local body institutions in the year 1994. The Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act 1994 of the Tamil Nadu Legislature Assembly received the Assent of the Governor on the 22nd April 1994. This Act ensured conducting regular election to the local body elections and has given life to grassroots democracy.

Statutory Status of the Gram Sabha
The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 has made specific provision for the establishment of Gram Sabha under Article 243A. It defines Gram Sabha as “a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within areas of Panchayat at the village level”. Accordingly, a Gram Sabha is established for a village or a group of villages and serves as an assembly of villagers. The size of the Gram Sabha differs from State to State. It generally covers minimum of 1000 and a maximum of 15,000 populations in case it is co-terminus with Gram Panchayats. If Gram Sabha is constituted for every revenue village, it covers a population ranging between 500 and
Article 243A states that the Gram Sabha may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the Legislature of State may provide.

**Gram Sabha in the Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act 1994**

The Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act 1994 of the Tamil Nadu Legislature Assembly received the Assent of the Governor on the 22nd April 1994. The Act defines Gram Sabha “a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a Panchayat village comprised within the area of village Panchayat concerned”. According to it the, Gram Sabha shall meet at least twice in a year but six months shall not intervene between any two meetings. In order to strengthen the Gram Sabha the government passed an order that all village panchayats have to convene Gram Sabha meeting four times in a year on 15th August, 2nd October, 26th January and 1st May. The quorum of Gram Sabha has been reduced from one-third to one-tenth.

**Rationale of Gram Sabha**

The main purpose for the creation of Gram Sabha or Village Assembly is that, this deliberative space is not just extending democracy downwards, or of expanding participation, but also of combining representation with direct democracy and thereby of drawing on the benefits of both. The creation of such an opportunity for debate, a deliberative space which is open to all, in an Indian village marked by the boundaries of caste, class and gender, is indeed a radical step.

**Area of Study**

To understand the nature and functioning of Gram Sabha in Tamil Nadu a field study was conducted in the Sriperumbudur. The Sriperumbudur Block Panchayat is located in Kancheepuram District which has a long-historical importance for the local self-government practices. It is also popular for its temples. In Kancheepuram there are 1137 villages. Kancheepuram has a total number of 648 Village Panchayats and 13 Panchayat Union Councils. In Sriperumbudur block there are a total number
of 58 Village Panchayats. Among this, two village panchayats namely Irungattukotai and Katrambakkam were selected for the study. Katrambakkam is a village panchayat for the three revenue villages. (Irungattukotai, Sunderamedu and Pudupedu)

**Methodology**

The methodology adopted for the present study with respect to the selection of study area, selection of respondents, tools used for the collection of data have been dealt with in this section. Tamil Nadu State was selected for the study. The field work was done during April-June 2010. To meet the objectives, the study was carried in Kancheepuram one of the largest districts in Tamil Nadu. Sriperumbudur Block was selected for the study. Among this block, two revenue village panchayats were selected namely Irungattukotai and Katrambakkam to collect the data from the field.

There are three categories of respondents chosen for the study purpose. Common people, elected representatives and officials. The sample was collected in multiple stages to ensure the consistency of the data. Simple random sampling method was used for selecting the public respondents to get the randomness of the sample. Purposive sampling has been employed for the selection of elected representatives and the officials of panchayat, block and district administration. Informal discussions were held with the block development officials to enhance the richness of the data.

The total number of sample size chosen for the study is 45. Common public were chosen randomly for the responses. Among them around half of them are young (19-35 years); respondents were selected purposefully to fulfill the main objective of the study. The elected panchayat representatives and officials are selected by adopting convenient sampling method.

The primary data collected by employing interview schedule. Separate interview schedules were administered for public and the officials. Along with face-to-face interviews were conducted with the district administrators. A focused group
discussion was conducted among the young people of the villages to know the youth perspectives on the gram sabha institution. The secondary data was collected through documentary sources from village panchayat office, block development office and the district headquarters.

**Table No.1: Distribution of the category of the Respondents**

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**Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

**Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents**

This section gives the socio-economic background of the respondents attending the gram sabha in the two villages, Irungattukottai and Katrambakkam. The socio-economic profile of the respondents is analyzed with the help of variables such as age, education, gender, income and other aspects that are having influence to determine the attitude towards the institution of gram sabha and community development through panchayati raj institutions. These variables are viewed together would form the social base of the villages in which respondents live. These variables are likely to have a bearing on the final impact of the political participation of the people in the form of institution of gram sabha. Although the entries in these tables are to a large extent self-explanatory, a brief interpretation of the data would provide much clarity on these dimensions.
Table No.2: Gender Composition of the Respondents attending Gram Sabha

<table>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows the total number of male and female members attending the gram sabha meetings of the village. Gender continues to be an important factor in determining the quality of participation in the public affairs. Almost the participation is equal in terms of quantity but male participants have a slight edge of 3% over the female representation. Out of the 35 respondents selected for the study, 51.5% of them are men, and the remaining 48.5% are women.

Table No.3: Age Distribution of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>In %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-35</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-50</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 60</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher sought to include more number of youth respondents as an objective of knowing and understanding about the young people’s perceptions, attitude towards the participation in the public affairs. The distribution of the respondents, as shown in the above table, reveals the fact that almost half percentage of the respondents (48.5%) belongs to the age group of 36-50 years followed by the age group of 18-35 years (45.7%) and 51-60 years (5.8%).
True, there is a heavy concentration of the people of the mature group (36-50). Interesting point to observe is that the study mainly focused on the nature, quality of youth participation in the gram sabha as India having approximately 42% young people in the total population. Therefore it is important to tapping the opinion the young people who are going to be the future citizens of the nation.

**Table No.4: Educational Qualifications of the Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>In %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High. Secondary</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education plays an important role and it is the most important tool for having better life, asserting the rights of the individual and achieving power in the community. Education will enhance the level of understanding about the community needs and have an influence on the nature of people’s participation in the public affairs. As far as the educational background of the respondents is concerned, Table 4 shows that one-sixth (17%) of all respondents are illiterates. Looking at the educational attainment, about 20% of them had primary education and one-third (34%) of the respondents have schooling and higher secondary education. The sample also consists of 11.4% of diploma holders and 17% of graduates. Interestingly no body has studied above graduation level. Interestingly women are better educated than the male respondents. The probable reason could be the introduction of free education with noon meal by the Government of Tamil Nadu. Education is clearly a very important correlate of participation in local governance activities.
Table No. 5: Social Composition of the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Group</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>In %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Caste</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Tribe</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBC/MBC</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social group continues to be one of the influencing factors of participation in the community empowerment even in contemporary India. Table 4 shows the distribution of respondents by the social identity reveals that the highest number (37.1%) of the respondents belongs to the scheduled caste. This was followed by the 34.3% of the respondents belong to the general category. This is followed by 28.6% belonging to the backward classes. Surprisingly among the respondents there was no representation from the tribal group in the sample.

Table No. 6: Occupation Details of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>In %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Wagers</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Trade</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Sector</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
<td><strong>97.2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The occupational distribution of the respondents, as shown in the above table, indicates that majority of the respondents are running small trade/business on their own. 54.3% of the respondents are involving themselves in running their own business. Around 23% of the respondents are employed in the service sector such as private based industries in the village. The 17.1% of the respondents are self-employed or trained in traditional skill
such as carpenter, electrical work. Very little percentage that is 2.8% of them is working on a daily wage basis. Surprisingly there were no respondents from the agriculture field.

**Table No. 7: Family Income Level of the Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Income per month in Rs.</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 2000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-3000</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3001-5000</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 5000</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>94.3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the overview of the table 6, it is understood that 28.5% of the respondent’s family income crosses above Rs.5000. This was followed by around 17.1% of them belong to the income level of Rs.3000-4000/- and 43% of the respondents of them belong to the average income group of Rs.2000-3000. Only 5.7% of them are having their income level less than Rs.2000. The table shows that the respondents are having better income sources.

**Awareness and Knowledge about the Gram Sabha among the people with special reference to the youth**

The data collected reveals that most of the respondents are aware about the institution of gram sabha; most of them attending the meetings of the gram sabha on regular basis. But the study finds out that the nature, quality of this participation is very poor. It means that the participation is much of passive in nature. It has not able to produce the good deliberation and healthy discussion among the community as a whole. This is a serious observation which needs to be addressed immediately; the public sphere must make active and vibrant for the effective functioning of the grass root democracy at the village level. Being aware is an important aspect but it is not sufficient to produce the
healthy discussions in the gram sabha meetings. It needs an enabling environment such as process of facilitation and proactive measures by the elected representatives about the importance of the gram sabha.

**Awareness and Knowledge among the Youth**

One of the main objectives of the study is to find out the perception, attitude of the young people towards the institution of gram sabha. Therefore, 45.7% of the sample consists of the young people between the age group of 19-35. Coming to the level of awareness among the youth about the gram sabha out of the 17 respondents from the young people only two youth are unaware and the remaining 15 young people are aware about the gram sabha meetings. Out of these 17 youth, 7 female and 10 male youth are present. Among the 7 female youth only one member is unaware but heard the name of gram sabha. All the 10 male youth are aware about the gram sabha. As far as the knowledge about the gram sabha is concerned most of them have an understanding that the meetings will take place in the primary school building.

**Mode of Communication and conduct of Gram Sabha**

The mode of communication about the gram sabha plays an important role in mobilizing the people to the public meeting. Most of the communication is through issuing notices and through poster circulation among the community members. The poster will include the venue, date and the timing of the gram sabha meeting. Around 57% of the people came to know about the meeting of gram sabha by seeing the poster and notices which will be distributed among the villagers. Almost one-third (28.5%) of the respondents are aware about the meeting through elected panchayat members. Around 8.5% of the respondents said that the communication will take place by the announcement through traditional way using tom-tom method. The remaining 8.5% respondents told that other means and ways are used for the communication.

The study finds that there is a good communication is disseminated through various channels to the villagers as far as the information regarding the gram sabha meetings.
Announcement of Gram Sabha Meeting

From the field it came to know that the most of the respondents were told that the communication will be made to the public only one day before the conduct of gram sabha. This is not a good practice as far as the gram sabha meetings are concerned, because, the communication should be made at least one week before the actual date of the gram sabha meetings. It will help the people to make their own arrangements on the date and time of the gram sabha. This is an important aspect where there is a need for effective guidelines from the centre to the states and from the states to the districts so that there is a continuous communication and remembrance about the gram sabha meetings. This will help in mobilizing the people towards the gram sabha meetings. It will pave the way for the increased people’s participation which is one of the most important elements of good governance.

Place of Gram Sabha Meetings

The study finds out that most of the gram sabha meetings were held in the primary school of the village. The probable reason for this is it will accommodate large number of the people as there is plenty of space available in the school area. Sometimes the meeting will take place in the panchayat office itself. But this will happen in special cases such as special gram sabha gathering such as registration of adult voters in electoral list of the village, announcement of new schemes from the state and central government. A better infrastructure facility with adequate space is one of the prerequisites for the village panchayat office. Sufficient fund allocation should be made in the state budgetary process for the good infrastructure facilities for the local elected bodies, because the better infrastructure (including good panchayat building, electricity, stationary etc.) creates an enabling environment for the people to come forward to take part in the community affairs.
Table No.8: Frequency of Gram Sabha Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Name of the Village</th>
<th>Total Eligible Voters</th>
<th>02/10/09 Attendance</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>26/01/2010 Attendance</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>01/05/10 Attendance</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Average Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Irungattukottai</td>
<td>1009</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Katrambakkam</td>
<td>1269</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>8.85</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>9.06</td>
<td>8.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Block Development Office, Sriperumbudur

This is an important part of the study which gives an idea about how frequently gram sabha meetings are taking place in the village panchayats. There are 1009 eligible voters in the Irungattukottai and 1269 voters in the Katrambakkam village panchayat. The katrambakkam village panchayat is the panchayat for the three villages namely katrambakkam, pudupedu and sunderamedu. In katrambakkam village panchayat there are total 900 eligible voters. The pudupedu village panchayat consists of single ward with 230 voters in the village. The third village Sunderamedu village panchayat consists of one ward with 139 voters in the village.

Quorum, Nature and Extent of People’s Participation

The minimum quorum for the people’s participation according to the Tamil Nadu Panchayati Raj Act 1994 is one-tenth of the total eligible voter’s population in the village. There are total numbers of 2278 eligible voters in both the villages. The gram sabha has been conducted frequently in both the villages in accordance to the provisions of the Tamil Nadu Panchayati Raj Act 1994. Most of the respondents are well aware of these dates as it was frequently gram sabha meetings were taking place during these dates. The respondents were attended the most recently conducted gram sabha in the village that is on 1st May 2010. The extent of the people’s participation hardly meets the required quorum for the meeting. As gram sabha meetings were conducted during the morning times most of the youth who are working in the near by industries were not able to attend. Most of the villagers will go for the work during the morning ties so it will have a negative impact on the
quality of public participation. But even though the participation of the people on an average not so poor.

**Youth and Women Participation in the Gram Sabha**

One of the main objectives of the study is to find out the extent and type of youth participation in the gram sabha meetings. Therefore special attention has been given to the analysis of responses given by the young people. The sample includes nearly half of them in the age group of 13-35 years. The study finds out the youth are participating in the gram sabha meetings. But the nature of participation is mostly passive. It means that the youth are just being present in the meetings without much involvement in the discussion part. Most of the youth once attend the gram sabha raised the queries, if these queries were not into consideration they regret for that and they won’t turn up for the next meeting. Most of the youth were able to raise their concerns and needs such as need of drinking water facility (Irungattukotai), transport facility (Katrambakkam). But as these needs cannot be fulfilled in the short time as these were the needs that require the support of state government and district administration. Because of this most of youth feel dejected as their concerns are not taken into consideration by the panchayat. There is dissatisfaction among the youth towards the gram sabha meetings. Overall the youth participation is there. At the same time the youth has to understand the limitations of the panchayat such as lack of good finance, functionaries which are responsible for the delay in responding to their needs and fulfilling those needs.

The participation of the women has an important role in the effective functioning of gram sabha in the villages. As women know what are all the needs and concerns of the family in the community. So if women participation is more then there will be more number of needs, concerns will come up in the discussion. The study finds out the female representation is good (according to the ward member, in Irungattukottai) when compared to male representation. But in the case of Katrambakkam village panchayat there is less number of women participation than the male representation. Most of them are participating passively without involving actively in the deliberations.
The people’s participation is the necessary element for the success of panchayati raj system. Based on the respondents view, the attendance of the gram sabha meetings will be in the range of 100-200. Here the data collected by using triangulation method. That is views are taken from the common public, elected representatives and the officials. The views expressed by these three categories are varying in nature. According to the public the attendance will be around 100-200, the elected members told that the representation would around 200-300 and finally according to the officials (panchayat assistants) there will be 100-150 people attending the gram sabha meetings. The youth (18-35yrs) has responded differently from all of the above views. According to their responses the attendance in the gram sabha meetings will be around 30-40 only. This is a serious observation which needs to be studied in detail to understand the crux of the problem of participation. But as far as reliability is concerned again there is a question of consultation between the community and the youth involvement.

Overall the attendance will be approximately around 125-175 people in both the villages. But in keeping the view of democracy this representation is very poor. There is a need to find ways and means to enhance the people’s participation for the success of the Panchayati Raj System.

Discussions in the Gram Sabha Meetings

Most of the discussions in the gram sabha meetings were related to the schemes and programmes. Around 42.8% repondents were told that the first priority in the meetings will be given to the developmental programmes to be implemented in the village. This was followed by the discussion on the income and expenditure of the finance of the panchayats. The panchayat assistant will read out the income and how the money was spent on what. During this point of time, few queries related to the money was raised by the villagers but they were not satisfied with the reply given by the panchayat elected members and the officials. This will reflect the accountability nature of the panchayat to the gram sabha.
In both the villages there are few industrial set up such as Hundai Company from which the local body will get lump sum amount in the form of property taxes. But the knowledge on how much money will be recovered is not known (even to the wardmember of the panchayat). This shows that the nature of the relationship between the president and the other elected members of the panchayat.

Very less number of the respondents that is only 3.5% respondents told that there is a space for discussing the infrastructure of the village such as transport, pipeline for the drinking water facility (in irungatukottai village). Around 39.2% of the respondents feels that all the above points will be discussed in the gram sabha meetings. The remaining 4.5% of the respondents told the discussion will take place on the other issues such as inclusion of voters in the electoral list, about the ration cards and issue of birth and death certificates by the panchayat office.

Efforts of Gram Sabha in Identifying, Articulating the needs and concerns of the people: Gram sabha is the grassroots institution where there is a space for the identification and articulation of the needs and concerns of the people. It provides a platform for the practice of direct democracy. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act-1992 says that in the Article 243G, the panchayats should function as institutions of self-government in which planning for socio-economic development of the village. Therefore, gram sabha has a role in the planning process by identifying the needs of the people.

Gram sabha has to give scope for tapping the needs of the people followed by the prioritisation of those needs. The study finds out that even though there is an identification of the needs of the people such as drinking water facility, transport system, primary health centre but these needs require sound finance sources. Central and State governments provide funds only the CSSs and SSSs. The own resource generation of the panchayats is not adequate to meet even the electricity charges, stationery etc. The identified needs in the gram sabha never got prioritised and not put forwarded to the panchayat for the necessary measures to be taken up. Needs such as transport facility to the village requires effective communication between the panchayat elected members, district officials and
the state government. There is a communication barrier existing between the local elected bodies and the permanent official bodies such as district collectorate.

**Beneficiary Selection by the Gram Sabha**

In the field the most of the respondents are unaware of how the list of beneficiaries will be made. 60% of the respondents told that they don’t know how and on what basis the beneficiaries list would be prepared. This is a serious observation because public has the right to know how the list would be prepared and whether the scheme is really benefitting to the needy person or not. Proper selection of the beneficiaries is one of the major criteria to know the transparency and accountability of the panchayat to the community members. Only 22.85% of the respondents knew about the selection of the beneficiaries. Among them few respondents observed that the beneficiary list would be selected among the persons who are the relatives of elected members or their close relatives. This indicates the favouritism nature of the panchayat members. Remaining 17.15% of the respondents are not given their responses.

**Consultation of Gram Sabha in the preparation of Village Plan**

The gram sabha is a consulting body for knowing the needs, concerns and aspirations of the people in the village. Therefore, the issues/problems raised in the gram sabha cannot be ignored to ensure the success of democracy at the grassroots level.

Therefore, it is very essential for panchayat to consult the gram sabha while preparing the annual plan, budget for the village. In the present study, the two village panchayats Irungattukottai and Katrambakkam there is a consultation from the panchayat for fulfilling the routine formalities.

Consulting gram sabha in prioritizing the needs of the people is one of key for the success of Panchayati Raj System. The study finds out that only 40% of the respondents told that the panchayat is consulting the gram sabha in the preparation of the plan. One of the surprising findings is that 42.5% of the public feels that the panchayat is not consulting the gram sabha in preparing the plan. Among these
respondents, some of them expressed that there is no specific plan preparation taking place for the development of the village. Because the agenda for the gram sabha will come from the district administration through the block development office in the form of notice/posters (interaction with panchayat assistant).

The points/issues raised by the villagers are noted down in the meeting. But the necessary follow up action was not taken so far. This show that the deliberations of the gram sabha meetings are not taken seriously neither by the panchayat elected representatives nor the officials. Gram sabha meetings without any necessary follow up activities will not yield any productive results for the village development. Therefore, quick measures are needed to be taken to address this issue immediately. There should be a continuous consultation process at least once in a month between the villagers and the panchayat.

Gram Sabha as a Participatory Democratic Structure

In the federal democratic system of the nation, the institution of gram sabha is the only place for the direct participation of the people in managing their own affairs. It provides a platform for the people to hold accountability of the elected members and the government officials for their actions. Finally, gram sabha has to play a role of enabler for the citizen participation in the community affairs. Democratic participation in the gram sabha is one necessary condition for the good local governance.

Level of Satisfaction among the People

Around 68.5% of the respondents expressed their satisfaction towards the gram sabha as a democratic participatory mechanism. The respondent’s opinion is that at least it has provided the space for expressing their concerns, needs to the panchayat. 17.15% of the respondents not felt the gram sabha as a structure for participation. It is because they felt that in the meetings of gram sabha they are not given an opportunity for expressing their voices in the discussion. Mainly the concerns raised by the youth are not given adequate importance. Because of this most of the youth are
reluctant to take part in the gram sabha meetings. The remaining 14.35% respondents have not given their responses on this aspect.

With regard to the satisfaction of the working of gram sabha, one-third (34%) of the respondents are moderately satisfied with the functioning of gram sabha. 23% of the respondents felt good about the nature of working of the institution. Overall the institution is working moderately in the villages.

Cases of Panchayat Elected Representatives
1. Shri K. Veeraraghavan, Vice-president, Katrambakkam Village Panchayat

The main objective of having discussions with the elected panchayat representatives is to know about their view, opinions and perspectives on the participation of the people in the gram sabha and its level of functioning. The first interaction was held with the vice-president of the katrambakkam village panchayat. He is requested to give his opinion on the people’s participation in the gram sabha. He expressed that around 300 people will attend the gram sabha from the three villages. But this seems to be false because the attendance in the last three gram sabha meetings has not crossed 200 (based on the register of the panchayat). He has been asked specific question on the basic issues/problems prevailing in the village. The most important basic issues highlighted are lack of proper drinking water facility, employment to the youth, lack of proper health facilities etc. The vice-president opined about the youth participation in the gram sabha meetings; the participation of the youth in the gram sabha is good. But most of the youth are seeking employment opportunities in the gram sabha meetings. He expressed his satisfaction with regard to the people’s participation in the meetings.

2. With Shri. K. Rajaram, Ward Member, Irungattukottai Village Panchayat

Shri. Rajaram after serving the electricity board of the Tamil Nadu government, he contested and got elected as ward member of the panchayat. He was asked about the people’s participation the gram sabha meetings. He expressed that more number of females participate than the male members. Youth will also take part in the
meetings. They raised questions about providing the regular employment opportunities in the industries located in and around the village. Among 1000 employees only 10-12 local people are working as permanent staff in these industries. Good number of amount will come as property taxes from these industries. But the member is unaware about how much money will come to the panchayat. This shows lack of transparency and accountability of the panchayat. It also reflects the nature and kind of relationship between the president and the other elected members of the panchayat. The fundamental issues in the village are lack of proper drinking water facility, health facility, unemployment, public transport system etc. He expressed that around 100-120 people will attend the gram sabha meetings. The meetings will be held in primary school of the village.

Findings and Suggestions

General Findings

1. One of the major findings is that the institution of gram sabha is not pervaded into the community as expected level. It means that the mere constitution of gram sabha will not work. It has to be made people’s institution with their active participation.

2. People have not owned the institution of gram sabha as their friendly institution which will take care of their concerns and needs.

3. There is no accountability between the president and the ward members which is a serious issue regarding the accountability of the institution. There should be institutionalization of processes such as social audit mechanism to enhance the accountability of both the elected representatives and the panchayat. This will increase the credibility of the institution of gram sabha.

4. The gram sabha meetings are conducted for the sake of fulfilling the administrative formalities

5. The agenda to be discussed in the gram sabha meetings will come from the top administration which will undermine the spirit of democracy.

6. No serious deliberations and discussions are taking place in the gram sabha meetings.
7. The quorum of gram sabha meetings is hardly met in both the villages. There is no gradual increase in the people’s participation in the discussions.

8. The nature, quality of the participation is passive except in a few cases. Active participation of people is necessary to hold accountability of the elected representatives and the panchayat officials.

9. The Participation of the people is poor specially women and the youth. Most of the participation of people comes from the age group between 35-50.

10. Women and the youth participation is not up to the expected level. Even those who participate remain silent in the discussions.

**Specific Findings**

1. **Knowledge and Awareness about the Gram Sabha**

   There is a considerable level of awareness existing among the people of the villages about the institution of gram sabha.

   People are aware about the fact that there is a public forum to discuss, deliberate about their concerns and needs which is a healthy sign from the democracy point of view.

   Awareness is the first step to involve in the decision-making process. But this awareness has to lead the action part which is necessary to transform the awareness into action in the form of raising voices in the public forums such as gram sabha to solve their own problems and needs.

   One of the significant findings is that even the elected panchayat representatives are unaware about the role and the importance of gram sabha in the democracy. But the knowledge about the elected panchayat representatives, conduct of gram sabha, role and importance of gram sabha are not yet known and understood by the both elected representatives and the people at large. The role of effective leadership plays an important part in ensuring the fruits of democracy to the people. The study finds out that there is a lack of leadership which is required to improve the rural governance.
2. Awareness, Knowledge about Gram Sabha among the Youth

Youth is known for its innovative ideas, dynamism in their attitude. It forms a major chunk in the population of India (42%). The main purpose of the study is found out the knowledge, attitude, and perceptions of youth about the grass root institution of gram sabha in the chosen villages. The study finds out that the youth are having interest to take part in the gram sabha meetings. But their voices are not heard properly in the discussions. This may be attributed to the lack of assertive communication skills and courage to speak in the public forums.

The young adult voters (who were age between 18-20yrs) are unexposed to the gram sabha. They don’t know even there is an institution like gram sabha. Most of the youth who is taking part in the gram sabha meetings will remain as passive observers.

Most of the suggestions, advices given by the youth in the discussions will not be giving adequate importance either by the panchayat members or by the community itself. Many youth are reluctant to attend the gram sabha meetings, because they felt that no good will happen by involving in the discussions. Overall the participation of the youth in the decision-making process is not satisfactory in the gram sabha.

Women Participation in the Gram Sabha

The participation of the women remains moderate in both the villages. The quality, nature of participation significantly varies from one village to the other. Most of the participants are not actively participating in the discussions. One of the positive signs is that women are showing much more interest in participating in the meetings.

3. Gram Sabha as a Participatory Structure

Gram Sabha is a constitutional entity through which people can exercise their rights, obligations and needs. It was accorded constitutional status and is regarded as people’s parliament. But in reality it still remains stagnant. It has to make a motion by involving the people and the community to bring life into it. It has not yet pervaded into
the minds of the people. Even educated voters are unaware about the importance of gram sabha. The elected representatives are not having enough knowledge about the role and importance of gram sabha which is a serious concern.

4. Role of Gram Sabha in Rural Governance

Gram Sabha is the only institutional structure available for the exercise of direct democracy. Therefore, it has to be made active to achieve the goals of democracy such as participation, inclusiveness, equity. The study finds out the gram sabha is not functioning up to the expected level because of the following reasons:

- Lack of effective leadership
- Lack of effective administrative support (Block, District)
- Lack of adequate publicity for the gram sabha meetings
- Lack of Assertive Citizenship among the individuals
- Lack of strong political will to strengthen the people’s institutions

Findings and Inferences of the Study

Based on the findings of the study the following inferences are drawn:

- Level of awareness is quite satisfactory among the people
- Educational level of the respondents is considerably good
- The gram sabha meetings are conducted regularly
- The required quorum for the gram sabha meeting is maintained with great difficulty
- Quality, nature of those who are participating in the gram sabha meetings is largely passive in nature
- Gram Sabha has not been able to meet the role in identifying the needs and concerns of the people
- Youth voices are not heard properly and their views are sidelined
- Women have shown much interest, enthusiasm to take part in the gram sabha meetings.
- One-third quorum of reservation for women in the panchayats has not met
• No transparency in the selection of beneficiaries
• Lack of capacity building for the elected representatives
• There is no village plan preparation
• Gram Sabha has not consulted in the identifying the needs/concerns during the agenda preparation for the meeting
• Lack of proper sensitization, orientation among the youth about the institution of gram sabha
• Lack of support from other grass root organizations such as youth clubs, self-help groups and other non-governmental organizations to mobilize the people

Suggestions for the Improvement

1. Adequate Publicity: There should be continuous and constant information dissemination mechanism/ways regarding the role and importance of gram sabha to the people

2. Suitable Place, Space: There should be a constant, suitable place to conduct the gram sabha meetings which will accommodate sufficient number of the people

3. Effective Utilisation of Local Media: To mobilise the community people the local media such as newspapers, news channels should be involved in the dissemination of the information about the importance of gram sabha

4. Continuous Advertisement: There should be continuous advertisements in the Ministry of Panchayati Raj at the Central level, The Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development at the state level explaining about the need of people’s participation in the gram sabha meetings

5. Screening and Documentation of Successful Gram Sabha Case Studies: The success stories of gram sabha (such as Hivre Bazar Village Panchayat, Maharashtra and Kuthumbakkam Village Panchayat, Tamil Nadu) should be documented and screened in every village panchayat.

6. Inclusion of Gram Sabha Practices in the School Curriculum: The practice, importance of gram sabha should be taught at the primary school and secondary
school levels to understand the concept of democracy among the children and the adolescents who are future citizens of the nation

7. **Involving Civil Society Organizations:** Integration of Panchayati Raj Institutions with the Civil Society Organizations such as Youth Clubs, Self-Help Groups will bring better results

8. **Awareness among the Young People:** The should be clear delineation about the role of young people in the community welfare. Youth should assign some responsibilities in the implementation of development programmes so that youth will feel that they are also having a role in improving the conditions of the people

9. **Democracy in the Schools, Colleges:** In the schools and colleges there should be an enabling environment for the democratic practices for the children, youth to understand the spirit of democracy

10. **Roadmap from Panchayats to Parliament:** Local Democratic participatory structures will act as schools of democracy and thus it is the roadmap for the leadership qualities. It also provides a platform to acquire the art and skill of governing process.
Towards Participatory Planning Through
Grama Sabha: Lessons from Kerala
Dr. J.B. Rajan*

1. Introduction

The people’s opportunities for participation in governance is better ensured through Panchayati Raj system of governance, but had been curtailed with legal, fiscal, and administrative powers till 1992. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to Indian Constitution was a radical reform in local governance that opened space for direct democracy by granting constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), including Gram Sabha. The PRIs are enshrined in the Constitution like the two upper levels of Government, i.e. Central and State Government. As a third tier of self-government, the PRIs have got more powers but what is remarkable is the creation of a fourth tier of governance, Grama Sabha. The Grama Sabha has been conceived as the basic body to ensure people’s participation in local governance and development. The Article 243 (b) of the Indian Constitution defines “Gram Sabha” as a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of Panchayat at the village level. The article 243 (g) of the Act defines a village as one specified by the Governor by public notification to be a village for the purposes of the Act and may include a group of villages so specified. And the Article 243A empowers Gram Sabha to exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide. The amendments do not specify any function to be performed by the Grama Sabha but it is left to the States to statutorily entrust the Grama Sabha with vast powers to function as a legal entity.

The State of Kerala has evolved a model in fulfilling the spirit of Panchayati Raj through its legislative, fiscal, and administrative reforms. The striking feature was

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the steps taken to strengthen *Grama Sabha* so as to ensure active participation of people in the planning process. The initiatives in Kerala for strengthening *Grama Sabha* justifies the statement made by Asok Mehta Committee that “the *Gram Sabha* has an important role in activating the democratic process at the grass-roots level, in inculcating community spirit, in increasing political awareness, in strengthening developmental orientations, in educating the rural people in administrative and political processes and in enabling the weaker sections to progressively assert their point of view.” (Govt. of India, 1978). This paper is an attempt to appraise the relevance of *Grama Sabha* as a forum for participatory planning and brings to light its legal base, powers and functions in the Kerala context.

**2. *Grama Sabha* in Kerala**

Following the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments, Kerala has made bold and radical attempts in establishing the decentralised governance by enacting appropriate legislation, launching necessary mechanism and creating environment. All these contributed to democratic decentralisation. The enactment of Kerala Panchayati Raj (KPR) Act 1994 devised a fourth-tier in the form of “Grama Sabha” with powers of planning, deciding, implementing, and monitoring of projects for local development and it was a leap towards direct democracy. The Grama Sabha has got a vibrant role after the Sen Committee recommendations, based on which KPR Act was amended. Sections 3, 3A, and 3B of The KPR Act, 1994 envisage the definition of *Grama Sabha*, its structure, powers, functions, and rights.

**2.1. Constituency**

According to S.3 (1) of KPR Act, each constituency of Village Panchayat may be specified as a village under clause (g) of article 243. Thus, each ward of the Village (Grama) Panchayat is considered as *Gramom* (village) and an assembly of the voters of that ward is considered as *Grama Sabha* (Village Assembly). Similar assemblies of urban local bodies (Municipalities and Corporations) are called Ward Sabha, as per S. 42A of Kerala Municipality Act. The constituencies (wards) of
Local Self Government Institutions (LSGIs) in 2005 number 16,139 in Grama Panchayat, 1,756 in Municipality, and 316 in Corporation; thus there are 16,139 Grama Sabhas and 2,072 Ward Sabhas in Kerala. (Table-1).

**Table 1: Numerical Strength of LSGIs and Constituencies in Kerala (2005)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LSGIs</th>
<th>No. of LSGIs</th>
<th>No. of Wards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grama Panchayat</td>
<td>999</td>
<td>16,139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block Panchayat</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>2,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Panchayat</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipality</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1,756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1223</strong></td>
<td><strong>20,554</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


According to S.3 (2) of KPR Act, all persons whose names are included in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of a village panchayat shall be deemed to be constituted as *Grama Sabha* of such village. In other words, all voters in the ward of the *Grama Panchayat* constitute a *Grama Sabha*.

**2.2. Meetings: Timing and Responsibility**

The KPR Act specifies the timing and responsibility of convening Grama Sabha meetings. As per S.3 (3) of KPR Act, *Grama Sabha* shall meet at least once in three months at the place fixed by the Village Panchayat and to such meetings, the Convenor of the Village Panchayat shall, compulsorily invite the members of the Block Panchayat, the District Panchayat and the Legislative Assembly representing the area of the *Grama Sabha*. Provided that the Convenor shall, on a request in writing made by not less than ten per cent of the members of any *Grama Sabha*, convene a special meeting of the *Grama Sabha* within fifteen days with the agenda
given along with the request. Provided further that such special meeting shall be convened only once within the period between two general meetings. Section 3 (4) of KPR Act specifies that the member of a village panchayat representing the constituency comprised in the area of a village shall be the Convenor of that Grama Sabha; however if due to any reason, physical or otherwise, the Convenor is unable to perform his functions as such, the President may appoint a member representing any adjacent constituency as the Convenor. As per S. 3 (5) of KPR, every meeting of the Grama Sabha shall be presided over by the President of the village panchayat or in his absence the vice-president or in the absence of both of them by the Convener of Grama Sabha.

The provision for Grama Sabha meeting opens space for people’s participation in local governance, as it is mandatory to convene Grama Sabha meetings at regular intervals. Further the provision for special meeting of the Grama Sabha prompt the people to organise themselves to express their voice. The Act also imposes responsibility on the elected representative as well as on the President to convene Grama Sabha meetings regularly.

It is important to note that as per S. 35 (p) of the KPR Act, the elected member will be disqualified if convening of Grama Sabha meeting once in three months is lapsed by the member, as Convenor of Grama Sabha, for two consecutive terms. However the date, time and venue of the Grama Sabha meeting have to be decided by the Panchayat, Rule 4 of the Kerala Panchayat Raj (Procedure for Convening and Conducting the Meeting of Grama Sabha) Rules, 1995 states that the President of the, Village Panchayat shall, in consultation with the Convenor of the Grama Sabha concerned, fix the date and time between 8 am. and 6 pm. and the Secretary of the Village Panchayat concerned shall publish the place, date and time of the meeting, so fixed, by affixing notice in appropriate public places, Government offices, schools in the area of the Grama Sabha and in the office of the Village Panchayat: The Convenor concerned shall try to inform the members of the Grama Sabha the place, date and time of the meeting and cause them to attend the meeting. It was
based on this rule that the State Election Commission issued an order disqualifying the President of Kaippamangalam Grama Panchayat in Thrissur district.

2.3. Proceedings

The S.3 (6) of KPR Act specifies the matters to be discussed in the Grama Sabha. The village panchayat shall place before the Grama Sabha a report relating to the developmental programmes relating to the constituency during the previous year and that are proposed to be undertaken during the current year, and the expenditure thereof, the annual statement of accounts and the administration report of the preceding year. If in any circumstances, any decision of the Grama Sabha could not be implemented, the President shall report the reason therefore, before the Grama Sabha. This provision, thus, makes it clear that the Grama Sabha should be duly informed of the developmental activities of their constituency.

2.4. The Supreme Authority

The supremacy of Grama Sabha is revealed by S.3 (7) of the KPR Act, which states that the village panchayats, the block panchayats and the district panchayats shall give due consideration to the recommendations and suggestions, if any, of the Grama Sabha. Even though the boundary of the Grama Sabha is determined by constituency of the Grama panchayat, the upper tiers of PRIs viz. block and district panchayat have to consider the recommendations and suggestions of the Grama Sabha.

The ultimate right of Grama Sabha in beneficiary selection for all the three tiers is specified by the State Government. In the case of PRIs, basically the Grama Sabha will identify the beneficiaries. Since the District Panchayat and Block Panchayats cannot convene the Grama Sabha, they will get the beneficiary selected through the respective Gram Panchayat who will carry out selection process through the Grama Sabha and give the selected list to the Block or District Panchayat for approval. This would mean that the number of beneficiaries to be selected by each
Grama panchayat would have to be determined in advance by the District and Block Panchayats.

2.5. Powers, Functions, and Rights

The Section 3 A of the KPR Act empowers Grama Sabha with vast powers, functions and rights. They are:

1. *Grama Sabha* shall, in such manner and subject to such procedure, as may be prescribed, perform the following powers and functions, namely: -
   a. to render assistance in the collection and compilation of details required to formulate development plans of the panchayat;
   b. to formulate the proposals and fixing of priority of schemes and development programmes to be implemented in the area of Village Panchayat;
   c. to prepare and submit to the Village Panchayat a final list of eligible beneficiaries in the order of priority relating to the beneficiary oriented schemes on the basic of the criteria fixed;
   d. to render assistance to implement effectively the development schemes by providing facilities locally required;
   e. to provide and mobilise voluntary service and contribution in cash or in kind necessary for the development plans;
   f. suggesting the location of street lights, street or community water taps, public wells, public sanitation units, irrigation facilities and such other public utility schemes;
   g. to formulate schemes to impart awareness on matters of public interest like cleanliness, environmental protection, pollution control and to give protection against social evils like corruption, illicit and clandestine transactions;
   h. to promote harmony and unity among various groups of people within the area of the *Grama Sabha* and to organise arts and sports festivals to develop goodwill among the people of that locality;
   i. to monitor and render assistance to the beneficiary committees engaged in the developmental activities within the area of the Village Panchayat.
j. to verify the eligibility of persons getting various kinds of welfare assistance from the Government such as pensions and subsidies;
k. to collect information regarding the detailed estimates of works proposed to be implemented in the area of the Grama Sabha;
l. to make available details regarding the services to be rendered and the activities proposed to be done by the officials concerned in the succeeding three months;
m. to know the rationale behind every decision taken by the panchayat regarding the area of the Grama Sabha;
n. to know the follow up action taken on the decisions of the Grama Sabha and the detailed reasons for not implementing any of the decisions;
o. to co-operate with the employees of the village panchayats in the sanitation processes and rendering voluntary service for the removal of garbage;
p. to find out the deficiencies in the arrangements for water supply, street lighting etc. within the area of the Grama Sabha and to suggest remedial measures;
q. to assist the activities of parent-teacher associations of the schools within the area of the Grama Sabha;
r. to assist the public health activities especially prevention of diseases and family welfare, within the area of the Grama Sabha.
s. to perform such other functions as may be prescribed from time to time.

2. The Grama Sabha shall, in its ordinary meeting or in the special meeting convened for the purpose; discuss the report referred to in sub-section (6) of section 3 and it shall have the right to know about the budgetary provisions, the details of plan outlay, item wise allocation of funds and details of the estimates and cost of materials of works executed or proposed to be executed within the area of the Grama Sabha.

3. The Audit report of the performance audit placed for the consideration of the Grama Sabha shall be discussed in the meeting and its views, recommendations and suggestions shall be communicated to the concerned village panchayat.
4. The **quorum** of the *Grama Sabha* shall be ten per cent of the number of voters of its area and the procedure for convening and conducting meetings of the *Grama Sabha* shall be such as may be prescribed. Provided that the quorum of the meting of a *Grama Sabha*, which was adjourned earlier for want of quorum shall be fifty when convened again.

5. The Officers of the Village Panchayats shall attend the meetings of the *Grama Sabha* as may be required by the President and an officer nominated by the Village Panchayat as the Co-ordinator of the *Grama Sabha* shall assist the Convenor in convening and conducting the meetings of the *Grama Sabha* and in recording its decisions in the Minutes Book and also in taking follow up action thereon.

6. The *Grama Sabha* may appoint, elect or constitute, general or special sub-committees for the detailed discussions on any issues or programmes and for the effective implementation of the schemes and the decisions and in furtherance of its rights and responsibilities. Provided that such committees shall consist of not less than ten members of whom, not less than half shall be women.

7. Resolutions may be passed on majority basis, in the meetings of the *Grama Sabha* in respect of any issue with in its jurisdiction, however, effort should be made to take decision on the basis of general consensus as far as possible.

8. When beneficiaries are to be selected according to any scheme, project or plan, the criteria for eligibility and order of priority shall be fixed by the panchayat subject to the terms and conditions prescribed in the scheme, project or plan and such criteria shall be published in the manner prescribed and intimated to the *Grama Sabha*.

9. The priority list prepared by *Grama Panchayat* after inviting applications for the selection of beneficiaries and conducting enquiries on the application received, shall be scrutinised at the meeting of the *Grama Sabha* in which the applicants
are also invited and a final list of the deserving beneficiaries, in the order of priority, shall be prepared and sent for the approval of the Grama Panchayat. Provided that the Grama Panchayat shall not change the order of priority in the list sent by the Grama Sabha for approval.

In addition to the above, rule 3 of the Kerala Panchayati Raj (Procedures for Convening and Conducting the Meeting of Grama Sabha) Rules 1995 specify the other functions to be performed by Grama Sabha viz.

(i) to provide assistance necessary to carry out fully the functions to be performed by the Village Panchayat as per the third schedule and other provisions of the Act.

(ii) to comply with the directions issued by the Government and the Village Panchayat from time to time.

2.6. Responsibilities of Grama Sabha

As per S. 3B of KPR Act, the Grama Sabha has the following responsibilities.

1. The Grama Sabha shall have the following responsibilities namely: -

i. Dissemination of information regarding developmental and welfare activities;

ii. Participating in and canvassing of programmes of Health and Literacy and such other time-bound developmental programmes;

iii. Collecting essential socio-economic data;

iv. Providing feedback on the performance of development programmes;

v. Resort to moral sanction to pay taxes, repayment of loans, promote environmental cleanliness and to maintain social harmony;

vi. Mobilise local resources to augment resources of the panchayat;

vii. Supervising development activities as volunteer teams and make arrangements for reporting urgently incidence of epidemics, natural calamities, etc.

2. The Grama Sabha shall make periodical reports to the village Panchayats in respect of matters specified in a section 3 A.
The relevant provisions in the KPR Act make it mandatory to convene *Gram Sabha* regularly with precise proceedings to be followed. The elected member is accountable to the people whom s/he represents. It also ensures accountability on the part of bureaucrats and PRIs. An assembly of people is created legally, in which the voice of people is heard and discussed.

### 3. Efforts for Empowering Grama Sabha

In addition to the enactment creating *Grama Sabha*, steps have been taken by the Government of Kerala for activating the *Sabha*. The 9th five-year plan in Kerala started as a campaign and steps were taken to ensure people’s participation. To quote from the government guideline: “*The objective of the proposed campaign is to ensure maximum people’s participation at every stage of the planning process from proposal to implementation*” (Govt. of Kerala, 1996). In the campaign process, due attention was given to activate the *Grama Sabha*. The guideline stated: “*the first stage of the Peoples’ Campaign for 9th Plan will consist of convening all Grama Sabhas and Ward Conventions (in Municipalities and Corporations) in the State to discuss the approach to the 9th plan in the local context. These meetings will identify the development problems of the Panchayats in their respective areas, and indicate their priorities. They can also make suggestions for solutions. The gram sbhas/conventions will be convened only on holidays so as to ensure widest participation.* (Ibid).

Despite all efforts taken during the 9th plan, the *Grama Sabha* attendance generally seems weak. The Sen Committee addressed this seriously and the valuable suggestions of the Committee were incorporated in the KPR Amendment Act 1999. The government guidelines for the 10th five-year plan spell out necessary steps, for ensuring effective participation in *Grama Sabha*. (Govt. of Kerala, 2002). While stressing the need for proper representation by every socio-economic section of the society, the section 7.2 of the document put forth following steps to be taken to ensure participation.
a. Determination of dates in advance by the local governments.
b. Printing of invitation notices and distributing them with each notice giving a summary of the responsibilities of Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha in Plan formulation.
c. Display of fixed notices in public places.
d. Establish contact with ‘interest’ groups through officers and elected members.
e. Information through micro organisations.
f. Special publicity through schools, anganwadis and cooperatives.
g. Special efforts through NGOs, libraries, and cooperatives.
h. Mobilization through SHGs/NHGs/SC/ST promoters.
i. Campaign through National Service Scheme volunteers, NCC cadets and College students on social work placement.
j. House visits through squad work.

The document further suggests identification and training of two facilitators (one male and one female) from among the Working Group members to activate the Grama Sabha. Also suggested are the modus operandi of convening Grama Sabha meeting and the maintenance of records relating to Grama Sabha.

The special procedure for Block Panchayats and District Panchayats put forth by section 7.2.5 of the document is also note worthy here: “The Block Panchayats should hold a meeting of all elected local government members of the three tiers of Panchayat from within its jurisdiction and carry out a detailed consultation exercise as above. In the case of District Panchayats a meeting of all Village Panchayat Presidents, all elected members of the District and Block Panchayats may be held and a similar exercise may be undertaken. The procedures followed for Grama Sabha/Ward Sabha meetings would mutatis mutandis apply to these consultations.” (ibid).

The supporting platforms of decentralisation in Kerala viz. Grama Sabha, Neighbourhood Groups, Working Groups, Beneficiary Committees, Technical
Advisory Committees and Technical Committees play crucial role for strengthening the PRIs and the decentralised governance. These fora also have opened spaces for the people to intervene in local governance.

4. Conclusion

In fact, the Constitutional mandate of the States to statutorily entrust Grama Sabha with powers has been fulfilled but with varying definitions for ‘village’. Despite the different definitions attributed for Grama Sabha by the States, recognizing it as a constitutional entity in the local development segment is significant. The Government of India has well recognized this by declaring 1999/2000 as the ‘Year of Gram Sabha’ to set the process of decentralised democracy in motion. The lessons from Kerala experience is that the active participation of people in the local governance and development can be ensured if a due space is provided to them. The Grama Sabha envisaged in Kerala is a leap towards not only the vibrant participatory planning but also participatory monitoring and social audit.

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Grampa Sabha to Loka Sabha

P. Lakshmanan*

“From Grampa Sabha to Loka Sabha” is a sublime democratic concept that reflects the principle of subsidiarity in decentralized planning. Subsidiarity in governance means whatever can be done at the lower level must be done there and only work that cannot be done at the lower level must be passed on to the next higher level of governance. To take an example village roads are to be constructed and maintained by Village Panchayat, roads connecting two or more villages are to be assigned to Middle tier Panchayat, district roads are to be assigned to District Panchayat, State Highways to State government and National Highways to Central government. Such a division of duties and responsibilities is the essence of decentralization of power. Our forefathers who in the struggle for independence had laid down their lives and suffered untold miseries, the architects of our constitution and the leaders who governed our country envisaged GRAMA SABHA as a forum of direct democracy at grass roots level and the LS as the forum of representative democracy at the apex.

The Democratic Structure

With the 73rd amendment to the constitution the three tier or two tier panchayats came into being all over the country and all the conformity acts of the States have provided for the constitution of GRAMA SABHA. The GRAMA SABHA is an assembly of all voters of a village or subdivisions of the village, where the citizen can directly participate in the decision making process, decisions relating to local development and governance. It is the forum that gives opportunity to the citizens to formulate, implement and monitor local development plans and to involve themselves in local governance. The LS is the supreme body of elected representatives that makes laws for the whole country ensuring that the elected representatives reflect the needs and views of the voters they represent. Our country is supposed to have a system of government that has both the democratic structures namely the GRAMA SABHA and the LS along with the other tiers of

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government in between the two structures. How do these democratic structures function now?

Loka Sabha

It is still a matter of pride for us that the LS, the highest pillar of democratic government is still functioning in India. In many countries that have become independent from colonial rule along with India, such a body of representative democracy does not even exist. We have succeeded in keeping the structure in tact, but it is the skeleton that is in tact and the flesh and blood that make it dynamic are gradually decaying. The LS is supposed to make laws that would make our country and countrymen rich, but now it is making laws to make its members rich. On the whole it seems to ignore the very purpose of the creation of such a body. Elections to the LS are conducted at regular intervals, but the voters do not get the opportunity to elect the right person to represent them in the law making body. In the present system, it is the political parties that select the candidates and often the candidates selected do not represent the voice of the people. Representative democracy is meaningful only if the elected candidates function as the voice of the people. Imagine a situation where out of the three candidates fielded in an election by three different political parties, one is involved in criminal cases; the second one in illegal and immoral activities and the third one protects the interests of business corporations. The voter is left little choice to elect the right candidate. Such a situation was an exception in the beginning, but gradually it is becoming the rule. In such a situation the voters’ choice is only the choice between Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

Grama Sabha

The Constitution of India defines GRAMA SABHA as “a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of panchayat at the village level.” It also says that GRAMA SABHAs may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the Legislature of the State may, by law, provide. Thus GRAMA SABHA became mandatory and at present there is GRAMA SABHA in all the GPs all over India. The powers to be exercised and functions to be performed by the GRAMA SABHA are to be decided by the State Legislature. This is
where we find great disparity among the States. All States have devolved powers and functions to GRAMA SABHA following the 11th Schedule of the Constitutional Amendment, but do the GRAMA SABHAs across the country really exercise the powers and perform the functions assigned to them? The answer is a big “NO”. Why is it so?

**Powers and Functions of Grama Sabha**

The powers and functions of the GRAMA SABHA vary from State to State. The difference is not found in the laws governing those powers and functions because all State Acts provide for devolution of powers and functions to GRAMA SABHA. It is visible in the way the GRAMA SABHA exercises those powers and performs the functions. Some States have earnestly attempted to make GRAMA SABHA a forum of direct democracy by devolving powers and functions and the funds to utilize the powers and functions, but some others have made a mockery of it. It is a rich learning experience to see random samples of the functioning of GRAMA SABHA across the country. I have taken these samples from my own experience or from the experience of others.

- In a GRAMA SABHA meeting the woman sarpanch sits silently in a chair while the “sarpanch pathi” sitting near her does all the talking and carries out the business of the GRAMA SABHA on behalf of his wife. No one finds anything wrong in the husband acting for his wife.
- A GRAMA SABHA seriously identifies the local development needs and prioritizes the needs not knowing that the funds to implement their needs will never come. The next year they are asked to do the same thing and they do it as a useless ritual.
- The high caste Hindus do not allow a Scheduled Tribe woman panchayat president to enter the Panchayat office to assume charge. The question of convening the GRAMA SABHA does not arise there.
- In a GRAMA SABHA the only person who can read and understand Govt Orders is the Secretary of the GP and he takes decisions for the people who approve the decisions not knowing what they are doing.
- A low caste Grama Panchayat President is brutally murdered by the dominant upper caste that cannot imagine themselves as mere citizens while a low caste person governed the panchayat.
- The president of a panchayat reads out the priority list of beneficiaries for many development projects and asks the people to clap their hands in approval and they...
do so. The list was prepared in consultation with the political leaders without any criteria for selection.

- A poor man who is eligible for benefit under a project is denied it. When he questions the decision in the GRAMA SABHA, he is threatened into silence.

These samples give only one side of the picture; the dark side. This bleak side makes one think that decentralized governance in India is only a big “Tamasha”, something that seems to be a mockery or farce of the real thing. But there is another side to the picture. There are GRAMA SABHAs in many States that meet regularly, participate in the formulation of local economic development plan, select beneficiaries for all schemes and even monitor and evaluate local plans. In States like Kerala, Karnataka and Sikkim the three tier panchayats are gradually emerging as institutions of local self-government with well defined powers and functions. What is more important is that they are exercising their powers and performing the functions. This is made possible because, besides making laws to enable the panchayat to function as independent local governments, there is a conscious effort on the part of the State government to strengthen the panchayats by building their capacity. In the case of many States powers and functions are given to panchayats, but not funds. Power without money is useless. Besides money, panchayats also need the functionaries to perform their functions and the freedom to govern. Only a right combination of the four Fs - Functions, Functionaries, Funds and Freedom - makes it possible for panchayats to function as a government. Only when panchayats become local self-governments, GRAMA SABHA becomes relevant and meaningful; otherwise it will continue to be a part of the big “Indian Tamasha”.

The Kerala Experience

The Kerala experience is often presented as a model for others to emulate, for the sole reason that a better model is not available in the country. The GRAMA SABHA in Kerala is not the ideal one, but it comes very close to the GRAMA SABHA that our ancestors had envisaged. Since a detailed comparison of the GRAMA SABHA of Kerala with its counterparts in other States goes beyond the purview of this paper, an attempt is made here to highlight the salient features of the GRAMA SABHA of Kerala. The Kerala Panchayat Raj Act defines village as “each constituency of a village panchayat”.

67
The constitutional definition of GRAMA SABHA as “a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of panchayat at the village level.” cannot be applied in Kerala because the population of a GP ranges from 5000 to 55000 and a meeting of all voters of a GP is impossible. In the case of Urban Local Bodies, Municipal Councils having a population of less than one lakh has Ward Sabhas, which is similar to Grama Sabhas. Municipal Corporations have Ward Committees consisting representatives of different sections of the society nominated by the local body. Each GRAMA SABHA or WS meets separately and takes decisions regarding local development and the decisions are consolidated in a development seminar held at the panchayat or municipal level.

**Important Provisions regarding GRAMA SABHA**

- The GRAMA SABHA shall meet at least once in three months at a place fixed by the Village Panchayat.
- The member of the Village Panchayat representing the constituency (ward) shall be the convener of the GRAMA SABHA and the President of the VP shall preside over the meeting.
- The quorum of the GRAMA SABHA is ten percent of the total voters.
- If an elected member fails to convene the GRAMA SABHA two times consecutively the member shall be disqualified and reelection conducted in the ward.

**Powers, Functions and Rights of the GRAMA SABHA**

Chapter 2 of Kerala Panchayat Raj Act (Amended in 1999) specifies the powers, functions, rights and responsibilities of the GRAMA SABHA. Since the list is very exhaustive only the important provisions are mentioned below.

- To formulate the proposals and fixing of priority of schemes and development programmes to be implemented in the panchayat
- To prepare and submit to the panchayat a final list of eligible beneficiaries in the order of priority relating to the beneficiary oriented schemes on the basis of the criteria fixed.
- The Village Panchayat shall not change the order of priority in the list approved by the GRAMA SABHA.
- Suggesting the location of streetlights, street or community water taps, public wells,
public sanitation units, irrigation facilities and such other public utility schemes.

- To verify the eligibility of persons getting various kinds of welfare assistance from the government such as pensions and subsidies.
- To know the rationale behind every decision taken by the panchayat regarding the area of the GRAMA SABHA.
- The officers of the panchayat shall attend the meeting of the Grama Sabha as may be required by the President and an officer nominated by the Panchayat as the coordinator of the GRAMA SABHA shall assist the convener in convening and conducting the meeting of the Grama Sabha and in recording its decisions in the Minutes Book and also in taking up follow up action thereof.

The selected provisions are sufficient to give a glimpse of the powers and functions of the GRAMA SABHA. If the GRAMA SABHAs all over the country exercise these powers and perform the functions India will turn out to be the “Ramarajya” that Gandhiji had dreamt of. It is a tall claim to say that this has happened in Kerala. All the sections and sub-sections of the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act are not followed in letter and spirit by all panchayats of the State. But most of the Panchayats conduct GRAMA SABHA according to the Act and when there is any violation, regulatory bodies like the Ombudsman for Local Governments, State Election Commission and Appellate Tribunal deal with such cases. This is a state of affairs that most other States have not attained.

**Participation of voters in Grama Sabha**

In Kerala, decentralization of power was not a government programme, but a massive campaign participating all sections of people, popularly known as People’s Plan Campaign. The entry point to decentralized governance was a bold attempt of participatory planning. In 1997, when the 9th Five Year Plan began, powers and funds were given to the three tier panchayats and they were asked to prepare local development plan with people’s participation. The enthusiasm generated by the campaign attracted the voters to the GRAMA SABHA as they had great expectations. The average number of members of a GRAMA SABHA is approximately 1000 and in the beginning, attendance was much above ten percent. The GRAMA SABHA that selected beneficiaries had maximum participation. Gradually there has been decline in the number of voters who participate in
the meeting of the GRAMA SABHA. Many studies and researches have tried to identify the reasons for the decline in people’s participation. The reports prepared by the committees appointed by the governments to study the problem have arrived at various conclusions and the State governments are always telling the people that they will take steps to enhance people’s participation in the GRAMA SABHA.

What is going on in the name of assessment of the functioning of GRAMA SABHA is a kind of “blame game”, the opposition blaming the ruling political front for the shortcomings and the ruling front blaming the previous government. In Kerala the two leading political coalitions, the United Democratic Front and Left Democratic Front come to power alternatively. Each blames the other for the setbacks. Although the three-tier panchayat system has been institutionalized, it is a fact that the participation of the people is gradually coming down. It is true that the enthusiasm generated by the campaign cannot be sustained for a long time. The need of the hour is to analyze the situation objectively and take steps to regain the vitality and dynamism of the GRAMA SABHA. The experience of more than decade of decentralization has made it clear that even those political parties that advocate decentralization of power in public do not want to give power to the people. They want decentralization of power up to the level of panchayat committee and not beyond that. When it comes to devolving power to the people at grassroots, they fear that it will be a threat to their position as leaders and it will even make them irrelevant.

It is when a large number of people distance themselves from the government that they turn to terrorism and militancy. Unfortunately that is what is happening in many parts of our country. Such people who are alienated from governance must be brought closer to the process of governance. GRAMA SABHA is an effective tool to bring the marginalized closer to local governance. When such people get an opportunity in the decision making process they become a part of the polity and thus the citizens of the country. This is the crucial role that GRAMA SABHA has to play in the present Indian context, besides the professed role in local economic development and ensuring social justice. It cannot be expected that the political leadership would realize the high potential of GRAMA SABHA and try to empower it. It is up to the civil society and the NGOs to build the social pressure to make the GRAMA SABHA a true forum of direct democracy.
Gram Sabha in Panchayat Raj System: A path towards the development

Dr. S.C. Jai Prabhakar*

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi believed that, democratic freedoms have to be founded in institutions of Self-government in every village in India. He drew his inspiration from the traditional Panchayats? ‘village republics’, which he called Panchayati Raj. He based his vision of contemporary democracy in independent India on genuine peoples’ participation in the development and welfare of their own habitats through elected Panchayats. Under the objective of ‘Power to the People’, 73rd constitutional amendment provided the village Panchayats in the state list of the seventh schedule. Consistently stressed the need of reservations for the depressed segments of our society and women of all category in the structure of Panchayati Raj. Thus, making India not only the world’s biggest democracy, but also the most representative democracy.

Local Governance in Karnataka

Karnataka has a fairly long and impressive history of decentralisation. It has century-old roots in policy decisions taken by the princely state of Mysore. As Manu Bhagavan (2003) has shown, the then Maharaja of Mysore, Krishnaraja Wadiyar, advised by his Diwan cum Chief Engineer M. Visweswaraiyah, instituted several initiatives to improve the quality of higher education in the state, with a particular emphasis on technology and the sciences. Additionally, in 1905, the Government of Mysore persuaded JN Tata to locate the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore subsidized by a land-grant, and an annual government subsidy of Rs.50,000.

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Similarly, the Mysorean roots of panchayati raj go very deep. The historian Christopher Bayly (2006) has recently stated that the terms panchayat and “sabha” in the context of village institutions were first articulated by Ram Raz, based on his experience as a “native judge” in Mysore about 200 years ago. These were then adopted by North Indian writers and subsequently absorbed into the nationalist canon via Gandhiji’s vigorous advocacy (Gandhi, 1962). “Modern” PRI reforms in Karnataka can be traced at least as far back as Krishnaraja Wadiyar’s expansion of local self-government in 1902-03 which created 8 district and 77 taluk boards. Nataraj and Anantpur (2004) document the subsequent history of panchayat reforms in Karnataka. In 1918, the Mysore Local Board was passed the Village Panchayat Act, which provided for the election of half of the representatives in district and two-thirds in taluk boards respectively. In 1926, a two tier scheme with village panchayats and district boards was established, abolishing taluk boards, with both bodies provided with power and independent sources of revenue; and in the post-independence period several acts and bills were passed culminating in the 1983.

A less well-known fact about Karnataka relates to its long experimentation with decentralisation. Attempts to devolve powers to local bodies had been initiated even before independence (Nataraj and AnanthPur, 2004). A serious effort to decentralise its political structures in Karnataka came about in the 1980s. The first major landmark in Karnataka was the 1983 Act, which introduced a two-tier, elected sub-state level governance structure. A notable feature was 25 per cent reservation for women in these bodies even before this was mandated by the Constitution. Elections under this Act were held in 1987. The 1983 Act was substituted by a new law in 1993 (the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993) to accommodate the mandatory provisions brought in by the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution. The 1993 Act provides for a three-tier structure – Zilla Panchayat (district level), Taluk Panchayat (Block level) and Gram Panchayat (village level).

Panchayati Raj is a system of governance in which Gram Panchayats are the basic units of administration. It has 3 levels: village, block and district. The Grama
Sabha is the grass root level democratic institution in each Village Panchayat. A vibrant Gram Sabha is essential for the effective functioning of Village Panchayats by promoting transparency and accountability in administration, enhancing public participation in the planning and implementation of schemes and in the choice of beneficiaries, and paving the way for social audit. The Government have ordered the conduct of Gram Sabha meetings a minimum of four times a year i.e. on 26th January, 1st May, 15th August and 2nd October. Government of India announced to observe 2009-10 as the Year of Gram Sabha and requested the states to conclude the activities undertaken during the Year of Gram Sabha, lessons learnt for the future functioning of Gram Sabha, honouring well functioning Gram Sabhas and Panchayat representatives who made special contribution, and other activities deemed important.

Role of Gram Sabha

The Gram Sabha has been defined by the Constitution as a body consisting of all registered voters of a village within the area of a village Panchayat. Article 243A provides that a Gram Sabha may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the legislature of a State may, by law, provide. Powers assigned to the Gram Sabha, therefore, vary from State to State.

Gram Sabha forum has high potential for grounding democracy at the grassroots, facilitating socio-economic inclusion, participation in planning and implementation of development programmes and ensuring accountability of the Panchayat to the electors. But it is generally seen that meetings of the Gram Sabhas are not held regularly and are marked by thin attendance particularly of women and marginalized groups. There is little discussion on the proposals put forward for approval by the Panchayat. Issues of common interest and of the marginalized sections are often not discussed.

The general perception is that the task before the Gram Sabha is approval of the lists of beneficiaries, approval for issue of utilization certificates and passing of the
annual accounts. Panchayat heads bring their own supporters and potential beneficiaries to attend the meetings so that while the quorum is completed, most of the other electors keep away. Hence, a sense of cynicism has developed about the efficacy of Gram Sabha meetings.

**Participation through Information**

Information is strongly associated with more active participation in gram panchayats and with more equitable service distribution. However, an ordinary villager has extremely limited access to information. For example, he or she is unlikely to know what the powers of the panchayat are, how Adhyaksha can be held accountable for misdeeds and how rights can be enforced. These information should be easily access to the people.

For the rural local governance to be effective, energizing Gram Sabhas is the real challenge. There is a need to evolve mechanisms for regular and meaningful meeting of the Gram Sabha, active participation of its members and monitoring its functioning. Before Conducting Gram Sabha Meetings, a notice about Gram Sabha Meeting must reach to the people at least 7 days in advance through written notices can be put in a public places, beating drums etc. This would more help in preparing for participation, if printed pamphlet to be distributed to each house contains main themes and agenda for the discussion in the meeting and publicity through local cable TV around the Gram Panchayats area. Place the notice boards in particular place of each block of the village so that people may get regular information about transparent activity of Gram Panchayat.

Education and access to information proved to be key correlates of higher levels of participation in the activities of Gram Panchayats. Increasing access to and use of education among the groups appears to be one of the most effective mid-term strategies for achieving better rates of inclusion.
Strategies need to be improved are:

- Increased primary/upper-primary school availability and effectiveness for females, tribals and landless people.
- Non-formal education opportunities which can be available at times which fit into adults work schedules.
- Panchayat/local governance literacy drives which ensure participation of a representative cross-section of rural society.

**Identifying the Beneficiaries**

Gram Sabha of the village is mainly focus on Development, Monitoring and Management. It offers equal opportunity to all citizens to discuss and criticize, approve or reject proposals of the Gram Panchayat and also assess its performance. Prioritization of needs are to be done in a sequential manner where community needs are given highest preference, followed by that of poor households and finally the needs of other households are essential to taken into account. Gram Sabha has to take critical decision to identify and approve the list of beneficiaries for different Government schemes.

Poverty is usually thought of in terms related to wealth and income. However; such measures are rarely able to adequately reflect the struggle waged by many of the poor in securing their livelihood. The concept of vulnerability is used to assist in understanding the situations in which livelihood stability is frequently endangered. High levels of vulnerability are commonly associated with households that are defenceless against cyclical fluctuations in natural processes or unforeseen expenditures and where a modicum of physical security and adequate coping mechanisms are lacking.

The aim of development interventions is not only to reduce poverty by increasing income-earning capacity, but also to lessen vulnerability by reducing risk and uncertainty while strengthening the capacity of the poor to deal with fluctuations in
their external environment. Both the wealth and vulnerability aspects of poverty should be considered while selecting the beneficiaries for different schemes.

**Criterion of Poverty**

To understand which households are classified as poor in terms of vulnerability, a ranking exercise may be used to identify the different socio-economic backgrounds.

Households who have problems managing their livelihoods or daily subsistence, or who have problems coping with any crisis such as drought, crop failure or the serious illness of a family member. Following this exercise, the respondents (head of the household) will ask to explain the indicators of vulnerability for the household categories: very vulnerable, vulnerable, livelihood secure, and very livelihood secure (Gardin, 1988).

While there is some commonality among the factors that cause households in the various localities to be either vulnerable or livelihood secure, it should be emphasized that the degree of vulnerability varies between the Panchayats depending on the larger livelihood context.

For example, a household considered to be very livelihood secure in Mysore taluk of South Karnataka, may be less livelihood secure in the context of agriculturally progressive in Gulbarga taluk of North Karnataka.

The indicators identify by the respondents for **very vulnerable** household includes:

- Landless households that are dependent on daily wage labour.
- Female-headed households without regular income and marginal land.
- Those where most members migrate due to the scarcity or insufficient productivity of land.
- Those where one of the main earners is physically or mentally disabled.
- Those who lack family or extended kin.
elder households without sons who can or are willing to contribute economically and
- Large households with few working members, little productive land or any additional regular supplementary income.
- Young people with less farming experience.

The indicators identify for the very livelihood secure households includes:
- Those that had one or more members with income security from jobs with government or the private sector.
- Those with large businesses or where at least one of the members was a shopkeeper. and
- Those households who had abundant irrigated productive land or had inherited property.

Some of the characteristics have to consider for classifying households as vulnerable.
- New households who had lost access to productive assets as a result of property division, large households without enough earning members,
- female-headed household with productive land,
- young people with less farming experience, and
- Lack of supplementary income and little rain-fed land.

Livelihood secure households will identify as:
- those who had productive land,
- had members who were self-employed or regularly employed, and
- Those with very productive land who had access to good irrigation sources.

Conclusion
Gram Sabha is key to the self-governance. Active participation of its members and monitoring its functioning will make the meaningful meeting of the Gram Sabha.
There is a need to evolve mechanism to understand the classification of poor and prioritization of needs of households are taken in to account before selecting the beneficiaries may formulate the efficient Gram Sabha.

**Recommendations**

1. Develop a prioritized database of needs of individual households and community to select the beneficiaries. Computerised Database may develop and add all the details of each and every household of the Gram Panchayat. (Panchayat Development Officers can maintain the database).

2. To help the Panchayats to identify the problems and needs of the village, a team of the responsible villagers other than the elected members may constitute. Encourage to all the household in a village to give suggestions and representations.

3. Develop village level plan to combat hunger and poverty through competent as well as dedicated agency (NGO/VO) may be a barrier in relation to replication of the process at macro level.

4. Complaint and Suggestion Box should be place in public places of the village; people can put their comments and suggestions.

**References**


Community Participation in Environmental Protection: Issues and Policy Implications

Dr. Mohd Azam Khan*
Tosib Alam**

Introduction

The goals of economic and social development must be defined in the terms of sustainable development in all countries, developed or developing, market oriented or centrally planned. Sustainable development is a process of change in which economic and fiscal policies, trade and foreign policies, energy and agriculture and industrial policies all aim to induce development paths that are economically, socially and ecologically sustainable. It encourages the conservation and preservation of natural resources and of the environment, and the management of energy, waste and pollution. Sustainable development is development based on patterns of production and consumption that can be pursued into the future without degrading the human or natural environment (Jushi, 2001). Population growth and economic development are contributing to many serious environmental problems in India. These include pressure on land, habitat destruction and loss of biodiversity, water scarcity and water pollution and global warming and climate change. Poverty and ignorance are the allies of environmental degradation, which in turn has two major damaging effects – it harms human health, and it reduces human productivity. Protection of the environment has to be a central part of any sustainable inclusive growth strategy. Sustainable development hints the rational use of scarce resources with the support of people and economic policies adopting strategic environmental management practices.

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Community-based natural resources management initiatives, coupled with policy reform, can prove to be an effective mechanism for improving access to, and improving productivity of natural resource. The success of joint forest management and irrigation user groups in India, provide enough evidence that social capital and participatory processes are as crucial to environmental protection as financial resources and development programmes.

The value of human land water and other assets depend on technologies that improve the productivity of those assets, thereby generating adequate return and income. Globalization can bring significant benefits of technological advancement, and market access through improved connectivity and information. However, it must be emphasized here that unless local communities themselves are involved in the selection and use of these technologies, they are unlikely to benefit from their implementation and these technological interventions will be unsustainable in the long term (Report, MoEF 2009). A multifarious strategy needs to be formulated to solve the problems through development process and to protect the environment through community participation. Hence participation from grassroots to the national level remains a fundamental building block for effective environment and natural resources, management. (Mukundan, 2004).

Need for Community Participation

Community participation imply participation in decision-making process, viz, planning, formulation, monitory, evaluation and sharing the benefits of development. People’s participation taking place when they involve in the process of services delivery. The participation can be in the form of attendance in the meeting, interaction, involved in tapping the benefits and participation in the decision-making process (khan and Alam, 2008) participation helps in enabling the people to understand the reality of their environment (social, political, economic, ecological and cultural), to reflect on the factors that shape their environment and to take steps to effect changes to improve their situation. Similarly, environmental issue cannot be solved unless the local communities take part in it. Their participation will help in promoting
afforestation, wildlife conservation, and also in generating additional employment opportunity to the needy.

Past environment conservation initiatives have failed due to communication gaps between those who design and manage project interventions and the intended beneficiary. Lack of involvement in project affecting their environment and natural resources make communities see conservation as a threat to their traditional lives. The development agents realized that local communities have rights to their natural resources: has a lot of indigenous knowledge on conservation of the environment and have the power to implement and sustain natural resources management activities over a long time. Hence community is critical to the effective environmental conservation (Mukundan, 2004).

The Environmental Sustainability

The goal of economic and social development must be defined in the terms of sustainable development in all countries, developed or developing, marked oriented or centrally planned. Sustainable development does not imply absolute limits to growth and it is not new concept of economic growth. Sustainable development is a process of change, in which economic and fiscal policies, trade and foreign policies, energy, agriculture and industrial policies all aim to induce development paths that are economically, socially, and ecologically sustainable (Kaur, et al, 2005).

The concept of sustainable development was first popularized by the World Conservation Strategy in 1980 and was very strongly promoted by the Brundlant Report, “Our Common Future”, which define it in 1987 as a “Development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs”. In 1992, United Nations Conference in Environment Development in Rio-de Janerio the, the Earth Summit, called for sustainable development, “To ensure socially responsible economic development while protecting the resources base and the environment for the benefits of future generation”. In fact the concept of sustainability has long been in use with varied
connotations and meanings (Nayak, 2008).

Environmental sustainability is focussing on the maintenance of produces and natural capital for ensuring continuing generation of output and value-added and bearing in mind possibility of extending the use of natural capital through resource saving and environmentally sound technological progress, resources discovery of substitution of produced, natural or human capital inputs. It is not a fixed state of resources, the direction of investment, the orientation of technological development and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs. Sustainability is a compromise between the increasing stresses or natural resources, forestry, water, food, land, atmosphere, biodiversity and the needs and expectation of large populations, which are rapidly moving to the cities of the world. This means that more resources-both renewable and non-renewable are needed, which include water, food, land, forest and energy (Meenakshi, 2007).

The Environmental Challenges

Population growth and economic development are contributing to many serious environmental problem in India. Environmental problems centre on human activity which can adversely affect the atmosphere, oceans and land, and cover global, national and local concerns, ranging from global warming and ozone depletion, to deforestation and soil erosion contamination of fresh water resources and urban pollution. Many developing countries have been more concerned about issues such as soil erosion, water pollution, air pollution, land degradation and desertification, which impinge on the relationship between poverty and environmental degradation. Rapid population growth places enormous pressures on all aspects of the environmental and combined with deforestation, land degradation and soil erosion, is increasing the members of those living in extreme poverty. But given that most developing countries are in the process of transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy it is essential to examine the major actual and potential environmental hazards in relation to development strategies (Vaikunth, 2007).
Land or Soil Degradation

The land serves as storage for water and nutrients required for plants and other living micro-macro-organism. The demand for food, energy and other human requirements depends upon the preservation and improvement of the productivity of land. Although India occupies only 2.4 percent of the world’s total land area, it supports over 16.7 percent of the entire global population. Of the total geographical area of 328.73 Mha, 306 Mha, Comprise the reporting area and 146.82 Mha, land is degraded land.

Table 1: Land degradation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Area in Mha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Geographical Area</td>
<td>328.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degradation Area</td>
<td>146.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Erosion</td>
<td>93.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wind Erosion</td>
<td>9.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Logging</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salinity/Alkalinity</td>
<td>5.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil Acidity</td>
<td>16.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex Problem</td>
<td>7.38</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land use planning, 2005

Out of total geographical area 328.7 Mha, 146.82 million are considered to be land-degraded area. Water and wind erosion is the major contributor of 103.16 million hectares to soil erosion, with other factors like water logging 14.3 Mha, alkali soil 5.95 Mha, acid soil 16.03 Mha, complex problem 7.38 million hectares adding to the situ degradation. The varying degrees and type of degradation stem mainly from unsustainable use and inappropriate land management practises. Loss
of vegetation occurs as a results of deforestation, cutting beyond the silviculturally permissible limits, unsustainable fuel-wood and fodder extraction shifting cultivation encroachment in to forest lands, forest fires and overgrazing, all of which subject the land to degradational forces, other important factors responsible for large-scale degradation are: non adoption of adequate soil conservation measure, improper crop rotation, indiscriminate use of agro-chemical, improper planning and management of irrigation systems (Report MoEF, 2009).

**Deforestation**

Forests are important natural resources in India. They have moderate in influence against floods and thus they protect the soil erosion. Forests also play an important role in enhancing the quality of environment by influencing the ecological balance and life support system (checking soil erosion, maintaining soil fertility, conserving water, regulating water cycles and floods, balancing carbon dioxide and oxygen content in atmosphere etc). Deforestation has significant human costs. Forests have been a major source of food, fodder, fuel, fibre, timber, dyes and oils for medicine. Cutting them can rob poor people of their lively-hood as well as their medicines (Nagdeve, 2002). Unfortunately, benefits are eroded by deforestation largely as a result of human pressure to exploit forest resources.

India’s forests cover in 2007 in 69.09 Mha which is 21.02 percent of the geographical area of this 8.35 Mha (2.54%) is very dense forest 31.90 Mha (9.71%) is moderately dense , and the rest 28.84 Mha (8.77%) is open forest; including 0.46 million hectares mangroves. Madhya Pradesh has the largest forest cover (2.77 Mha) constituting 11.25 percent of the country is forest cover followed by Maharashtra (7.33%) and Orissa (7.07%) in the table.

As per the latest report of the Forest Survey of India (2005), forests cover 23.6 percent of India’s total geographic area, which includes 3.04 percent of the tree cover. Area under grass lands is about 3.9 percent and desert cover about 2 percent.
Table 2: The Forest Cover in States in India In 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Geographical Area GA</th>
<th>Very Dense Forest</th>
<th>Moderately Dense Forest</th>
<th>Open Forest</th>
<th>Scrub</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Changing Forest Cover</th>
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<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>275,069</td>
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<td>Bihar</td>
<td>94163</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>3248</td>
<td>3325</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>6804</td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>196022</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>5249</td>
<td>8995</td>
<td>1463</td>
<td>14620</td>
<td>7.46</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>44212</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>1104</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>1594</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>55673</td>
<td>3224</td>
<td>6383</td>
<td>5061</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>14,668</td>
<td>26.35</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>191,791</td>
<td>1,777</td>
<td>20,181</td>
<td>14,212</td>
<td>3,176</td>
<td>36,190</td>
<td>18.87</td>
<td>-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>38,963</td>
<td>1,443</td>
<td>9,410</td>
<td>6,471</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>17,324</td>
<td>44.58</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>308,245</td>
<td>6,647</td>
<td>35,007</td>
<td>36,046</td>
<td>6,401</td>
<td>77,700</td>
<td>25.21</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>307,713</td>
<td>8,739</td>
<td>20,834</td>
<td>21,077</td>
<td>4,157</td>
<td>50,650</td>
<td>16.46</td>
<td>-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>155,707</td>
<td>7,073</td>
<td>21,394</td>
<td>20,388</td>
<td>4,852</td>
<td>48,855</td>
<td>31.38</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>50362</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>937</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1,664</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>342,239</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>4,450</td>
<td>11,514</td>
<td>4,347</td>
<td>16,036</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>130,058</td>
<td>2,926</td>
<td>10,216</td>
<td>10,196</td>
<td>1206</td>
<td>23,338</td>
<td>17.94</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>240,928</td>
<td>1,626</td>
<td>4,563</td>
<td>8,152</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>14,341</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>88,752</td>
<td>2,987</td>
<td>4,644</td>
<td>5,363</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12,994</td>
<td>14.64</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>3,287,263</td>
<td>83510</td>
<td>319,012</td>
<td>288,377</td>
<td>41,525</td>
<td>690,899</td>
<td>21.02</td>
<td>728</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The change refers to change in the area with respect to revised assessment for 2005.

Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Environmental and Forest, 2009-10.

Between 1990 and 2000, India gained an average of 3, 61,500 hectares of forest per year. This amount to an average annual reforestation rate of 0.57 percent. During 2000 and 2005, this rate decreased by 92.3 percent to 0.04 percent per annum. In total, between 1990 and 2005, India gained 5.9 percent in forest cover, around 3.762 Mha. But this accounts of 23.6 percent of total geographical area against 33 percent recommended by National Forest Policy of 1988. Per capita availability of forests in
India is much lower than the world average (Report MoEF, 2009). The devastation caused to the economy by deforestation is responsible for greater frequency and intensity of floods, soil erosion, heavy siltation of dams built at enormous expense and changes in climate condition. Continuing deforestation therefore has brought us face to face with a major ecological and socio-economic crisis.

**Water Pollution**

Water is not only an essential element for our survival but is also an important vehicle for economic development of the nation. Although water is a renewable resource, its reserve in nature is limited and therefore, we have to plan for its sustainable development and efficient management so that the growing demands of rising population, expanding industries and rapid urbanization are adequately met.

**Table 3: Water Availability in India**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quality (bcm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual Precipitation (including snow fall)</td>
<td>4000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual Availability</td>
<td>1869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Capita Water Availability</td>
<td>1820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Utilizable Water Resources</td>
<td>1123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Surface Water Resources</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Ground Water Resources</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Water Resources, 2006

The two main sources of fresh water in India are rainfall and the snowmelt of glaciers in the Himalaya, the average annual rainfall in the country has been estimated to about 1170 milli meters (mm). This, along with the total snow fall and glacier melt in terms of volume works out to about 4000 billion cubic meters (bcm). However, due to losses through evaporation and evapotranspiration, the water availability in the country
has been to be about 1869 bcm. Even this available water cannot be fully utilized due to
topographical constraints and hydrological features and utilizable water has been estimated
to be about 1123 bcm comprising of 690 bcm of surface water and 423 bcm of
replenishable ground water. The availability is further marked by very large temporal
and spatial variations (Panjiar, 2010).

Table 4: Projection of Water Requirement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Standing Sub-Committee of MoWR**</th>
<th>NCI WRD***</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigation</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking Water</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>1093</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * Billion Cubic Meter; ** Ministry of Water Resources; *** National Commission on Integrated Water Resource Development.


The supply-demand gap for water is projected to rise to about 50 percent by 2030,
with demands doubling from current 710 bcm to around 1498 bcm and supply barely
reaching 744 bcm. Currently, more than 80 percent of the 750 bcm water used in India
is for irrigation. The balance 20 percent is used to meet domestic, energy, industrial and
other requirements. With the rapidly growing population, along with industrial and
urbanization activities, the demand for water is expected to increase even faster (report
MoEF, 2009). Water quality has continued to deteriorate world over because of a number of factors. The most widespread contamination of water occurs from industrial waste. Water pollution is the most serious environmental problem for the 1 billion people in developing countries who lack access to sanitation. The direct impact of water borne diseases is huge, especially for children and the poor. Unsafe water is implicated in many cases of diarrheal diseases, which as a group kill more than 3 million people mostly children and cause about 900 million episodes of illness every year (Misra and Puri, 2009). The large scale use of pesticides may have revolutionized food production, but these chemical are responsible for more than 2 million human poisoning every year with a resultant 25,000 deaths.

**Bio-diversity Loss**

Biological diversity a composite of genetic information, species and ecosystem provides material wealth in the form of food, fibre, medicine and inputs into industrial processes. India is one of the mega-biodiversity countries of the world. From about 70 percent of total geographical areas surveyed so far 45,500 plant species and 91,000 animal species representing about 7 percent of the world’s flora and 6.5 percent of the world’s fauna have been described. With only 2.4 percent of the total land area of the world, the known biological diversity of India contributes 8 percent to the known global biological diversity. Being one of the 17 identified megadiverse countries; it is home to 8.58 percent of mammalians, 13.66 percent of avian, and 7.91 percent of reptilians, 4.66 percent of amphibians, 11.72 percent of fish, and 11.80 percent plant species documented so far (Report MoEF, 2009).

Population growth leads to expanding human settlement and increasing demand for food, fuel and building materials. Modernization of agriculture also threatens potentially valuable local crops. Biodiversity the world over is in peril because the habitats are threatened due to such development programmes as creation of reserviors, mining, forest cleaning, lying of communication and transport networks etc. It is estimated that in the world wide perspective slightly over 1000 animal species and sub-species are
threatened with extinction rate of one per year, while 20,200 flowering plants are thought to risk (Nagdeve, 2007)

**Global Warming and Climate Change**

The country’s large population and rapidly increasing energy use plays an important and growing role in climate change. This is primarily caused by the building up of greenhouse gasses (GHG) e.g. Carbon dioxide, Methane, Nitrous oxide and others in the atmosphere. Climate change can be accompanied by higher average temperature near earth’s surface, changed rainfall patterns, and increased severity and frequency of floods, droughts, and cyclone, which can severely impact livelihoods, especially of the poor in developing countries like India. The contribution of India to the cumulative global emissions is only 5 percent. Thus at present, India’s share in the carbon stock in the atmosphere is relatively miniscule when compared to its distribution over the nation’s population (Report, MoEF, 2009). Climate change is likely to impact all the natural ecosystem as well as socio-economic system as per the National Communication Report of India to UNFCCC.

In its 2007 report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts global temperature will rise by 2 - 4.5 °C by the end of this Century and for the next two decades a warming of about 0.2°C per decades is projected, even if the concentrations of all greenhouse gases and aerosols had been kept constant at year 2000 levels, a further warming of about 0.1°C would be expected (Report MoEF, 2009). India’s shares in the carbon stock in the atmosphere is relatively very small in terms of per capita emissions. India’s per capita carbon emissions average One-twentieth of those of the US and one-tenth of the most countries in the Western Europe and Japan. Sectoral distribution shows that the highest CO2 equivalent emission contribution is from the energy sector that is 61 percent (Report Annual, 2010).
Distribution of GHG Emissions from India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gas</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N20</td>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH4</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO2</td>
<td>Industrial Process</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LULUCF</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waste</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: India’s Initial National Communication to UNFCCC, 2004.

With an economy closely linked to its natural resources base and climatically sensitive sectors such as agriculture, water and forestry, India may faced a major threat because of the projected change in climate. With climate change there would be increasing scarcity of water, reduction in fields of forest biomass, and increase risk to human health. The impact of climate change can be listed as follows:

- Climate change has had an effect in the monsoons. India is heavily dependent on the monsoon to meets its agricultural and water needs, and also the projecting and propagating its biodiversity. Subtle changes have already been noted in the monsoon rain patterns by scientists.

- The surface air temperature in India are going up at the rate of 0.4°C per hundred years, particularly during the post-monsoon and winter season, projected to increase threats to human health. Climate influence many of the key determinants of health: it leads to extremes and violent weather events; resurgence of diseases organisms and vectors’ food and water; and the stability of the ecosystem.

- Relatively small climatic change can cause large water resources problems, particularly in arid and semi-arid regions such as North West India. This will have an impact on agriculture, drinking water and generation of hydro-electric power.
Agriculture is the most vulnerable sector to climate change as it is inherently sensitive to climate variability and climate change will leave its impact on Indian agriculture. Increased temperature will impact agricultural production. Higher temperature reduce the total duration of a crop cycle by inducing early flowering, thus shortening the ‘grain fill’ period. The shorter the crop cycle, the lower the yield per unit area.

About 1,900 Mha of land is affected by land degradation. Climate change, leading to warming and water stress could further exacerbate land degradation, leading to desertification. Climate changes are likely to exacerbate the degradation of resources and socio-economic pressures.

Increase in temperature will result in shifting of lower altitude tropical and subtropical forests to higher altitude temperate forest regions, resulting in the extinction of some temperate vegetation types. Decrease in rainfall and the resultant soil moisture stress could result in drier teak dominated forests replacing Sal trees in Central India. Even in a relatively short span of about 50 years, most of the forests biomes in India seem to be highly vulnerable to the projected change in climate. The impact of climate change in forest ecosystem is likely to be long-term and irreversible.

Deltas will be threatened by flooding, erosion and salt intrusion. Loss of coastal mangroves will have an impact on fisheries.

India has coastline of 7,516 Km. A trend of sea level rise of 1 cm per decade has been recorded along the Indian Coast. Seal level rise due to thermal expansion of sea water in the India Ocean is expected to be about 25-45 cm by 2050. This could inundate low lying areas, drown coastal marshes and wet lands, erode beaches, exacerbate flooding and increase the salinity of rivers, bays and aquifers (Murari, 2010).

**Community Participation for Environment Protection**

Environmental protection is a practise of protecting the environment, an individual, organization or governmental level for the benefits of the natural environment and or humans. Due to pressure of population and our technology the biophysical environment...
is being degraded, sometimes permanently. The protection of the environment is needed from various human activities. Waste, pollution, deforestation, loss of biodiversity and toxics are some of the issue relating to environmental protection. But they should be organized and protected through people’s participation. Their participation will help in promoting afforestation, wildlife conservation, and also in generating additional employment to the needy. Various formal and informal education programme, environmental awareness programmes, advertisement, public movements, afforestation, conservation of wildlife etc. are to be organized in a large scale (Mukundan, 2004).

**Forest Resource Management by the Community**

It is increasingly recognized that involvement of people in forest management not only contributes to regeneration of degraded forest. But also helps in effective conservation of the forests, apart from the meeting the communities subsistence needs. As a strategy for forest management in India, community participation has achieved high priority from the government and was included in the National Forest Policies of 1988 and guidelines on Joint Forest Management (JFM) in the country (Rao, et al 2007). Joint Forest Management is a decentralized and people oriented forest management approach. The approach lies in the assumption that only a willing and active partnership between the Forest Department and Village Communities can promote conservation and regeneration of degraded forests, sustainable use and management of forest resources initiated with the circular of the Ministry of Environment and forest on June 1990 on people’s involvement in forest conservation and management. The JFM regime has evolved gradually and at present 106479 such communities (22 million participants) are functioning in 28 states covering 22.02 Mha of forests. This participatory regime is seen as a potential strength of forest management for the forest fringe (Report, 2007-08). Van panchayats are another form of local community management of forest resources, which have legal basis and clearly defined duties and powers. Van panchayats (VPs) were created to give elected representative of local people a well-defined role in the management of civil (unreserved) forests under the overall supervision of district magistrates. The VPs have responsibilities for the maintenance and upkeep of forests, distribution of produce on the
basis of local demand and forests departments’ approval and execution of forest department plan. Despite their remarkable growth and good record in the village forest management, the VPs are hampered in their functioning by unnecessary administrative controls and are not able to realise their full potential for the development of forestry in the hills. The challenge now is to effectively empower the local communities with appropriate rights and responsibilities and ensure that sub-national benefits from forest conservation access to them (S.N. and Kulkarni, 2007).

**Participatory Management of Water Resources**

The National Water Policy, 2002 emphasizes the role of Water User Association (WUAs) and panchayati Raj Institution (PRIs) in the operation, maintenance and management of water resources infrastructure and facilities. It gives direct impetus to community participation an all facts of water management. The approach of the international funding and the introduction of 73rd and 74th amendments in to the Constitution has brought in changes in government policies in many sectors. Decentralization, revolution of powers, participatory and bottom up approach are the new words found in recent government reports, policy documents and manuals. So far about 57,000 WUAs have been formed. They have to be made operational and effective. Draft bill for participatory irrigation management (PIM) has also been circulated to states and 13 states have already enacted appropriate legislation (Panijar, 2010). To further strengthen community participation in the drinking water sector for sustainability, National Rural Drinking Water Quality Monitoring and surveillance Programme has been launched in February, 2006 under which 5 persons in each Gram Panchayat are to be strained to carry out regular surveillance of drinking water sources for which 100 percent financial assistance including waste testing kits, are provided. During 2008-09, all the remaining habitations, i.e. 17,188 uncovered and 100,862 slipped back habitations are proposed to increase. In addition, 92,468 quality-affected habitations would be addressed. Thus during 2008-09 in all 215,518 habitations are proposed to be covered (Chari, 2009).
Water Management Project helps in rehabilitation of degraded land forest and water resources through various technological inputs like creation of rain water harvesting dam, afforestation, various soil and water conservation measure etc. But in order to sustain the developmental process there is a need of vibrant social organization or institution based in active people’s participation. So the people’s participation or social sustainability becomes the backbone of the watershed development project. Under the National Watershed Development Project for Rain Fed Areas (NWDPRA) 2328 micro-water sheds has been receiving treatment while ICAR has been managing 47 model watersheds. Under the NWDPRA the total project cost was US $ 500 million, covering 3.7 million hectares in 2500 micro-water shed of 500 to 5000 hectares each, in 25 states and two Union territories of the country. The coverage of the programme extended to at least 10,000 villages, holding at least 15 million people and 7.5 million cattle in 115 agro-climate zones (Roy, 2005).

Participatory Planning For Land Resources

Since it is the man who is primarily responsible for degradation of environment, regeneration and conservation can only be possible by creating awareness and seeking participation of the peoples. The entire watershed community should be involved to implement Wasteland Development Programme and maintain the assets created to ensure sustainability. Wasteland Development Programme was started in early sixties and progressively strengthens during 9th and 10th five year plans. It acquires momentum during 9th and 10th plans at the area treated as well as investment increased sharply from 17.672 million hectares and Rs.46388.0 million till 8th plan to 50.899 (188%) million hectares and Rs.192,512.2 (315%) million at the end of the 10th plan. Working Group on Watershed Development, Rained Farming and Natural resources Management constituted for the 10th plan projected that 107 million hectares of land were subjected to degradation, of which 88.5 million hectares would have to be treated under watershed programme during 10th to 13th plans (Patel, 2009).
Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP) was launched in 1973-74 and currently is implemented in 972 blocks of 185 district in 16 states, area covered 7,45,914 Sq. Km. Desert Development Programme also aims at promoting overall economic development and improving the socio-economic conditions of the resource poor and disadvantaged sections of peoples inhabiting the programme areas. DDP is under implementation in 235 blocks of 40 districts in seven states having the coverage of about 45.7 Mha. Reclamation of Alkali Soil (RAS) about seven million hectares is affected by salt problem, out of which about 3.581 million hectares suffers from alkalinity in 11 states. Since the inception of the programme, till end in 2004-05, an area of 6.59 lakhs hectares had been reclaimed under this programme. The new approach also recognizes the need to involve the community as a necessary condition for the sustainability of the programme. People’s participation and community organization is primarily sought to establish a system under which village peoples can actually involve themselves in planning, implementation and monitoring of watershed development programmes.

**Role of Gram Sabha**

Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act is universally hailed as a milestone in the constitutional history of the country heralding a new era of local self-governance. It has envisioned people’s participation in the process of planning, decision–making, implementation and delivery system, bringing in political and social changes of a far reaching significance which are not possible without a vibrant gram sabha, active and taking well-considered collective decisions on matter concerning village governance (Sharan, 2004). Article 243 A of the Indian Constitution provides that a gram sabha may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the legislature of a state may, by law, provide. The gram sabha occupies a central place in the entire scheme of local governance because it provides an opportunity to the individual villages to participate in the local decision-making process. It is duty of the gram sabha to suggest corrective measures for preventing environmental degradation by promoting land improvement, plantations, organic farming and community led management of watersheds, clean development mechanisms and conservation of
bio-diversity. Gram sabha can play educative role to motivate every member to keep the earth cool and green and contribute their participation towards the environmental protection and preservation programmes (Sisodia, 2007).

India has designated 2009-10 as the year of *gram sabha* to spread awareness about good governance at the local level. To make local governance effective, energising local governing bodies is a real challenge before the government. It has also been decided that the states should make appropriate provisions in their state panchayati raj acts to strengthen the powers and enhance the role and scope of these bodies. Since, for the rural local governance to be effective, energizing Gram Sabhas is the real challenge. There is a need to evolve mechanisms for regular and meaningful meeting of the Gram Sabha, active participation of its members and monitoring its functioning (Somkuwar, 2010).

**Policy Implications**

India has a very comprehensive framework of legal and institutional mechanism in the region to respond to the tremendous challenges to the environment it is facing, owing to population growth, poverty and illiteracy augmented by urbanization and industrial development. The United Nations Conference on Human Environment held at Stockholm in 1972 led to the enactment of various legislations in the field of environment. The water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act was enacted in 1974. This was first attempt to Curb Water Pollution. The need for environmental protection was incorporated in the Constitution by (42nd Amendment) Act of 1976. Article 48A of the Constitution provides that the “State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to state guard the forests and wild life of the country”. The Bhopal gas tragedy of 1984 exposed many law in the India legal system. A number of statutes were enacted in the wake of the tragedy, Environment Protection Act, 1988 being the most important. A “Policy Statement for abatement of pollution, 1992” and National Conservation Strategy and the Policy Statement on Environment & Development, 1992” emphasizes pollution prevention and promotion of
cleaner technologies to reduce industrial pollutants (Prasad and Kochher, 2009). India has signed the Convention on bio-diversity and the U.N. Framework on climate change in 1992. India is also a signatory to Montreal Protocol on Ozone Layer Protection along with its London Amendment; India has started the process of phasing out ozone depleting goods and others substances. The National Water Policy, 2002 Contains provisions for developing, conserving, sustainable utilization and management of important water resources and the need to be governed by national perspective.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has the important role of monitoring the development process and its environmental impact in a perspective of sustainable development and devise suitable regulatory structures to achieve the desired results. MoEF is primarily concerned with the implementation of policies and programmes relating to conservation of the country’s natural resources including lakes and rivers, its biodiversity and wildlife, ensuring the welfare of animals and prevention and abatement of pollution. The first National Environment Policy was put in to place in 2006. Also, the re-engineering of the environmental clearance process and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification and review of the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification were undertaken to improve the quality of environmental governance. The principal objectives of the National Environment Policy are the following:

- Conservation of critical environmental resources.
- Intra-generational equity: livelihood security for the poor.
- Intergenerational equity.
- Integration of environmental concerns in economic and social development.
- Efficiency in environmental resources use.
- Environmental governance.
- Enhancement of resources for environmental conservation.

During the 11th five-year plan, the National Environment Policy stated objectives and principles and to be realized through concrete actions in different areas relating to the key environmental challenges faced. The Eleventh plan must build on this experience by integrating environment consideration in to policy making in all sectors of the economy-
infrastructure, transport, water supply, sanitation, industry, agriculture, and anti-poverty programmes. It calls for strengthening the oversight and regularly framework for environment management so that development decisions do not impinge adversely on sustainability (Report, 2007-08).

Currently the government of India released its National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) in June 2008. The National Action Plan advocates a strategy that promotes the adaptation in Climate Change and further enhancement of the ecological sustainability of India’s Development path. The National Action Plan focuses attention on 8 priority National Missions are these:

- Solar energy
- Enhanced energy efficiency
- Sustainable habitat
- Conserving water
- Sustaining the Himalayan ecosystem
- A Green India
- Strategic knowledge platform for climate change
- Sustainable agriculture

**Concluding Remarks**

In the last two decades there has been increasing concern about the threat to the environment caused by economic growth and its more undesirable side effects. Rapid industrialization, in spite of its positive effects on economic development of the world, has very seriously threatened the world’s natural environmental balance. These days, protection of environment has become a key issue all over the world. Several factors and forces are responsible for destruction of environment. Population growth become a burden as it multiples pressures on space and resources. It is significantly influencing resources depletion and environmental population. At 2 percent an annual growth rate, India’s population is expected to double in 35 years. In industrialization and urbanization, is growing at a rate faster than the population growth rate. Deforestation
leads to soil erosion, floods, droughts, loss of biodiversity, less rain fall and finally to
desertification. Construction of highways and water transfer projects and urbanization
are mainly responsible for loss of forests. Land degradation occurring due to the natural
and human induced causes, like wind erosion and water logging, is one of the priority
concerns in India. The varying degrees and types of degradation system mainly from
unsustainable use and development pressures are changing the characteristics of water
in India. Erosion in the watershed due to the fast growing development and poor land
management practices is increasing siltation and changing stream hydraulics. The ground
water reserve is becoming more and more depleted as surface water resources have
become pro polluted for human use. Human activities both directly and indirectly,
responsible for current high rates of biodiversity loss are – habitat loss; fragmentation
extraction and development. Excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides is a
significant environmental problem in India which disturbs balance of nature and reduces
agricultural output. Finally climate change may alter the distribution and quality of India’s
natural resources and adversely affect the livelihood of its people.

Protection of the environment has to be a central part of any sustainable inclusive
growth strategy. Sustainable use of natural resources requires community
participation with a responsible role assigned to the communities for conservation.
There is need to reconcile differences in perspective to achieve, a balance of increased
participation, and efficiency in the decision-making process. Moreover, because
most environmental decisions are concerned with establishing rights and
responsibilities over the use of common natural resources (such as water, land, and
biodiversity) environmental law must require substantial rights of public participation
to provide check and balances on administration government and to improve the quality
of decisions. Participatory approaches to empowering the community for change and
sustainable improvement in their livelihood. Some of the recommendations made to reduce
environmental problems are follows:-

- People’s participation and community organization need to be made very effective
to ensure proper planning, implementation and monitoring so as to achieve
quantitative objectives of various programmes.
A massive programme of waste land development through afforestation and tree planting with people’s participation should be popularised. The government and other voluntary organization should educate the common mass about the need.

Land degradation problem could be tackled to an extent by sustainable policies that would internalize the issue into proper decision-making.

Appropriate and immediate legislation is needed to control and regulate the use of ground water and protect surface water resources so as to ensure a basic sustainable supply of drinking water for rural population.

For receiving assistance under the NRCP/NLCP, ULBs should be fully involved in developing the programme along with specific statutory responsibility for operating and maintaining the treatment facility created.

Decentralization systems of waste water treatment need to be encouraged as against centralized, large end-of-pipe treatment units.

Gram sabha must be empowered to enhance social audit of gram panchayats, recall elected functionaries, approve schemes, control the common property resources and review the various rural development programmes and schemes implemented at the village level.

Gram Sabha should fully participate in planning, implementation and performance review of various schemes viz. BRGF, NREGA, NRHM, SSA, ICDS, IWMP, RKVY etc. In preparing plan and shelf of projects, realistic assessment of resources should be made. All State Departments should clearly articulate the role of Gram Sabha in their Policy/Programme/Scheme.

Formulate conservation and prudent use strategies for each significant catalogued wet land, with participation from local communities and other relevant stakeholders.

Enabling environment for social and participatory regimes should be the aim of central effort, as is being done through JEM mode under the National Afforestation Programme.

The policy objectives of 33% forest cover should be revisited for its definition on ecological considerations. The green cover should include the existing natural
ecosystem within which the tree cover constitutes a sub-set.

- Regular awareness campaigns should be conducted by voluntary organisations to create awareness about environmental conservation activities.
- To educate the community on use of indicators for advocacy and monitoring of development in the community over a period of time.
- The community plans to involve a mechanism to keep a check on the effectiveness of the programmes after its completion. The mechanism would involve developing their own indicator and a governing body.

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Rejuvenating Grassroot Democracy: An Experience from Kerala

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Background

The institution of Gram Sabha has a recent origin in the State of Kerala. Gram Sabha in the State was identified as an institution in the post-73rd Constitutional Act era only and was included in the Kerala Panchayati Raj Act, 1994. Quite interestingly, the idea of Gram Sabha never came up even in the politically active period of 1957-1975 in the state also. The institution of Gram Sabha found its place in the Kerala political sphere only after 1995, after the local government institutions with constitutional backing assumed power after the Panchayat elections.

The concept of democratic decentralisation is not a serious agenda of the Kerala society in general and the political parties in the state in particular. It is observed that local politics in the State is relatively less competitive, unlike state/national level. This inference has been arrived at from the interactions with several practitioners and experts working in the field, and by gathering reflections from the field on several occasions during the last one decade. The role, functions, activities and programmes of the Panchayati Raj Institutions never figured seriously in the meetings of political parties, though there are exceptions at some places. And interestingly, no political party encourages the people to attend Gram Sabha unlike the quantum of efforts made during the elections to vote. However, there are exceptions also. But exceptions cannot be quoted beyond a certain point to substantiate the arguments. And there is every likelihood that the participation of the people during Gram Sabha meeting is managed, generated or even engineered to a certain extent. It is observed that the quality of population active in local politics is generally

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lesser than the average quality of population in the local area. Lack of civic sense among the population and possibility of degeneration of the political system could be cited as some of the reasons. It is noted that several attempts were made in the past to portray Gram Sabha as an institution with omnipotent powers in local governance. And similarly, number of efforts were made to highlight this institution in an unrealistic way, capped with enormous powers and responsibilities. It is an on-going debate that which institution needs to be strengthened first – the Gram Panchayat or the Gram Sabha?

The institution of Gram Sabha has assumed much significance and turned to be a vibrant body during the period of decentralised planning in the State, popularly known as ‘People’s Plan Campaign (PPC)’. Without undermining the added roles, functions and responsibilities of Gram Sabhas during the PPC in the post-1996 period, a general tendency has been prevalent to view Gram Sabha as an institution for doling out benefits to the needy. And there is another argument that Gram Sabha is only a ‘paper tiger’ having no serious role and functions in local governance. And it is insignificant to make any effort to transform it into a vibrant grassroots institution. Even in many academic discourses, there is a general point that people are not taking Gram Sabha in a serious way as required to be. And across the different parts of the country, attempts have been always made to extrapolate the attendance of Gram Sabha meetings, as the mandatory quorum itself may not be there in many cases. It is noted that only a minor segment of population attend the Gram Sabha meetings with the genuine interest and responsibility of a citizen. And it is in this context that the attempt made to rejuvenate grassroots democracy by taking a different approach to enhance Gram Sabha participation in a village panchayat of Kerala assumes significance.

**Study Area**

Perumbalam Gram Panchayat (GP) is a part of Thycattussery Block, Alappuzha District, Kerala. Thycattussery Block includes four more Gram Panchayats – Arookkutty, Chennam Pallippuram, Panavally and Thycattussery. Perumbalam has a unique feature, as it is an ‘Island Panchayat’ surrounded by water bodies all around. The region has a
plain landscape of coastal nature and is characterised by high population, economic backwardness and general poverty as seen in most coastal plains of the state. The region is known for relatively high degree of social mobilisation and the existence of large number of associations. The people in the region are motivated and organised politically, virtually making any external intervention difficult.

The initiative towards strengthening of Gram Sabha in this direction was made by a civil society organisation working in the area. This organisation, named as ‘Platform for Decentralisation and Panchayati Raj’, was initiated by a group of people from cross-section of the society like retired government officials, teachers, social workers, health workers, farmers, etc. Some of the members of the forum was associated with the PRIs during the PPC period itself. This initiative was an off-shoot of the capacity building initiatives for strengthening local governance launched in the Thycattussery Block area as part of SPRISA project. By the initiative of the Forum and with the approval and willingness of Gram Panchayat Committee, an attempt was made to enhance participation of people in the Gram Sabha in Perumbalam GP.

Methodology

An action research for improving the capacity of Panchayati Raj system was going on in the Gram Panchayats of Thycattussery Block in Alappuzha District. During the period, several orientation and sensitisation sessions were organised in the area for the elected members, officials of GP and constituent institutions, members of Community Based Organisations (CBO), etc. Several interactions and discussions were held with the members of local community, who were associated with the PRIs during the decentralised planning activities. Most of them have served in one or other capacity with the Panchayats as resource persons / working group members and took part actively in the Gram Sabha and all other social activities in the area. Primarily, they have a panchayat-friendly approach and have the willingness and interest to support the Panchayati Raj system in whatever way they could. It was during one of those discussions with the local community members at the Block level, the idea of initiating the Platform for
Decentralisation and Panchayati Raj emerged. That was the starting point, which led to various unique efforts by the civil society activists in the area.

In one of the several sittings the members of the Forum had with the elected members of the Perumbalam GP, the issue of energising the Gram Sabha came up. Detailed discussions took place on different approaches and strategies tried out in several areas on this direction. And the idea of developing a tool for measuring Gram Sabha participation was emerged in a meeting. It was decided to have a meeting of elected members of the GP and members of the Platform, which was facilitated by the Centre for Rural Management (CRM). A tool for assessing the preparatory measures and analysing the extent of participation of people in the Grama Sabha sessions was developed through joint sittings of the platform and elected members of the GP.

The methodology adopted has been like an action research taken up in the area of study. The approach of the paper is also non-conventional which is in consonance with the methodology adopted for the initiative. It proved to be a process of learning for all stakeholders, be it the elected members of the GP, members of the citizen forum or the CRM personnel. This attempt assumes significance due to three reasons. Firstly, the initiative for the exercise came from ‘within’ the Panchayat Raj system and without any external direction. Secondly, the monitoring tool was prepared through a participatory exercise, with the active contributions from the Panchayat members and the local civil society activists. Thirdly, the thrust was on enhancing quantitative and qualitative parameters of Gram Sabha by designing a comprehensive tool.

**The Strategy, Process and Approach**

A unique strategy was adopted to enhance people’s participation in Gram Sabhas at Perumbalam GP. Members of the local citizen forum and the Panchayat Committee of Perumbalam had several rounds of discussions about the strategy to be adopted for strengthening Gram Sabha in the area. During the discussions, a suggestion came up to monitor the conduct of Gram Sabha and find out the weak areas.
The process of preparing the tool for monitoring Gram Sabha itself was quite significant as the initiative in this direction was purely local, where the civil society activists and the Gram Panchayat jointly participated in the preparation and administration of tool. Number of sittings was held at the Panchayat office after initiation of the move by the Gram Panchayat. The structure, contents and other modalities for conducting the exercise was discussed threadbare and was finalised after several rounds of discussions. Elected members of Perumbalam Gram Panchayat, key functionaries of the Platform and faculty members of CRM actively participated in the process. During the development of the tool, emphasis was given to the different activities and number of sub-activities to be considered at the GP level and ward level. Different aspects are to be observed at Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha levels during the exercise, so that the weak link at each level could be ascertained and suitable remedial action could be taken. After preparation of the tool, a separate meeting was held in which the schedule for participation in the forthcoming Gram Sabha meetings in Perumbalam Gram Panchayat was decided and ‘who will attend where’ was also finalised.

This move is a paradigm shift in the sense that the approach was made here to assess the participation of people in Gram Sabha on a qualitative dimension, rather than to view it merely on a quantitative level. As the exercise was conducted in all 12 Gram Sabhas of Perumbalam Gram Panchayat, it enabled to bring out the weak areas at different parts of the Panchayat and to think of taking suitable corrective actions. The tool developed for this exercise can be modified and improved to prepare a ‘Gram Sabha Participation Index’ towards up-scaling the efforts. Thus, it may be viewed as a basic schedule to assess citizen participation and by making necessary changes, the same can be used to measure Gram Sabha Participation Index at different time and space domains.

The Structure and Design of the tool

The tool for measurement of Gram Sabha participation included both quantitative and qualitative dimensions, to be observed at Gram Panchayat level and at Gram Sabha level. The various activities and sub-activities considered at the Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha levels are given separately here.
Activities at the GP level

This broadly includes publicity, decisions and preparatory activities. Each activity is broken into various sub-activities.

Publicity:
1. Publishing of notice.
2. Intimation through media.
3. Intimation to Community Based Organisations (CBO) in the area.

Decisions:
1. Fixing of date and time.
2. Preparing the agenda.
3. Detailing Gram Sabha co-ordinators.
4. Issuing instructions to the concerned officials to attend Gram Sabha.
5. Provision of responsibilities to the elected members.
6. Inviting the concerned Block/District Panchayat members.
7. Deciding the expenses for organising the meeting.

Preparatory Activities:
1. Preparing the application forms.
2. Distribute the applications through Ward Development Committee (WDC) / Kudumbasree members.
3. Organising training to Gram Sabha co-ordinators.
4. Preparation of income-expense records, reports, etc. to be presented in the Gram Sabha.
5. Assign responsibility to the concerned person to present the reports.

We can see that 15 sub-activities need to be ensured at Gram Panchayat level during the exercise.
Activities at the Ward Level

This broadly includes setting up, norms for participation, and conduct of the meeting at the Gram Sabha level.

Setting up
1. Formation of organising committee (Ensure representation of WDC, Self Help Groups, Kudumbasree units, CBOs, etc.).
2. Distribution of notice.
3. Placing of posters/banners at prominent places.
4. Conduct of squad work for publicity.
5. Extend invitation to prominent persons from the ward.
6. Setting up the meeting hall and seating arrangements.
7. Assign responsibility to WDC members in the Group discussions.
8. Assign responsibility for registration, distribution of report/documents to the participants, recording of minutes, etc.

Norms for Participation
1. Female to Male ratio of participants was nearly 55 : 45.
2. A minimum of 100 participants from 50 households participated.
3. Proportional representation from Above Poverty Line (APL) and Below Poverty Line (BPL) households.
4. A minimum of 60 percent participants to remain throughout the meeting.
5. A minimum of five participants commented on accounts, report, etc.

Conduct of the meeting
1. Meeting to start not later than 30 minutes from the scheduled time.
2. Inaugural formalities to consume less time and report presentation, discussions, etc. to consume more time.
3. Recording of points raised and discussions during the meeting.
4. Important decisions/points to be read at the end again.
5. Adhering to the responsibilities by the assigned persons.
6. Presentation from each group made during the plenary session.
7. Documents maintained and photographs taken.

About 20 sub-activities can be verified at Gram Sabha level, thus making a total of 35 sub-activities in the tool designed for ascertaining the Gram Sabha participation.

**Administration of tool**

A separate registration format was prepared to get the socio-economic profile the participants of the Gram Sabha, as required by the schedule for monitoring. According to the schedule fixed, designated observers (Minimum of two persons from the Platform) attended each Gram Sabha of Perumbalam Gram Panchayat. By using a schedule incorporating 35 sub-activities, they have noted the preparatory activities and observed the Gram Sabha proceedings. Each observer gave the independent judgement, by giving a score of ‘1’ for adhering positively to each sub-activity. And the total score given by the observers was divided by the number of observers participated in the Gram Sabha and the final score has been arrived. After consolidating the final scores and compiling the observations from the observers, a final report was prepared by the Platform members.

The Report on monitoring of Gram Sabha participation was presented before the Gram Panchayat Committee. Detailed deliberations of the report took place in the Gram Panchayat committee and the committee unanimously agreed with the major findings and observations regarding the conduct of Gram Sabha. The Panchayat committee resolved to consider the suggestions put forward by the platform towards strengthening of the Gram Sabha in the area, complimented the Platform for their initiative and hard work, and expected similar supporting ventures from the Platform to strengthen the Panchayati Raj system.

**Benefits of the Exercise**

Such an approach and strategy aimed at strengthening of Gram Sabha by developing
a tool for monitoring the preparation and conduct of Gram Sabha has been unique. And such an exercise enabled to assess citizen participation in the Gram Sabha, quantitatively and qualitatively, without any bias/favour. It also enabled to generate awareness among all stakeholders regarding proper conduct of Gram Sabha.

It is even more significant that the tool was developed in a participatory manner in which the elected members of the GP and members of the civil society were involved in the preparation. The process of preparing the tool itself was quite beneficial. It is noted that such an approach has resulted in ensuring fixing of responsibility to each participant during the meeting. It also resulted in making better role clarity for all the stakeholders, be it an elected member, official and a citizen. Such an exercise has also helped to understand the weak points in each Gram Sabha, organised in the same GP. Simultaneously, it enabled to take necessary corrective steps to improve participation of people in the subsequent meetings. It is suggested that the tool can be suitably modified as per the focus of the Gram Sabha meeting, time constraints and as per the context.

**Conclusion**

Devising a tool for assessing participation in Gram Sabha is an initiative and unique strategy for enhancing citizen participation. Being an exercise from within, initiative by the citizens of the locality, it has a unique place. Significantly preparation of the tool for the assessment has been an outcome of deliberative and participatory process, which by itself has made an influence among the elected members of the GP. This indicates a paradigm shift in the strategy so far adopted to enhance participation of people in Gram Sabha. Interestingly, the exercise has the willingness and approval by the Gram Panchayat Committee. The strategy for rejuvenating grassroot democracy at Perumbalam Gram Panchayat has temporal and spatial dimensions and need to be modified suiting to the focus of Gram Sabha and the local situations, before replicating the exercise elsewhere.
Notes

1. During the preparatory phase of the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002), the Government of Kerala initiated a unique strategy for the decentralising the planning approach, popularly known as ‘People’s Plan Campaign (PPC)’. This was organized by the State Planning Board with the active support of the Ministry of Local Administration from August 1996. It laid greater emphasis on decentralization and people’s participation in planning. Towards giving a meaningful direction to the process of decentralisation, the campaign was started with an announcement by the State Government that 35% - 40% of the total plan (development) funds of the state would be devolved to the local bodies, to be spent by them on the basis of the priorities set by them. The managers of the ‘campaign’ hoped that as the plan process moved forward, the institutional, legal and procedural bottlenecks to effective decentralization of power would be removed, as and when they arise. Guidelines about sectoral distribution of the devolved funds in Production, Service and Infrastructure sectors, were issued to prevent the local bodies from earmarking disproportionate amounts for non-productive sectors.

2. It is a common platform for supporting Panchayats and the decentralisation process evolved at the regional level. It is expected to serve as a support mechanism of the Panchayats as well as a watchdog function from the perspective of the citizens. In the beginning, 35 persons with established credentials in different walks of life were brought together from all the Panchayats of Thycattussery Block and an executive committee and office bearers have come into existence. The platform meets regularly to deliberate on various decentralisation issues.

3. Strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions: Search for Allies (SPRISA) project was initiated by the Centre for Rural Management, an autonomous organisation with its head office at Kottayam, Kerala, has been working in the field of local governance for the last many years. The project was carried out with the support from SDC-CapDecK, Thiruvananthapuram during 2004-2008.

4. It is a Kerala Government initiative for eradicating all the overt faces of poverty from the State within 10 years. Initiated by the Local Administration Ministry,
Kudumbasree Mission was launched in 1998. The Self Help Groups of women were organised under the Kudumbasree project. The project aims at the all-round development of the people below poverty line. It has a hierarchical structure of Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs) at the sub-ward level, Area Development Societies (ADS) at the Ward level and Community Development Society (CDS) at the GP level.
**Grama Sabha: Challenges before us**

P. Shivashankar*

To bring in transparency in selection of beneficiaries for various schemes and to ensure a bottom to top approach of planning process, Grama Sabha was introduced by Karnataka Zilla Parishads, Taluk Panchayat samithis, Mandal Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayat Act, 1983. The same was continued in section 3 of Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993. Major Amendments were brought in by Karnataka Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Act, 2002. The legal provisions, as it stands today has provided for Ward Sabha below Grama Sabha levels. The decisions taken at Ward Sabhas to be placed before Grama Sabha for inclusion in Grama panchayat development plan.

*As per Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act the Grama Sabha*

1. Shall meet at least once in six months.
2. Special meeting of Grama Sabha shall be convened if a request is made by not less than Ten percent of Grama Sabha members with a specific Agenda
3. The quorum for the meeting is not less than 1/10th of the total numbers or hundred members whichever is less.
4. At least ten members from each ward sabha shall participate.
5. 30% shall be women.
6. SC/ST representatives shall be in proportion to their population.

*The powers of Grama Sabha (mainly) in the sphere of planning may be defined as follows:*

a. To consider and approve annual action plan of Grama Panchayat.
b. To identify and prioritize proposals for all development schemes of Grama Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat, Zilla Panchayat.

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c. To identify, prioritize and select individual beneficiaries for Grama Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat Zilla Panchayat and Government schemes.

In a true sense, Grama Sabha’s are the lowest level democratic decision making process. It can be termed as modern form of direct democracy. But the question before us is whether it is working in true sense.

**Present scenario of Grama sabha**

1. Poor attendance of village level Officers & staff in Grama Sabha.
2. Lack of knowledge and skill about the development schemes for the Nodal Officer.
3. Constant changes in Nodal Officers, which leads to discontinuity.
4. Very few Grama Panchayats places Action taken reports of previous meeting in the Grama Sabha.
5. The meeting notices doesnot contain Agenda notes to be discussed.
6. Lack of sufficient publicity among the members to attend Grama sabha.
7. Lack of Interest amongst members to attend Grama Sabha.
8. Dominance of ruling party cadres in the Grama Sabha proceedings.
9. Grama Sabha’s are not bereft of narrow parochial thinking , such as Nepotism, Groupism, Dominance of major caste, religion etc. In many cases present Grama Sabhas have failed to provide social and economic justices.
10. Lack of co-operation from the departments outside the administrative jurisdiction of Zilla Panchayat like Revenue dept. etc. Even though, these departments are implementing majority of individual beneficiary schemes, they neither attend the Grama Sabhas nor they are accountable to the people.
11. People evince interest in many service oriented departments like State Electricity Boards. They like to raise the issues of deficiency in services rendered by these departments. But these departments do not attend the Gramasabha.
12. Effective running of Grama Sabha needs strong political will. These days
parellal Sabha’s like “Jana Spandana Sabha” are encouraged. More importance is given to these type of meetings where in other departments identify and distribute the individual benefits on the spot. Hence the importance of Grama Sabha is dwindling.

13. Lack of transparency in recording the minutes of Grama Sabha’s, has led to loss of faith of the people in the system of Grama Sabha.

All these problems have led to dwindling interest of members in general and women, SC & ST members in particular. Many a times it is seen that Grama panchayat members going from house to house to take the signature of the members so that they meet the requisite quorum.

Despite all these limitations, there is no other alternative to Grama Sabha. Activation of Grama Sabha can be done by bringing in more transparency, and strengthen the decision making process. A practical and transparent method of prioritizing the individual beneficiary list needs to be developed. {Peoples faith in the system has to be brought back, so that more &more people participate in Grama Sabha}.

Massive IEC programmes among villagers and various groups in villages such has Self Help Groups is taken up. Various departments outside Zilla Panchayat which are giving direct services to the public are to brought under the ambit of Grama Sabha. Capacity building of Adyaksha in conducting and controlling the Grama Sabha proceedings to be taken up. By these measures, I think we can bring back the participation of the people in development process effectively.
Gram Sabhas in Kerala: Measures for Revitalising its Working

Dr. Oommen John*

The Grama Sabhas are visualized as a forum of direct democracy where the people are given a chance not only in electing their representatives but also in discussing, deciding and participating in the developmental activities of the panchayat. People’s Participation and accountability to people are sought to be ensured through the gram sabha, chaired by the ward members. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 for the first time made the gram sabhas as an integral part of the Panchayati raj system in India and made constitution of grama sabhas a mandatory provision of the respective state acts. Another positive feature which added to the importance of the grama sabha was the enactment of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005. This act clearly defined the role of the grama sabhas in the process of social audit.

In Kerala, the grama sabhas have come to occupy an important role in the development activities of the panchayati raj institutions. Initially the grama sabhas have played an important role in the People’s campaign for decentralized planning. In fact, these bodies were the live wire in the whole process of planning at the grass root level. But over the years, the importance of grama sabha as an institution has waned and in most places, they have turned docile, meeting just for the purpose of fulfilling the constitutional necessity. The participation of people in the meetings has declined and the meetings sometimes have turned ritual. This paper tries to analyse the reasons for the weakening of grama sabhas and suggest measures to revitalize the grama sabhas. But before delving into the analysis, it is imperative that we look at its constitution and the role played by it in the initial years.

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Constitution of Grama Sabha

According to the Kerala Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, the grama sabha is constituted for each constituency or ward of the grama panchayat. The meetings are held every three months and the elected representative of the grama panchayat is the convener of the grama sabha. The members of the block panchayat and the district panchayat representing the area of the grama sabha are invited to attend its meeting by the president of the grama panchayat concerned. The meetings are presided over by the President of the grama panchayat. In his absence, the vice-president or the convenor can preside over its meetings. The quorum for the meetings is fixed at one tenth of the total strength of the grama sabha. But for any subsequent meeting arising from lack of quorum, the strength need be only 50. Implementing officials are required to attend the Gram Sabha meetings. It is envisaged that the needs articulated at the Gram Sabha meetings be recorded, processed, prioritized and harmonized into the broad development plan for the Panchayat.

The Kerala Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 dwells at length with the powers and responsibilities of the grama sabha. It has been given 18 kinds of powers, functions and rights. Apart from this, it has also been given eight various kinds of responsibilities. The grama sabha is empowered to appoint, elect or constitute general or special committees for detailed discussions on any issues or programmes and for the effective implementation of the schemes and its decisions and in furtherance of its rights and responsibilities.

With this background, let us look at the functioning of the grama sabhas. As an institution at the grassroots or cutting edge level, its functioning can be studied in relation to three areas.

Institution of Planning

Grama Sabha provide an ideal forum for people to meet and discuss their local developmental problems, the causes for the problems and possible solutions. It is easier to know the felt needs and aspirations of the people in the meetings of the
grama sabha. In the decentralized planning process, the grama sabhas have been given a pivotal role. This has been used as a vehicle for bringing about greater people’s participation in planning the developmental activities of the panchayat. The first step in the process is the needs identification of the local community and the gaps in local development by the people in the grama sabha. On the basis of the gaps identified by the people in the grama sabhas, projects are prepared by the Working Groups which are then vetted by the Technical Advisory Groups before approval by the District Planning Committee. In order to ensure maximum participation of the people, the meetings are held on holidays. In this meeting, but for the inaugural and valedictory sessions, the entire deliberations were held sector wise and in small groups of 25-30 participants so as to ensure their participation in the deliberations. The aim of the group discussion are three fold: Firstly, certain qualitative, and to a certain extent, quantitative information with respect to that particular sector is elicited. Secondly, development problems of the ward with reference to the sector are listed. The group may also prioritise the needs. Thirdly, people are also guided to analyse these problems on the basis of experience and, to the extent possible make suggestions or solutions.

Institution for Identification of beneficiaries

In order to ensure people’s participation and transparency in the identification and selection of beneficiaries, the grama sabha has been given this power for the schemes implemented by the different tiers of PR bodies. This power was reinforced by the decision of the High Court which ruled that the panchayat are not selecting authorities by only approving authorities for the decisions taken by the grama sabha in the case of beneficiary selection. The government issued guidelines for selection of beneficiaries under Plan schemes including centrally and state sponsored schemes. As per the guidelines, the grama sabha has been given the power for selection of beneficiaries for all the schemes implemented by the three tiers. The guidelines laid down the procedure for selection of beneficiaries like determination of criteria, publicity, issuing of application forms, verification etc.
The procedure followed for the selection of beneficiaries is to distribute the beneficiary forms among the people and they will have to list the various schemes/benefits they are interested in getting. Once the applications forms are received by the grama panchayat, the ward committee processes it and a tentative list is prepared based on weightage given to various factors. This list is placed before the grama sabha for approval. The grama sabha can make changes in the list as it deems necessary. The prioritized list for each ward is then consolidated on the basis of clear norms and a final list is published by the grama panchayat as a whole. During this process, the grama panchayat cannot change the priorities of each ward.

**Institution of Social Audit**

There can be no better forum to undertake the social audit than the grama sabha. The objective of Social Audit is to bring about greater transparency and accountability in the planning, implementation and utilization of funds. Through this power, the Grama Sabha can ensure transparency and accountability in the functioning of the grama panchayat. The transparency which is the sine qua non of Grama Sabha ensures a check in arbitrariness in decision making and fine tune the administration of the grama panchayat to the needs of the community at large. This power will make the panchayats think twice before taking any arbitrary or biased decisions bypassing the established norms or by manipulating the records. The power of social audit by the grama sabha has received further momentum and legal backing after the enactment of MGNREGA. Section 17 endows the Grama Sabha with the authority to conduct social audit and monitor execution of works. The Act stipulates that the grama sabha should conduct social audit twice a year.

**Present Scenario**

The grama sabha as an institution can play an important role in planning, selection of beneficiaries and in social audit. But all these will be a futile exercise unless there is participation of the people in its meetings. Though the Grama sabha was a new concept in Kerala, the participation of the people in the grama sabha during the
initial period was satisfactory. But over the years, the role of the grama sabha as a facilitator and provider for planning has declined. The needs emanating from it should be the basis on which projects are supposed to be prepared. This has failed and the meetings of the grama sabha if at called have turned into a ritual in order to fulfill the constitutional mandate. Even the discussion in the grama sabha was confined to the list of demands rather than analyzing the problems and prioritizing the needs. As the Oommen Committee observed, “If it (Gram Sabha) goes well, indeed it is a great idea and a powerful anti-dote to the extant elite-oriented liberal democracy. But when it becomes a routine affair and a meeting place of beneficiaries or benefit seekers or when attendance gets fudged an important democratic tool stands discredited and the bureaucracy comes back with a vengeance. The gram sabha/ward sabha meetings which could have been developed into a forum for consensus building or throwing up constructive ideas for development purposes lose their significance”.

In a study conducted in Vettikavala Block Panchayat, it was found that no grama panchayat has followed the statutory requirement of holding grama sabha meetings four times a year. In the six Grama Panchayats in the block area, the average number of meetings was only two. In another Grama Panchayat, Soorinad North in Sasthamcotta block, three meetings were held during 2008-09 and four meetings during 2009-10 (Figures given in Table 1). It was found that the wording about calling the meeting in the Act came in handy for the elected members from calling more meetings. The Act stipulates that the gap between two meetings should not exceed six months and they used this conveniently in not calling more meetings. It was found that the participation differed from meeting to meeting. It was more during the selection of beneficiaries and the number gradually dwindled for the subsequent meetings. Even in a better performing Grama Panchayat like Soorinad North, the participation is just enough to fulfill the quorum. One can imagine the situation in other panchayats. There is an allegation that the gram sabha register is manipulated. It was pointed out that in many wards the minimum of 50 (this is the
In case you do not get the statutory minimum of 10% quorum in the first meeting, it was the rule than the exception. Quite often, the meetings turned out to be forums of beneficiaries. Presumably because most of them belong to the BPL categories, the educated youth, middle class and upper class shied away from such meetings as the benefits of individual schemes are limited only to BPL families. Under such a circumstance, the gram sabha cannot become a meaningful forum to articulate the felt needs of the community, or critically comment on budgets, plan priorities, audit reports, and the like (Oommen Committee p.72).

**Table 1: Participation of People in Grama Sabha Meetings in Soorinad North Grama Panchayat**

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<th>Ward</th>
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The quorum for the grama sabha meetings is one tenth of the total strength of the voters of the particular ward. But if the grama sabha is adjourned for lack of quorum, the next meeting can be held with only 50 members. This provision is sometimes deliberately used by the elected members to get their decisions passed.
by avoiding a larger assembly of voters. There are also cases where names are added in the attendance register after the meetings.

Another problem is that elected members do not give that much importance to the decisions taken in the meetings of the grama sabha. Sometimes the decisions taken by the grama sabha are overturned or diluted by the grama panchayat committee. In such cases, people deliberately keep away from attending these meetings when they come to know that decisions will eventually be overturned by the grama panchayat.

There has been a decline in the benefits being doled out by the grama sabha over the years. This is another reason for the declining participation of the people in the meetings. Even those beneficiaries who had got benefits keep away from the subsequent meetings.

Another problem being faced by the grama sabha is the oversystemisation of its meetings. In the initial phase, less time was given to inaugural and valedictory sessions so that more time could be devoted to the people to express not only their felt-needs and problems but also to search for the causes and remedies drawing form their life experience. But lately, the trend has changed in favour of the old type where the elected representatives or the officials dominate the proceedings.

In such a scenario, what are the measures needed to revitalize the grama sabhas so that they perform the role which is expected of them.

**Measures towards revitalizing the Grama Sabhas**

1. Awareness about the grama sabha and its powers and responsibilities is a necessary precondition for the success of the Grama Sabha. It is necessary to create awareness about the utility of attending the meetings. As per the Act, the meetings are to be held after proper notice is given to the voters regarding the date and the agenda of the meetings. Notices will have to be displayed on
public boards put up for this purpose and due publicity will have to be given regarding these meetings.

2. The participation of people is very crucial for the successful working of the grama sabha. Greater the participation of the people, better will be the check on the quality of governance of the local bodies. But here it is imperative that the type of participation be defined. Is it participation in terms of numbers or the quality of participation that is important? The numbers alone will not lead to better governance. The people should be willing to ask questions and fix accountability on the elected members and also on the officials for any lapses. The timings of the meeting is a crucial factor for the participation of the people. Meetings should be held on holidays so that all people can attend grama sabha. Records attendance of people should be public documents and it should not be allowed to be manipulated or damaged.

3. The frequency of meetings – four times a year- could be a reason for the low participation of the people. Calling the meetings every quarter is a strain not only on the people but also on the functionaries associated with it. The meetings which were two were increased to four on the recommendations of the Sen Committee. Like in frequent elections, a sort of lethargy sets in when people are asked to attend the meetings at regular intervals and when they think that the outcome would not be different with each meeting. People attend the meetings with the purpose of getting benefits and normally keep away when they feel that there is no purpose in attending the remaining meetings. One measure that is needed is to reduce the four meetings to may be twice a year. The Oommen Committee has recommended for two meetings a year. It said, “One important aspect relates to making gram sabha a more viable and lively component of decentralised planning and decentralised governance in the state. Minimum of four GS meetings in a year is an extremely arduous task. In Kerala with an average of 15-20 wards per GP and much more for a Municipality or Municipal Corporation to convene such a huge number of meetings (on average 60-80 per GP) and requiring the officials to participate
in all such meetings in a year is practically difficult. We recommend that GS meetings may be reduced to two and the quorum be reduced to 5 per cent. Every effort has to be made to make the GS meeting serious and productive. All the officials must be present and the participants should be informed of the actions taken on the responses and resolutions of the previous meetings” (P.81-82).

4. The elected members normally shy away from calling the meetings for fear of facing the wrath of the people. They are reluctant to call the meetings or even when they call it, they do it for the sake for fulfilling the constitutional responsibility. The elected members should not see the grama sabha as an institution that curtails their freedom and area of operations. On the contrary, the grama sabhas give legitimacy and concurrence to their governance. The shortcomings listed out in the meetings can be corrected.

5. The grama sabhas are held ward wise on account of the high population of the grama panchayat. Even then, the high population is a factor that hinders participation of the people in the grama sabha. One suggestion is to experiment with the possibility of a sub-system (like a Neighbourhood Group of men and women) below the ward which the ward members may use. Given the nature of clientilist politics that obtains in Kerala, the instrumentality of the sub-system may be used only after considerable debate. At any rate the sub system should be made a formal space by explicitly defining their roles, duties and functions (Oommen Committee, p.72).

**Conclusion**

The grama sabhas in Kerala can play an important role in bringing about a responsive administration. But for it to happen, the grama sabhas have to become more dynamic and performs its role efficiently and effectively. Giving powers and responsibilities alone will not make the body strong. When these powers are exercised by the people, the quality of governance is bound to improve. Participation of people is a necessary condition for the success of the grama sabha. Greater the participation
of the people better will be quality of administration by the grama panchayat. There should be synergy between these two bodies and one should not see the other as a rival in administration.

References
Gram Sabha as a tool of Decentralised local governance – A Practitioners’ Perspective

PC Jaffer, IAS

This article tries to give an insight into the functioning of Gram Sabhas as witnessed by the writer during his tenures in rural development sector. The experiences he came across regarding the functioning of gram Sabhas, their assertiveness for supremacy and certain efforts to dilute their powers are referred in this article. The paper explains the evolution and changing roles of Gram Sabha and evaluates its actual functioning in the field. It also gives a brief comparison of the functioning of Gram Sabha in Kerala and Karnataka based on the observations made by the author rather than based on documentary analysis.

The Gram Sabha is explained in the context of the Constitution of India as a meeting of all adult members of a village who has the right to vote. This has been conceptualised as a body to ensure the accountability of the elected representatives at the grass roots. This is a very powerful mechanism of decentralised governance. This concept has been from the existing system of village Panchayats, used to reach collective decisions and settle disputes. The 73rd amendment to the constitution has legalised the existing system. Thus one can explain Gram Sabha as a mechanism of collective decision-making and dispute resolution in the villages, which has been adopted as a tool for decentralised governance.

It is worthwhile to examine the system of collective decision making in the villages and its evolution over time. The system that was in vogue revolved around the influence enjoyed by the village headman over the villagers. The village headman

* District Commissioner, Mandya District, KARNATAKA
or the most influential person of the village was selected mostly on the basis of the family, dominant caste, wealth. In most of the cases this had to be a male member. The existence of women in this capacity was very rare. In most cases, the village headman has the benefit on all the three counts. This means, he is in a very influential family from the dominant caste in the village having lot of wealth. The wealth coupled with poverty in the village made people approach them for small financial favours. Their response to these was on two lines. Either they were too generous to part away a share of their wealth in the form of charity that earned them a lot of legitimate respect or they exploited the poor in need by indulging in money lending with exorbitant rates of interest. The dispute resolution mechanism revolved around such influential persons in the villages as they enjoy acceptability out of respect or out of fear.

Such influential persons over a period of time became the representatives of the village with the governments of the time stated to deal regarding the affairs of the village. It has to be noted that the governance was also not on democratic lines at that time. The British or the local Kings found it convenient to decentralise the village governance in the hands of such people. This further increased their legitimacy. Thus we had a system of village Pradhans (Police patil, Shanbog etc) who were the representatives of the government. These positions were hereditary ensuring the continued dominance of certain families in the villages.

All disputes in the villages were heard and decided by a group of people known as Village Panchayat and the group used to be normally headed by these influential people. Though they were expected to be impartial, the possibilities of the subjectivity and partiality on the lines of family and caste could not be ruled out. Certain traditions and practices rather than statutes and rules bound them. The effectiveness of the system revolved around the collective fear of the villagers on these people which was reinforced through the decisions of social boycott or use of physical force. These people also took decisions regarding the developmental activities of the villages. These were endorsed by the occasional meeting of people headed by the very same people.
The same system was followed in Karnataka as well. There used to be a system of the heads of village, head of seven villages and head of 12 villages etc. This system helped in sorting out differences and disputes that were of inter village in nature. Thus the characteristic features of traditional system were hereditary, non-democratic and based on social and economic status, enjoyed the support of people out of influence, and the decisions were not contested by people, the decisions were implemented through the threats of social sanctions. This system was primarily for the dispute redressal and the role of such village Sabhas was minimal in developmental activities and planning. They did not enjoy any sanctity in the eyes of law. The biggest advantage of this was to minimise the litigations in the villages and thereby avoid the negative emotions generated in the village due to this. This was a big help to the administration as well.

Despite having many advantages, this system lacked democratic nature and representativeness. It did not go well with the aim of inclusive growth and protection of the interest of the disadvantaged sections of the society. Certain developments have eroded this authority of the rural governance. Most important of these are the advent of Local Self Government Institutions established under Legislative authority. The leaders of this type of village government are elected through a fair and transparent process and enjoy the confidence of people. They have to approach their electorate for renewal of the contract with people. Instead of hereditary and informal authority, they enjoy formal democratic authority. Another major development that coincided with this was the abolition of hereditary officers in most parts of the country. Thus we have been gradually moving from an informal system of rural governance to a formalised and legalised system.

The erosion of informal authority coincides with certain major social changes in the country. As already discussed, the earlier system depended on the social sanctions and boycotts. This works when an individual is scared of the non-cooperation from the society, as he requires help from others. The recent development towards a highly individualised and self-centric society has removed the strong need for dependence over
others. Increase in the income and wealth of people with openings for spending ensured that the people have everything at their disposal if once has money. This has weakened the harmony in the society.

It is against this background that we have to see the functioning of Gram Sabhas. The functions of the Gram Sabha are to prepare the development plans for the village, select beneficiaries and monitor the implementation for all the welfare schemes. By doing this, the Gram Sabha acts as an agency to converge the traditional collective wisdom of the villagers, technical knowledge of the academics/experts and the experience of government officials in planning and execution.

Gram Sabha being a meeting of all voters in the village, all the adults are expected to participate. However, the trend across the country is not encouraging. Only those who are actively involved in the politics or those who are the aspirants of the benefits attend Gram Sabha regularly. Though there is attendance in large number in many cases, those who actively participate in the proceedings are very few. Thus, there is some reflection of the social hierarchy in the modern Gram Sabhas as well. Thus the many times, the decisions of Gram Sabha again reflect the wishes of the influential people in the village. However, there are numerous instances where Gram Sabhas have given valuable suggestions in formulating the development plan for the village. This is especially true in case of prioritisation of the schemes.

There are experiences where Gram Sabhas and GPs fought against the external interference in selection of beneficiaries. One such example happened in the year 2008. Beneficiaries were selected for the Ashraya, housing scheme for the government of Karnataka. The scheme guidelines stipulate the Gram Sabha to identify the beneficiaries. There is a vigilance committee headed by the MLA who will evaluate the selection before forwarding to the Government. The idea was to keep a check on the activities at the lower level and ensure that they follow proper procedure. The committee can only point out the wrongly selected beneficiaries but cannot add anybody. In this case, about 750 beneficiaries were replaced at the Taluka...
level at the behest of the MLA. Since it was approved by the Vigilance Committee, the government approved it as well. But, once the approved list was sent to the Gram Panchayat for implementation, they have realised that the list proposed by them has been completely modified. The GPs approached the Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Panchayat along with the documents. The CEO after conducting verification found that the approved list did not have the seal of approval by the Gram Sabha. All these beneficiaries were cancelled after sending a report to the government in this regard. Though very rare, this shows the evolution of Gram Sabhas to an agency powerful enough to question the MLA (who incidentally was a cabinet minister).

Another aspect that can be examined in this paper is the comparative picture of Gram Sabha in Kerala and Karnataka as observed by this writer in the last few years. These are only observations and not based on any official documents like minutes of the meeting. The attendance in the Gram Sabhas is almost on the same pattern, may be more number of people participating in Karnataka. However, the quality of input from the common man and the availability of technical knowledge in the village are tremendous in Kerala. Since the state is generally progressed in the Education field, every village has many educated people resulting in better quality of deliberations in Gram Sabha. The beneficiary selection and prioritisation are more objective in Kerala as most of the members of the Gram Sabha would be generally aware of the provisions regarding all the schemes. The documentation and record keeping is an area where Karnataka has to improve significantly. There are many instances where one could not trace the proceedings of the Gram Sabha while conducting inspections of the GP.

The Gram Sabha is given the responsibility of monitoring the developmental works carried out in the village. In Kerala, payment for many such works is contingent upon the clearance by the Gram Sabha or through the vigilance committee set up by the Gram Sabha. This is not enforced in Karnataka for many activities. The transaction of business including the planning, monitoring, social audit are more serious in Kerala than Karnataka. The Gram Sabha has sub-groups in the form of
neighbourhood groups in Kerala. The Self Help Groups are formally coordinated through Kudumbashree and formally made a part of the Gram Sabha. In Karnataka, there are multiple agencies promoting SHGs. They are not made fully part of the Gram Sabha and GP.

The ongoing discussions lead us to a few conclusions. Firstly, the institution of collective governance in the village has evolved from a hereditary and informal system to a democratised, representative and legalised system. This evolution has resulted in having diversity of opinions in the village ensuring fair chance to the downtrodden in the decision making process. The Gram Sabha has transformed from a body of dispute redressal to an agency of decentralised governance having responsibilities of planning and implementation of developmental programmes. This changes have been accelerated due to the advent of local government institutions, abolitions and hereditary offices and to a certain extent, globalisation. The discussion ahs also found that the deliberations in the Gram Sabha many times lack seriousness and they deviate from the actual aim of facilitating development to the secondary aim of selection of beneficiaries to the individual programmes. Finally, the Gram Sabha proceedings are more serious and properly documents in Kerala than in Karnataka.

The case study mentioned in the paper demonstrates the evolution of gram Sabha to a level where they can question the authority of the elected representatives at the higher level. This is an indication of the expected conflict between the elected governments at various levels, which eventually will result in a further democratised and decentralised system of governance.
Changing Role of Gram Sabha in Decentralised Governance – An Overview of Andhra Pradesh Experience

M. Gopinath Reddy*
Madhusudan Bandi**
S. Ramachandra Reddy***

Introduction

Participatory Democracy and Gram Sabhas (GS) in rural India are almost synonymous, perhaps this is why Gandhi expected, that the framers of Constitution would restore the original position of dignity to panchayats after the independence. He firmly believed that few men sitting in Delhi or Madras was no democracy, to him the meaningful democracy was its realistic practice in every village. Holding similar view, Nehru had also said, “Democracy is not merely Parliament at the top or legislature in the states but something which excites every person and something that trains every person to take his proper role and indeed any place” (Ramathilingam, 1995).

Democracy as form of government implies that, the ultimate authority of government is vested in the common people so that the public policy is made to conform to the will of the people and to serve the interests of the people. While Direct Democracy means the rule by the people of a state, town or the other political community by means of direct participation in the management of public affairs. And this was perceived to be only possible in a relatively small numbers of citizens who could meet periodically at one place. And, this was thought as not practicable in modern times. Though desiring a government participated by whole people and admission of all to share in the sovereign power of the state, Mill perceived the limitations of pure or Direct Democracy. Rousseau also a powerful advocate of Direct Democracy too saw the difficulty of realising direct democracy on a large scale under modern conditions. Therefore ‘Indirect Democracy’

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or ‘Representative Democracy’ was adopted by the countries practicing democracies as a solution to conduct government by the representatives of the people, who are elected at regular intervals by the people.

Yet, GS in its concept in the overall decentralisation structure in India’s famously known Panchayati Raj (PR) Institutions could undoubtedly be said as the most appropriate model of democracy that holds potential to meet the challenging demands of Direct or Participatory Democracy even in the times of modern era of big States. As observed by Mathew (2000) since 1995, GS in India has become a central issue in the PR discussions and gained further notice when the Union Finance Minister in the 1999 Budget speech declared 1999-2000 as the year of the GS. Earlier in 80s the failure of Representative Democracy elsewhere in the World had paved way for the rise to peoples’ movements all over the globe for better resource management and revitalization of their grass roots structures by giving a greater voice to people in government spending and established the fact that Democracy actually breathes at the bottom. And, the GS is the forum in India, which can ensure direct democracy offering equal opportunity to all the citizens of a village to discuss, criticize and approve or reject the proposals of the Panchayat executive and assess its past performance being a watchdog of democracy at the grassroots level.

**Understanding GS in Concept and Theory of Democracy**

The keen interest developed in Participatory Democracy across the World demonstrates how the interpretation of democracy as a system of government is fast changing. The desire for a meaningful participation in the decision-making process has entered on the contemporary political scene as the drive for Participatory Democracy. As defined by the Students for Democracy Society (SDS), which first publicised the term, this means that:

“Political life would be based in several root principles: that decision making of basic social consequences be carried on by public groupings;
that politics be seen positively, as the art of collectively creating an acceptable pattern of social relation; that politics has the function of bringing people out of isolation and into community, thus being a necessary, though not sufficient, means of finding meaning in personal life; that the political order should serve to clarify problems in a way instrumental to their solution; it should provide outlets for the expression of personal grievance and aspiration; opposing views should be organised so as to illuminate choices and facilitate the attainment of goals; channels should be commonly available to relate men to knowledge and to power so that private problems from bad recreation facilities to personal alienation re-formulated as general issues” (Nath and Mishra, 1997).

Touching almost all the terms mentioned by the SDS, it could be said that GS in India has succeeded in devolving the rightful powers to its people. While probing the GS, one finds that the PR Act has made a provision for constituting GS for every village, which should meet twice a year. Further, a GS shall consist of all persons whose names are included in the electoral roll for the Gram Panchayat (GP) (Sarumathy, nd; Mahipal, 1995). This is in accordance to Mill’s thought on Pure Democracy “the ideally best of government is that in which the sovereignty, or supreme controlling power in the last resort, is vested in the entire aggregate of the community; every citizen not only having a voice in the exercise of that ultimate sovereignty but being at least occasionally, called on to take an actual part in the government, by the personal discharge of some public functions, local or general”. Reposing faith in the common man, GS implies that all beings have a worth in themselves and no one is a mere means to another’s end. This was how Lindsay had envisaged the true democracy. And also fulfils Kant’s well-known formula in this connection “so act as to treat humanity, whether in your person or in that of any other, in every case as an end, and never merely as a means” (Nath and Mishra, 1997).
**Statutory Position of Gram Sabha**

GS is an institutional space created within the local government for structured interactions between the public and the policy makers. The broad purpose of having such institution at the grassroots level is to make the most of the opportunities for the underprivileged and socially marginalized groups, to exercise influence over policy preference, resource allocation and programme design (Robinson, 1998; Mathew, 2000). The GS meeting at the grassroots (village) level facilitates participatory governance and planning since the elected representatives, officials and the public are expected to take part in it. This podium enables the GP to plan and execute the local projects towards better prospect as per the needs and aspirations of the people (Babu, nd; Pasayat and Barik, 1998). The participation of people further ensures cost effective planning and implementation and competence in monitoring of the projects besides enabling the local government to rope-in the services of the people’s and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) in their developmental efforts. The important areas which directly concern these people are safe drinking water, girl education, basic health services, toilets and sanitation, *anganwadis*, widow and destitute women, housing, training needs in income generating schemes, assistance to form self help groups and *mahila mandals*, ensuring benefits under various poverty alleviation programmes (Babu, nd).

In AP, The GS also ensures transparency in the administration and accountability of *Panchayat* functionaries to the public. The *Sarpanch* (president) of the GP and in his absence, the *Upa-Sarpanch* (Vice President) presides over the GS meetings. A good number of functions have been entrusted to GS, such as review of annual statement of accounts and audit report; report on the administrative affairs of the preceding year; review of works for the current year; proposals for fresh taxation or enhancement of rates of existing taxes and selection of schemes, beneficiaries and location under various anti-poverty programmes (GoAP, 1994). Thus, the GS is expected to play an important role in shaping not only the *Panchayat* administration but also the development of individuals and the community (Babu, nd).
Review of Literature

Scholars believe that through 73rd Amendment, the country has passed from democracy by consent to democracy by participation (Ramaswamy 1994). Unlike in Central and State government where in people have no way in decision-making except on the polling day, GS a lowest unit in PRIs, comprising not more than 1,000 souls ensures face-to-face communication and active participation of all the adult members forming the GS, enabling them to participate directly in the decision making processes and gives “voice to voiceless people” living in 6,00,000 villages of India. This will also safeguard that the ideal of “power to the people” does not degenerate into the “power to the powerful”. This participatory democracy of “institution of self-government” restores power to the people to whom it belongs as dreamt by Lord Ripon and Gandhi (Gangrade, 1995). Complimenting the efforts of the framers of 73rd Amendment, the GS is proving to be the best social audit unit in new democratic set-up. Reports from Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh suggest that several GS meetings had been extremely effective social audit forum. Accountability to the people at the lower levels is naturally higher because of the watchful eyes of the people (Mathew, 2000). Though a lot of ground works needs to be done to make the institution of GS the best forum of social audit to hold the elected representatives on tenterhooks. If the above gives the positive picture, the shortcomings are not like extinct; rather they seem to be overtaken. The following are the grey areas of GS.

Almost all the State Acts have provided for the GS but its functions and authority have not been spelt out in detail resulting in ineffective functioning in most of the places (Choudhury and Jain, nd). This phenomenon could be attributed to the expression ‘may’ being deliberately used in place of ‘shall’ for the items of importance in the much talked about 73rd Amendment, leaving the discretion on part of the State Legislature. For instance, “GS” is only defined but its establishment is not made compulsory. It is only mentioned that the State legislature may prescribe its powers and functions (Rao, 1995). Taking dig at the AP Panchayat Act, Mahipal (1995) feels that the state has provided for a GS only because it has been made mandatory for the State Governments in the
73rd Amendment. AP is the State where the institution has been given no power (to identify beneficiaries for various poverty alleviation programmes, propose an annual plan, discuss the budget and audit reports and review progress) in spite of it being the base of the PR system. The GP is free to ignore its suggestions and recommendations. Whereas in Punjab and Haryana the GS has been authorized to approve and sanction the reports and proposals of the GP. The Bihar Act has even provided for vigilance committee to be formed by members of the GS to monitor the working of the Gram Panchayat, which is its executive body. In Karnataka also an Amendment was introduced in its Legislative Assembly on August 2, 2002 providing for GS to meet four times a year and their decisions would be mandatory and not merely recommendatory in nature (Ghorpade, 2002).

Choudhury and Jain, (nd), observed that the GS meetings are generally held as prescribed, yet the purpose is hardly served in the absence of a well-defined and well-directed mandate. More often, there is a tendency to conduct the meetings in a formal manner and finalise the proceedings in haste. Field experience from Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan shows that many people do not know the dates of the GS meetings fixed by the state government. Since GS meetings are held at Panchayat headquarters, people from distant villages find it difficult to attend them (Mathew, 2000). Cases were cited about the meetings that were conducted without any consideration to the requirement of the quorum. The absence of women folk in the meetings of the GS was a common feature. The participation of people belonging to the weaker sections was also minimal. Only such of the people from these groups participated in the meetings when they were to be identified as beneficiaries under a given scheme. The entire exercise thus becomes formal and incapable of yielding the expected results (Choudhury and Jain, nd). It becomes more pathetic when the losers in the Panchayat elections mobilize support only to oppose the sarpanch and frustrate his development plans in the GS. All this highlights lack of culture of GS in our society in spite of talking big about our legacy of ‘Participatory Democracy’. Whatsoever, the real culprit is caste and class division in Indian villages that keep the community away from working for common good (Mathew, 2000). When
the need is participation of weaker sections in GS is central to the very spirit of participatory democracy that too with fair amount of knowledge of their demands and requirements with an ability to articulate the same in the meetings.

Objective of the Field Study

In the above backdrop, this paper makes an attempt to find the ground reality about the functioning of GS in AP, extent of public participation, the problems encountered, and the remedial measures needed to make them more effective. The methodology adopted is descriptive and analytical. The analysis made is based on both quantitative and qualitative information. The data has been collected from a sample of two selected mandals each - one backward and developed in the three districts spread across the three different regions of AP i.e. Coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana. The study is supplemented to a large extent by qualitative information, which was captured through field observations and discussions with functionaries of Panchayats and the public in the study area.

Assessment from our Field Study

It will not be surprising to find the field reality contrary to what is mentioned in the statute across entire country. And the state of AP is no different from the rest of the country. In the following paragraphs a detailed account of Gram Sabha and its operational dynamics captured from the account of chairpersons / members of Gram Panchayats as well as household respondents.

Coming to the very basic function and need of conduction of GS at least twice a year as per legislation. The responses of the leaders interviewed who belonged to different Panchayats, was that on an average it was found that 36 % in Medak, 72 % in Anantapur and 53 % in West Godavari admitting the worst fear any decentralization enthusiast envisages i.e. no GS is held even once as against the stipulated the number of two GS meetings.
Table 1: Opinions of the Chairpersons / Members on Regarding Various Operational Aspects of Gram Sabha

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Medak</th>
<th>Anantapur</th>
<th>West Godavari</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Castes</td>
<td>SC/ST</td>
<td>BC</td>
<td>Minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of times GS are held</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than two times</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues discussed in the GS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of beneficiaries</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Anti-Poverty Programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt needs of the villagers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janmabhoomi works</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villagers’ interest in GS</td>
<td>Actively</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discussions</td>
<td>Not actively</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the remaining GS where they are held the important issues discussed were that of identification of Anti-poverty Programmes beneficiaries, immediate needs of the villagers, Janmabhoomi works and other ones. There are no significant preferences for the above issues since all these issues are discussed in equal measures in all the three districts. However the BCs participation across all the three districts is comparatively more. In the opinion of the leaders in whose constituencies GS are held, have said that the villager’s interest is quite active in the GS discussions with 73 % in Medak, 100 % in Anantapur and 95 % in West Godavari.

In the opinion of the leaders from the three districts the needs of the people are identified on the basis of priority for the felt needs. Considering the criteria, most of the leaders felt drinking water received more priority followed by road and electricity. There were many other issues in each of the different Panchayats and most did not know, very surprisingly these Panchayat leaders thought other institutions primarily Janmabhoomi* programme identify the needs of the people. It is followed by Gram Panhayat and then GS. This trend is there in every district. When the leaders were asked about the activities
undertaken by their *Panchayat* during last five years, Medak and Anantapur panchayat leaders said they concentrated mostly in the field of rural development programmes, followed by providing sanitation facility and drinking water. Whereas in West Godavari leaders preferred sanitation and drinking water followed by rural development programmes and anti-poverty programme.

Table 2: Opinions of the Chairpersons / Members on the Identification of Peoples’ Needs of Importance and the Appropriate Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Medak</th>
<th>Anantapur</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RC</td>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>OC</td>
<td>RC</td>
<td>Minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode of identifying priorities of people needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking water</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drainage works</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions that identify the needs of the people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gram Sabha</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gram Panchayat</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other institutions (Janmabhoomi)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities undertaken by the Panchayat during last five years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural development</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti poverty programmes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanitation, provision of drinking water</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and identification of the schemes in the Panchayat have improved the choices of the people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not improved</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Planning process has improved rural masses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>income and employment opportunities in the villages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor are benefited by</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRY works</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRDP / DRDA Schemes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAY / RPH</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When asked about the new role of the *Panchayat* planning and identifying the schemes has in any way improved the choices of the people, 60% of the leaders in Medak have opined in positive, while 58% leaders in West Godavri did not think so. Even in Anantapur only 49% could agree to this view. Here 36% of the leaders pleaded their ignorance in this regard. However, the same leaders to the tune of 77% in Medak, 53% in Anantapur and 85% in West Godavari thought that this kind of planning process has improved rural masses income and employment opportunities in the villages.

When probed as to how the people in general and poor in particular were benefited by such kind of planning process. The Chairperson / Members in Medak and West Godavari gave credit to JRY works. In Anantapur IRDP / DRDA schemes helped the needy in more beneficial way. In the following lines the assessment of GS by the respondents of various developmental programmes is dealt with.

**Table 3: Opinions of the Beneficiary Respondents on their Awareness and Participation in the GS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Medak</th>
<th>Anantapur</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parameters</strong></td>
<td><strong>SC/ST</strong></td>
<td><strong>BC</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unaware of Existence of GS</strong></td>
<td>97</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problems Discussed in the GS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developmental</strong></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beneficiary Identification</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Janmabhoomi</strong></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing- weaker section</strong></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Common property management</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Any Other Issue</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The opinion expressed by the respondents about their awareness on an important organisation such as ‘GS’, was one of disbelief, because most of them (more than 90%) in all the three districts and across all the castes expressed their unawareness of the GS.
But saving grace was that, those few who affirmed to know about GS said they participated in them actively.

When participating in the GS the respondents among all sections favoured discussing general problems, which was followed by the issues like housing for weaker sections and Janmabhoomi programmes, common property management and other issues (50% each) in Anantapur and the issues concerning the panchayat institutions (83%) in West Godavari.

**The Role of Gram Sabha in Identification of Anti-poverty programmes**

There are innumerable schemes introduced for the poverty alleviation in the rural areas by the Union and State governments. Quite obviously the success of these programmes depends on the effectiveness of targeting the programme to the poor and this effectiveness is determined by such factors as how far the system identify the right beneficiaries and how far the transaction costs involved and leakages accompany are reduced. In the backdrop of the widespread belief of absence of transparency in the whole affair of handling these schemes and those involved in the implementation of these programmes obligated in entrusting the responsibility to the PRIs on the ground that these institutions ensured transparency and accountability. As Panchayats provided for people’s participation in local governance, and as beneficiaries are identified in the open GS meetings, it is argued, there is less scope of misidentification of beneficiaries and no room for middlemen to operate. Also since the officials are accountable to people and their representatives, there will be a hold on their corrupt practices. In either case, transaction costs and leakages are likely to be minimised under the Panchayat regime.

When the respondents were asked about their experiences with this arrangement the opinions with regard to identification of anti-poverty programs in each district were found to be divided. If 100% Medak respondents reported that they are not identified at all, while 49% of Anantapur respondents expressed same way but most of them in this district seemed not too disillusioned with the panchayat. Then again West Godavari respondents held similar view as to what was held by Medak respondents with 62% reporting that they were not identified in the gram sabha.
Table 4: Opinions of the Beneficiary Respondents on Identification of Anti-Poverty Programmes and Gram Sabha

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Castes</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Medak</th>
<th>Anantapur</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anti-poverty Programmes are not identified in GS</td>
<td></td>
<td>SOST</td>
<td>BC</td>
<td>Minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the Disagreed cases, the Beneficiaries are identified by</td>
<td>MDO</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bankers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiary identification at local level reduces transaction costs</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Areas where transaction costs are reduced</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other costs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genuine selection of beneficiary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original assets</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat information with the local Panchayat is now available</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of Panchayat schemes</td>
<td>Mondal Officials</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRDA Officials</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Panchayat has improved employment</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The reason held by the people for non-identification of the beneficiaries by the GS is because it is done by Mandal Development Officers (MDO) in most instances as told by the people (100%, 87% and 42% in Medak, Anantapur and West Godavari respectively). In case of West Godavari 54% of the people believed that others like local politicians influence in identifying the beneficiaries.

When the people were asked further about any reduction in transaction costs if beneficiaries are identified at local level, most of the households in Medak have expressed their ignorance (69%) in this regard, while Anantapur and West Godavari households agreed with the possibility of reduction in costs. The respective opinion being 99% and 92% in Anantapur and West Godavari. When probed further about the areas wherein the transaction costs could be saved most of those who had agreed to the possibility of reduction in the cost in the previous question have specifically said that ‘transportation cost’ will come down considerably. Almost all the respondents in Medak, Anantapur and West Godavari respectively held this view.

**Andhra Pradesh National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (APNREGS), Panchayats and Gram Sabha**

- The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, passed by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in 2005, is one of the largest and most ambitious anti-poverty schemes adopted by the Indian government since independence.
- Responsibility for the immense task of generating sufficient work for all who demand it and for supervising worksites is delegated to the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the act.
- Intermediate (Block/Mandal) Panchayats are responsible for ensuring that job seekers are provided with work within 15 days and identifying appropriate works if the GP fails to do so.
- Andhra Pradesh (AP) is the only state which has made available detailed records of each participant in NREGA to the public over the internet.
• In terms of transparency, the implementation of NREGA by the state government has been exemplary.

• AP is the only state to have established an independent agency to promote and oversee local audits of NREGA.

• AP is also the only state to have implemented an advanced information system for tracking participation data.

• Andhra Pradesh also differs from other states in that a large portion of responsibility for implementation of NREGA has been assigned to unelected officials at the mandal level.

• Gram Panchayats still maintain a large share of control over the implementation of NREGA, but this control is less than in most other states.

• IFMR study indicates that reserving a sarpanch seat to a SC or BC results in a slight increase in the proportion of SCs or BCs respectively participating in NREGA.

• The study also mentions no effect at all of reservations of sarpanch seats for women or STs and no effect of any type of reservation on levels of caste or gender segregation at NREGA worksites, average NREGA days worked by members of the reserved group, or average NREGA wage for members of the reserved group.

• Local politicians in AP are considerably more involved in NREGP than they are in Rajasthan. They use social policy programs as an opportunity for advancement for their followers and encourage capture.

• A recent study done by CESS in 45 gram panchayats in AP show that even though these institutions do not have much role all the important decisions are taken by these leaders.

• Most of the decisions re laced with their political and monitary interests and against the poor.

• It was also observed that Gam Sabhas institutions were used to get resolution for the NREGS works and at later stages these institutions are not made use.
Conclusion

From the foregoing analysis it is evident that institution of gram sabha - a direct variant of participatory and sustentative democracy and its working in the AP state is far from satisfactory. The institution of gram sabha has not yet developed into genuine institution of Social Audit and public accountability. The attitude of the ruling elites from the top and even at the level of village presidents is quite hostile to it. Hardly any faith, by the leaders in these institutions as reflecting community will and aspirations has been exhibited. Until legislative backing is ensured by the state government, as has been done in Karnataka, in the form of bringing an amendment to make gram sabha a mandatory institution to be taken into confidence for all the major decisions concerning village life, a real people-centred rural development will not usher in. In the recent flag ship programmes like APNREGS, the role of Gram Sabha was confined to only passing resolution for the works approval and no other role in other activities is visible. It is in this background that Government of India’s sincere effort to bring in constitution Amendment Bill to include schedule 13 (Article 243 A) which makes the institution of Gram Sabha very powerful with comprehensive powers and functions relating to village affairs, needs to be lauded.

References


An Action Research on Mahila Sabha (Gram Sabha by women voters): An Experience in West Bengal

Suparna Ganguly*

1. Introduction

West Bengal has a long tradition of searching Gandhiji’s vision of ‘Village Republic’ based on decentralization and genuine peoples’ participation establishing their choice and voice regarding development and welfare of the society.

After independence according to the recommendations of the Balvantrai Mehata Committee to the National Development Council, the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1957 and the West Bengal Zilla parishad Act, 1963 were enacted introducing the four-tier Panchayat system which was superseded in late sixties. Again a new Panchayat Act, namely, the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973 was enacted introducing a three-tier Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) on 1st January, 1974. The provisions of the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973 were implemented after the general election on 4th June, 1978, more than a decade before the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution of India.

Since 1978 to till date, a continuous efforts has been running in West Bengal for three-fold objectives which are complementary to each other and indispensable for “Governance”. These are:

- Strengthening PRIs for improving rural governance
- Activating People’s Participation and
- Increasing the degree of decentralization.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1993 accelerated the process of democratic decentralization in which both powers and responsibilities were devolved upon elected panchayat representatives across the three-tiers. Though the decentralized planning found

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expression in the First Five Year Plan (1951-56), but the trend was towards the greater centralization. After 73rd and 74th Amendment, article 243G of the Constitution envisaged a reversal of the hitherto centralized approach stating that panchayats would undertake planning for social justice and economic development.

Article 243 ZD of the Constitution also mandated the establishment of the District Planning Committee (DPC) for consolidating plans prepared by each level of PRIs—Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti, and District (who have to prepare the Perspective five year plan and Annual plans for their respective jurisdiction).

The Constitution defines Gram Sabha as a body consisting of voters relating to a village comprised within a Panchayat. Thus the term “Gram Sabha” must be taken into consideration in its holistic manner, it is not only the meeting, it is the platform where people and panchayat may interact.

The 73rd amendment thus envisages the Gram Sabha as a foundation of the Panchayat Raj system. “Gram Sabha” means a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls, comprised within the area of Panchayat at the village level. In the Panchayat Raj system, Gram Sabha is the only permanent unit. Mukhiyas [heads] and other members of Panchayat continue for 5 years only from the date appointed for the first meeting, but the villagers do not change. Empowerment of Gram Sabha means strengthening of the Panchayat Raj Institution (PRIs). Success or failure of this system depends upon the strength of the Gram Sabha.

In West Bengal, people’s participation in planning has been assured through “Gram Sansad” meetings at the ward level and “Gram Sabha” meetings at Gram Panchayat level. In terms of the provisions of the law, every year in the month of December, 1 meeting of the Gram Sabha helds, whereas Gram Sansad helds twice in a year, in the month of May and November. According to the Revision of local government Act of West Bengal in 2003, Gram Sansads were given authority to form one Gram Unnayan Samiti (village development council) for local planning and implementation in each area.
As spelt out in the Rules, the Gram Sansad (at ward level) is to guide and advise the Gram Panchayat in the preparation of its five-year plan and annual plan. On behalf of the Gram Sansad, Gram Unnayan Samiti is responsible for the following works:

- to guide Gram Panchayats on schemes for economic development and social justice,
- to identify and prioritise the local needs,
- to discuss the various poverty alleviation schemes and to identify the beneficiaries of various poverty reduction programme.
- to mobilize mass support for programme of community welfare, family planning, child welfare, adult education etc.
- to record any objection to Gram Panchayat regarding implementation to local schemes.

According to the Act, through the Gram Sabha the common people are entitled,

- to discuss, alter, modify the future plan taken by the Gram Panchayat with the help of Gram Unnayan Samitis.
- to prioritise or approve or disapprove the proposals taken by the Gram Panchayat to address the needs placed in GramSansad.
- to select and include the people -in -need for various poverty alleviation programmes.
- to conduct the Social Audits.

The government of West Bengal have also issued one guidelines on preparation of village planning and circulated to all the gram panchayats in the state. All the Gram Panchayats prepare the Perspective plan and Annual Action Plan based on the proposals or schemes suggested and prioritized by the people in the meeting of Gram Sansads and Gram Sabha. This plan is also preceded with the annual budget of the Panchayats.

**Present status of Gram Sabha and Gram Sansads: Gaps behind**

According to the secondary data of Panchayat and Rural development, GoWB, since last 5-7 years, Gram Sansad meeting takes place just for formalities, not in its
holistic manner.

**Gram Sabha meetings and Gram Unnayan Samitis (GUS), which are expected to function apolitically, have failed to fulfil their goals. People’s participation at the Gram Sabha meetings is alarmingly low and their space suffers from unintended politicization.**

Though the formation of Gram Unnayan Samiti intends more devolution of power — but the experience is not so pleasant as it has created the battle of power.

**GUS formation and activities has unmasked a detrimental political culture that underlies people’s lack of interest. Further devolution of power through the village development councils will not necessarily mean a better system.**

Though there is strong dependence of the people on the Panchayats, but people are very reluctant to go to the Gram Sansad or Gram Sabha as their needs have been not addressed properly. According to Harry Blair (2000), there is unequal distribution of benefits as the ruling party wanted to maintain loyalty to their supporters. In a study of Kerala, the author wrote, "When a party dominates a Panchayat, it tends to reward its sympathizers exclusively".

Though in some districts, Gram Sabha is observed very sincerely where people fulfills the quorum, but interesting scenario is that women participation is very poor. It reflects the argument of Smt. Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak in another way,

-- *the subaltern has no history and can not speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow*.7

If women participate in the Gram Sabha, it has also seen that their voices and choices have not been properly addressed. Most of the discussions (Income-expensiture statement, the budget statement etc.) do not touch them. They have to go through some "Yes” or “No”. Most of the time female voices are suppressed and ignored.
Female: I am from Mulipara of Nudur area. I wish to let you know that we are extremely poor widows. We ought to depend on others…

Assistant from the Panchayat: We are here to listen to area problems, tell us about your area, not about yourself.

Female: I have lost my husband too. I am in serious crisis. It is about us, the widows living in extreme poverty.

Female: My husband has lost both of his legs. I need help to sustain. I request you to help me.

Female: I am a beggar with a handicapped son. Please do something for me. I have seen many people getting money, clothes, etc. I did not get anything.

Female: Muslimpara suffers from paucity of water. We do not have any pond or tubewell. Please do something.

Assistant: The woman coming from Nahodari spoke about the water scarcity too, the Head is also aware of this. It is known to us that you are new settlers beside the highway. We have noted down your demand.

The essence of Gram Sabha lies not only in the solidarity but also in the true participation of the people towards the discussion of the local needs, problems, available resources, possible solutions addressing the needs etc. so that the people can take active part contributing their voices and choices towards the Planning and Implementation. But this main task of Gram Sabha is neglected by the Panchayat.

It seems that most of the Gram Sabhas have failed to incorporate people’s voices in planning and decision making processes. The more alarming finding is the political interference in meeting procedures.

It is very significant to mention that the very idea and significance of village level planning is hardly discussed in the political gatherings. The matter is not fully exposed to the villagers even when the Gram Sansad meetings take place.
In some places people’s opinion has been captured and reflected in Planning, but women requirements has not been reflected in the plan. Though in the Ninth Plan (1998-2002), the idea of Women Component Plan (WCP) was introduced [which was unconditional minimum quantum of funds for women in the schemes run by all the Departments, perceived to be “women-related” and critical for women’s empowerment], no WCP is found at Panchayat level.

….. there were many government schemes providing relief to women in distress in a rather narrow manner without addressing the underlying structural problems; and recommended that such relief giving schemes must be supplemented by measures to ensure that women’s rights are more clearly defined, enforced and protected.

Though in the Tenth five year plan (2002-2007), emphasis was given both on WCP and the Gender budgeting, there is no Gender

“immediate action in tying up these two effective concepts of WCP and Gender Budgeting to play a complementary role to each other, and thus ensure both Preventive and post facto action in enabling women to receive their rightful share from all the women-related general development sectors”.

Budgeting at Panchayat level. All the budgets are Gender blind.

Most of the Voters of Gram Sabha are unaware of the “women-related”, “pro-women” and “the general schemes” and most of the functionaries of the Panchayats are unaccustomed to see the schemes classification wise or in context of welfare. As a result, the fruits of the schemes are not reaching cent percent to the people, especially to women.

Objectives of the Action Research

In this perspective the State Institute of Panchayat and Rural Development (SIPRD),
West Bengal has taken up a Pilot Action Research to appreciate and understand the dynamics of Women Participation in Gram Sansad as well as in planning process. In a general sense, this action research study has addressed the following objectives:

1) to study the perception of the people about Gram Sansad and Gram Unnayan Samiti.
2) to examine the role of Gram Sansad in formulating the plan of Gram Panchayat.
3) to identify the constraints before the women voters for participating in Gram Sansad.
4) to understand the awareness of women regarding schemes and the role of Gram Sansad and Gram Unnayan Samiti and their responsibility.
5) to identify the parameters and the process for effective participation of the women voters in Gram Sansad i.e Mahila Sansad identifying the Women requirements.
6) to identify the constraints towards the encouragement of the people's participation in Mahila Sansad followed by Gram Sansad.
7) to compare the wish-list of male and female voters and assessment of its impact on planning.

Methodology and Universe

The Action Research study has been designed and carried out by the Research Team of the SIPRD. This study targeted to the women voters of the Gram Sansad. The methodology was mixed-method based in order to address the different contexts - ethnographic study, interviews, focus group discussion, video and audio recording etc. The methodology has involved the following stages:

- Purposive selection of the district of Bankura as backward district and also to avoid political disturbances.
- Purposive selection of the block, Joypur as there is an understanding between administration and political set-up which is primary condition of such Action Research.
- Part-purposive and part-random selection of the Gram Panchayat named Moynapur, in context of the social and political composition of the members and
their gender identities, headed by a lady.

- Part-purposive and part-random selection of two Gram Sansad(wards) covering various stratum of the society.
- Endeavour to cover all the households of thirteen hamlets of selected two gram-sansads.

At the district level all the Zilla Parishad Members (35) and Zilla Parishad Officials (12) were given “Gender Sensitisation Training” for 5 days based on scientific approach. Similarly, all the selected and elected functionaries at the block level (total 48) were trained up on the same theme. At Gram Panchayat level all the members of Gram Panchayats (14), staffs of the Gram panchayat (5), all secretaries of Gram Unnayan Samitis (11) and active Self Help Group (SHG) leaders (10) were gone through the same “Gender Sensitisation Training” for five days following the scientific approach.

The research team had interacted with 100 male and 220 female, 20 GUS members and 25 local resource persons.

As the pivoting theme of the Action Research programme is “Learning by doing”, thus the steps were as follows:

- Gender sensitization training
- Successive Meeting with Gram Panchayat about the dates
- Collection of the primary informations about the village & peoples
- Collection of the data of the universe through PLA & PRA techniques.
- Door-to-door visit and campaign
- Motivating the ladies through Para–baithak or hamlet-meeting.
- Awareness meeting / camp
- Rally by the women of the village
- Motivating the women by Drama therapy
- Doing some sort of works which can be done without money
- Street drama by the women of the village
Prachar and flow of information through Posters, handbills, Walling, Miking etc.
Spot visit where any scheme was going on.
Observation of special days (women’s day, mother’s day etc.)
facilitation for doing small works by panchayats as per local needs, rather than
the big ones (electricity, water, roads etc.)
Finally holding Mahila Sansad followed by Gram Sansad
Collection/Identification of women requirements and incorporating those in
Annual Action plan.

Our Findings
About the respondents
Our respondents were mainly the people of Gram sansads, namely, Kusumadighi
and Ashurali Dakshinpara. Having 40.24% illiterate people, Kusumadighi owns 310
households & 58 BPL families. Though this sansad is dominated by non-bramhin upper
caste, more than one third of the population is of Schedule caste (mainly Bagdi community)
and Schedule tribe (Santals). On the other hand, Ashurali with less number of illiterate
population (28.94%) has a visible slice of Muslim population and Schedule caste
population. Side by side, this sansad is also dominated by upper-caste hindus.

For the interest of our analysis we categorized the households in four classes (Well-
off class, Middle class, Poor class and Poorest of the poor class) on the basis of asset
possession, liability, occupation and purchasing power (both protein and clothing). This
classification has been depicted in the following table.
Table-1: Categorisation of the Households of the Gram Sansads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Asset possession</th>
<th>Liability</th>
<th>Purchasing power</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>No. of Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Well-off class</td>
<td>Have more land, pond house, bank balances, TV, motor cycle, radio etc.</td>
<td>No debt, no disease</td>
<td>Daily protein intake, clothings</td>
<td>Big farmer/fixed job holder</td>
<td>101 (27.15%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>62 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Middle class</td>
<td>Have land, pond, house, means of production, may or may not have TV, motor cycle, radio etc.</td>
<td>No debt,</td>
<td>Protein intake at least twice a week, have clothings</td>
<td>Agriculturere/Petty businessman/shop keeper</td>
<td>157 (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>104 (33.54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Poor class</td>
<td>No land or little land, No means of production, No TV, radio, motor cycle</td>
<td>Having debt, Sick, aged, ill</td>
<td>Insufficient clothings, protein intake occasionally</td>
<td>Daily labour/non-farm wage labour, but no constant income</td>
<td>93 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>86 (27.74%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Poorest (BPL) class</td>
<td>No land or house, no assets</td>
<td>Sick, aged, ill, destitutes</td>
<td>Torned clothings, No food</td>
<td>Beggar, no employment/</td>
<td>21 (5.60%)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>58 (18.70%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, SIPRD, 2010

As our main concern was experiencing Mahila Sansad, we took some parameters to measure the space for Women like –

1) Education
2) participation in employment,
3) mean age at marriage,
4) sex ratio,
5) Health awareness,
6) Access to money,
7) Decision making,
8) Political Awareness and
9) Social awareness.

1) In case of level of Education, half of the women voter of Kusumadighi are illiterate (52%) and that of Ashurali are 30%.
2) As most of the women folk are from SC family and from lower income group, most of them have **participated in employment**. Most of them are engaged with agriculture and other non-farm activities like non-farm wage labour, vachati (rice making), livestock rearing, pisciculture, salpata stitching, bidi making, broom making, making bamboo craft, catching snake, petty trade, Belmala making, Selling Haria (local wine), making “Mudi” (puffed rice) and working as maid servant.

3) **Mean age at marriage** is 16 in Ashurali but that of Kushumadighi is 21

4) **Sex ratio** in Kusumadighi (1007) is greater than that in Ashurali (948).

5) In case of **health awareness**, average number of siblings in Ashurali sansad is 4, though in Muslim dominated paras it is 5. Average number of siblings in Kusumadighi is 3. Women taking minimum protein in Ashurali is 45% and that in Kusumadighi is 35%. In Ashurali 9% women do not take any protein and that of Kusumadighi is 10%. 78% women in Kusumadighi are under family planning whereas 59.6% in Ashurali are under family planning. There are few handicapped (44 in Ashurali and 20 in Kusumadighi), aged and incapable of work, elderly women in both the sansads. In most of the family, there are no such serious permanent disease except some seasonal diseases.

6) Regarding **Access to Money**, most of the women folk (89%) in Kusumadighi have their own income, but only 30% have own purchasing power and 22% have saving habit, whereas in Ashurali 65% women have their own income but only 18% have access in purchasing and 15% have saving habit.

7) Regarding women’s participation in household **decision making**, women respondents were asked about their access in the decisions taken regarding

   i) purchasing household items,
   ii) treatment of family members,
   iii) education of siblings,
   iv) marriage of their siblings,
   v) birth control,
   vi) funding responsibility etc.
It has been found that highest number of women who enjoy the decision making is in Kusumadighi (60%) along with highest funding responsibility (30%). Women’s participation in the decision making increases as their age increases.

8) **Political awareness** among the women folk has been concentrated within a word “Party”. To them, “Party” means, particular coloured flag and the meeting called by a particular political party, which must be obeyed for their own existence. Beyond this they have no idea about their rights, their choices, about Democracy, Rules, Justice, Equality or Equity. But they are aware about the “100 days’ work” (MGNREGA) not as right but as their demand. Unknowingly, they follow the rules: “Survival of the fittest”.

8) Social awareness among women folk has been found better in Kusumadighi than that in Ashurali, though the literacy level is better in Ashurali. This is due to more women participation in work-force and in self-help groups. They are more conscious about the girl-trafficking and domestic violence. Protests are done against alcoholism breaking the Bhatikhana (wineshop).

In context of these parameters we had found the women of Kusumadighi in better position though they were not so vocal and ignorant.

On the other hand, the male folk in both the sansad were in better position in context of those parameters. Literacy rate among male was 78.97% in Ashurali and that of Kusumadighi was 67.39%. Participation in employment, access to money, decision making etc were in favour of male folk in both the sansad. Political awareness in comparative sense had been found in both the sansad though it was vibrant in Kusumadighi. Social awareness of the male folk in both the sansads were predetermined by the society which was gender insensitive.
Perception of the people about Gram sansad, Gram Sabha and Gram Unnayan Samiti.

West Bengal was pioneer state to change the Political course in India on the basis of social rural leadership and was first state to allow panchayats to serve for the people against rural vested interest and there was a dependence on Panchayats.

Unlike the earlier occasions there was not much migration from the rural to urban areas which spoke of the successful performance of panchayats.

Even today Panchayat is related with a village people from his birth to death. But most of the people are unaware of the function of Gramsansad. As we have got some voices:

**Male:** I know sansad. It is a meeting, called by the member. What is my benefit spoiling the time to hear the numerical jugglery?

**Female:** If member calls us, my husband goes, I do not. Because who will cut the grass for my pets?

**Male:** If they call, we have to go. Otherwise I am not interested with Gram Sansad as I do not know what is my function with it.

**Female:** I have heard the term Gram sansad, but can’t say when it would hold? When they tell us to attend a meeting, I go with my husband. After few times, giving my thumb impression, I have to come back for my household work.

**Male:** Yes, I know the Gram Sansad. If I have time, I go there. But generally I do not speak as all have been predetermined. No way to speak out.

**Female:** Most of the time they do not call us, they call my husband. I do not know what is its function.

**Male:** Oh! yes, I know it. It is a meeting where the lists are made for tubewells, roads, sanitation and so on. But ultimately there is nothing.

**Female:** Are you telling about the meeting where pension are given or houses are given? They will not give it to me.

(Voice of the villagers of two sansads at Moynapur Gram Panchayat, Joypur PS, Bankura)
Most of the male voters (90%) in Kusumadighi and in Ashurali (75%) told that they know the Gram Sansad meeting, but what its implication is not clear to them. Very few in Kusumadighi (20%) and in Ashurali (25%) could identify the Gram Sabha. They do not have the clear picture about these grassroots level formations. No message about its implication towards increasing transparency, establishing the more democracy, and accountability and checking the corruption with the help of People’s participation was with them. To them it is only the meeting for demanding various benefits.

About Gram Unnayan Samiti, most of the people are aware though very few have the idea about its role and responsibility in true sense. To them it is a functional forum of Panchayat for implementing the schemes or it is a grassroots level forum of the party people to control the area, as reflected by the following voices:

**Male:** Yes, I know GUS where Fakir Gure, Chittaranjan, Bhakti Malik are working. They do the paper works for 100 days work (MGNREGA), pay to the people and get also “Roj” (wage).

**Female:** I have come to know from my husband that GUS controls everything in our hamlet which consists of party people.

**Male:** No, I do not know the rules and responsibilities of GUS. They monitor all the work of Panchayat and investigate everything at our para. I have heard that they have the bank account in which Panchayat gives money.

**Female:** Yes I know about GUS. Being a RP (Resource Person) of SHG members at Panchayat level, I know all the members of GUS. So far as I know, GUS has the power to monitor all the matters in a ward or sansad.

(Voice of the villagers of two sansads at Moynapur Gram Panchayat, Joypur PS, Bankura)

In most of the cases GUS is synonymous to local committee of existing political party instead of being a people’s forum.

We find that Gram Sabha meetings and Gram Unnayan Samitis (GUS), which are expected to function apolitically, have failed to fulfil their goals. People’s participation
at the *Gram Sabha* meetings is alarmingly low and their space suffers from unintended politicisation.

**Role of Gram Sansad in formulat the plan of Gram Panchayat.**

Our findings regarding the role of Gram Panchayat towards the plan preparation was based on some questions like . . . .

i) How many people attend the Gram sansad?
ii) How long the meeting continues? When it is held?
iii) What are the subjects discussed?
iv) Whether there are interactions at Gram sansad or not? Does Gram Panchayat listen to all? Can the people speak freely?
v) Whether GUS collects data and information or not interacting with the people?
vi) Does GUS prepare plan or verify it Gram Sansad?
vii) Whether GUS members get training for plan preparation or not?
viii) Does GUS has the link with the concerned Upasamiti?

It was found that Moynapur Gram Panchayat was very sincere about routine wise meeting of Gram Sansad in the month of May and November. In both the sansads, people come but not more than 10-15%. It was found that in both the sansads, women participation is negligible. Though the duty of GUS is to gather all the people at Gram sansad from all sectors irrespective of all the parties. But they do not perform their duty properly.

In so far as the time concern, most of the sansad sits from 2.30 pm or 4 pm for the interest of staffs of the Gram Panchayat. But at this time, most of the labour folk are engaged in work or tired with the work. It was found in these sansads, this is the time for most of the people to collect grass for the cattle and bringing them back from the grazing field. Thus participation is less due to odd time.

It was also found that the duration of the sansad meeting is very short. It was about one and half hour or two hours, out of which most of the time is spent for fulfilling
the quorum and after that Gram Panchayat representatives and secretary observe the meeting very casually, just giving speech on success of Panchayat and then reading out the budget statement or reading out some name of the beneficiaries. But Gram Sansad needs time if Gram Panchayat wants to formulate the plan effectively. It needs time for verifying the problem identified by GUS, for discussing the solution part and its approval, for review of budget statements, for social audit etc.

All the discussions at Gram Sansad are GO centric. According to our field experience at many sansads, discussions were held mostly on various schemes, like IAY (Indira Awas Yojana), MGNREGA, IGNOAPS, Total Sanitation Programme etc. In this context obviously BPL debate occupies the next bigger slice of the total time. Water, Roads, Culvert, Irrigation, School building, Health infrastructure etc are also the issues. But no social issues like, dowry, population control, early marriage, alcoholism, energizing the youths, gender discrimination etc are not at all discussed. A constant tussle goes on between the Panchayat (fulfilling their target as governmental scheme implementing agents) and the people (putting always individual demand rather than that of a community). Outcome of this bargaining is no plan formulation.

Figure: Frequency of issues discussed in Gram Sabha
From our field survey, it has been found that there is no true interaction at Gram sansad rather than one way transmission of few information and chaos. Average picture of segregation of the total duration of the Gram Sabha can be represented by the following chart.

**Figure: True Picture of interaction in Gram Sansad**

Most of the time Gram sansad starts with long political speech about the success story of Panchayat and blaming the opposition, followed by a monologue by the Staffs of Panchayats regarding the budget statement, Revenue-Expenditure etc. creating no respond among the people. If the Gram sansad stays for more time, people try to place their wish-list without caring the limitation of the Panchayat. On the other hand Panchayat also tries to ignore the voices unheard. If there is some interaction, that is suppressed by debate and chaos. Though the Gram Sansad, according to the rule is entitled to suggest Gram Panchayat for planning, but peoples can not speak either due to lack of time, or as their voices are suppressed.

Regarding **data collection or identification of problems and plan formulation** for the local area, the scenario is not so ardent. Most of the members of GUSs are inactive and less interested about formal data collection. They have some informal
information as neighbor but no formal databank which is inevitable for planning. It is done by the staff of the panchayats. All of the members are heavily occupied with implementing MGNREGA. In our universe (See the table-2) among GUS members only 15% in Kusumadighi and 14% in Ashurali know the rules and responsibilities of GUS. None of them got the training about how to plan. Some members act as informer to Gram Panchayat but none disseminates the information suomoto to the people. None has any role in budget formulation but very few participate in planning for sansad.

Table–2: Profile of the members of GUS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Gram Sansads</th>
<th>No. of members</th>
<th>Occupational composition of GUS</th>
<th>Averag age group</th>
<th>Whether giving information yes no</th>
<th>Whether know the GUS rules yes no</th>
<th>Whether received training about planning yes no</th>
<th>Whether helps in planning &amp; budget yes no</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kusumadighi</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4 farmers, 4 agr. labor, 1 pr. school teacher, 1 ICDS worker, 3 SHG members</td>
<td>35 - 50</td>
<td>3 (23%) 10 (76.92%) 2 (15.3 8%) 11 (84.6 1%)</td>
<td>0 0 (B) 13 (100 %) 0 (B)</td>
<td>3 (Pl) 10 (Pl)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashurali Dakshinpara</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2 petty business man. 6 agr. labor, 1 retd. service man. 1 health worker. 2SHG member 2 housewives</td>
<td>40-60</td>
<td>5 (35.71 %) 9 (64.28 %) 2 (14.2 8%) 12 (85.7 1%)</td>
<td>0 0 (B) 14 (100 %) 0 (B)</td>
<td>2 (Pl) 14.28% 12 (Pl) 85.7 1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, Action Research on Mahila Sansad, SIPRD, 2010

In this context it can be concluded that GUS can not perform its role as stated in the Rule. Being a representative committee of the Gram Sansad, it should have close relation with every single person of the sansad and should assure the people’s involvement in bottom-up approach of planning. Instead of that they have been closely linked with the Panchayat and seperated from the mass. Thus they are also habituated to prepare the
plan by increasing 10% of the previous plan estimate. According to our study, the role of Gram sansad in plan preparation is fuzzy.

**Constraints before the Women-folk for attending the Gram sansad**

Why women participation is alarmingly low —— to get the answer we put some questions before our women folk.

**Table -3: Constraints before the women participation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the sansads</th>
<th>Whether time is odd</th>
<th>Whether announcem ent is there</th>
<th>Whether they are informed personally</th>
<th>Whether they know the importance</th>
<th>Whether they are allowed to go by the family</th>
<th>Whether they are allowed to speak or not</th>
<th>Whether their voices unheard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kusumadighi</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashurali- Dakshinpara</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, Action Research on Mahila Sansad, SIPRD, 2010

It has been found that the Gender discrimination is the main cause behind the low participation of women folk. No member in the family or in sansad or in village thinks that it needs women to speak or opine. It is a running notion that women should not say anything publicly as “Meyemanush kam bojhe” (ladies understand less). This is caught in some voices:

**Male:** No, no, they are more comfortable in the house. They need not go to the public place. They have no experience about outer world.

**Female:** I won’t allow my daughter-in-law to sit at sansad. What she knows?

**Male:** Women can not understand the politics. So what is the need of their gathering?
Female: My husband takes all the decision. I have no knowledge. So I need not go to sansad. What he thinks, that is also my opinion.

Male: Listen, we command our home. Ladies are dependant on us. They can not give any opinion who themselves are cripple.

Female: We are humble women. We do not know panchayat, do not know politics, do not know anything. How can we talk in front of male?

Panchayat Worker : They are always under the veil. They can not speak with us lifting their face. So what is the necessity to disturb them?

According to women folk the constraints before them for attending the sansad are as follows:

1. No propriety of conduct for the women folk from Panchayat — not invited separately,
2. No idea percolated by Panchayat or GUS about the importance of their presence at sansad.
3. Domination of local male folk.
4. Apathetic Panchayats
5. No permission from the familial end
6. Societal clog of no importance and no space for them
7. Uneasy environment
8. Lack of ignorance
9. Lack of courage
10. Suppression of opinion
11. Unheard or unaddressed opinions
12. Politicisation of the meeting

Thus it has been found that the passiveness and reluctance of Panchayat towards the women participation in Gram Sansad as well as Plan formulation is one of the reason behind the low participation of women. It is the duty of GUS as well as Panchayat to provide minimum space for women to raise their voices and to incorporate their choices.
in the Plan. At the same time due to Gender box existing in the society women can not overcome the cross-bolt.

…. But to draw the women on to the public sphere the men have to be supportive and willing to make adjustments to accommodate the women to go out and participate.

Awareness of Women voters regarding schemes and the role and responsibility of GUS and Gram sansad

In the Sixth five year plan, one new chapter was added regarding “multi-disciplinary approach of development for women” with thrust on health, education, and employment”. In Ninth plan (1997-2002) concepts of WID (women in development) and GAD (gender and development) were inserted. In Tenth plan (2002-07) thrust was on Women Component Plan (WCP). In Eleventh plan (2007-12) two concepts have been inserted, Women Component Plan and Gender Budgeting. Since these thirty years, so many attempts had been taken by the government and so many schemes had been implemented towards the development of women folk. But the target group is still in the dark which has come out from our study.

They have no idea about the schemes in detail. They have come to know the schemes in very narrow form from the neighbor-network or according to their perception. For example, ICDS stands for “Khichudi (chow-chow) school” as it supplements the nutrition for 0-6 children and the pregnant or conceiving mother. But they do not know what is its objective or who is the implementer. To them Total sanitation programme means “Latrine of Rs. 400/-”. They have no information like, what is the yield of benefit, who would be the beneficiary, how to get, where to contact etc. They are very much aware only with MGNREGA and ICDS programme as these two schemes are directly matching with their interests.

Regarding the role and responsibility of GUS and Gram Sansad, none of the women in those two sansads had the information. They could not identify GUS as separated
from local party politics. According to them it is a platform not for the people but for the selected people to exercise the power.

**Process of effective participation of the women voters in Gram Sansad**

After getting the whole picture of Gram Sansad and Gram Sabha our concerted effort was on the Motivation part so that the people, especially women can truly participate in Gram Sansad in order to visualize their voice and choice through Planning. With this aim, we targeted only two sansads of Moynapur Gram Panchayat and started with a time calendar:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Jun 09</th>
<th>Jul 09</th>
<th>Aug 09</th>
<th>Sep 09</th>
<th>Oct 09</th>
<th>Nov 09</th>
<th>Dec 09</th>
<th>Jan 10</th>
<th>Feb 10</th>
<th>Mar 10</th>
<th>Apr 10</th>
<th>May 10</th>
<th>June 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Data Collection through PLA &amp; PRA</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<td>2. Rapport building and Environment Creation</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Training of PRI members</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Campaign for GS and MS</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Awareness Camp &amp; Para Meeting</td>
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<td>6. Spot visit for monitoring the scheme</td>
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<td>7. Small works done</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Holding Mahila Sansad &amp; Gram Sansad</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Incorporation of wish list in Plan and Documentation</td>
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In all these steps, **Gram Panchayat was always at fore-front.** Sometimes representatives from upper tiers also joined in this venture. In the time of rapport building, campaign and awareness camp we had experienced the **enthusiasm** among the general people and the panchayat people. All of them respond positively. But at the same time there were **questions about our identity and about the political leaning of the programme.** As Gram Panchayat members and GUS members were with us, people had the questions, whether this programme was implanted by a particular political party or not. This experience revealed to us that rural people of Bengal have been suffering from a discomfort and lisping of fear emerged from the nature of village factional politics and polarization. But our apolitical and indifferent discussions made them relieved and confident.

Before the campaign for attending Mahila Sabha, women were found not interested about the Gram Panchayat, about their sansad or GUS. But when they came to know that this is the platform to open their mind about their grievances and deception, to share their sorrows and grieves, to express their needs and dream, to protest against injustice, then they had **got the reliance** on our word.

After having the trust, process started to make the women **vocal and self-confident.** The propriety of conduct given to them by the panchayat members and the study team and listening to them with patience at hamlet meeting or door-to-door visit made them confident. Street drama, Rally, Mother’s meeting etc. removed their shyness and added courage and energy. To our surprise, women participation reached its maximum, ranging from 18 years to 85 years. Little kids also came to help their illiterate mothers, writing down their dialogues in the play or songs.

Through implementing some sort of works (Medical camp for cattle, Accelerating the Health services, Mobile Information Desk etc.) Gram Panchayat came nearer to the people. Gram Panchayat also found their **weaknesses** (no contact with the people, no monitoring, excluding the people especially the women from the democratic process, too dependence on the GUS members, too much political interventions in decision making.
etc.). They realized that they were not performing the role as a member of Local self Government for the welfare of the people. Rather they are exercising the political power, acting as governmental scheme implementing agent.

**Pradhan (Head of the Gram Panchayat):**

Generally, I do not visit all the wards, as I am overburdened. Thus I have to depend on the Panchayat members and the members of the Gram Unnayan Samiti and some other informers. Besides this, everyday so many people come to the office. Thus I was unconcerned about the people’s reliance. But now I have realized the reality.

**Sanchalaks (Chair person of Sub-committees of Gram panchayat):**

This field visit is an eye-opener. I never came to other wards except my ward. But as a Sanchalak I have the responsibility of all the wards. Today I realized that where is the gap.

**Panchayat Member:**

I am an agricultural labor. Where is my time? If I have to visit door to door of my ward, I shall loose one man days. How can I maintain my family?

**Another Member:**

Everyday evening, I sit at a tea-stall in the market area. There I meet so many people. No, women do not come there. But if there is any need, their husbands come. But today I realized that I should go to them either at work-sight or to the houses for taking their views.

In the course of our study, we found the **collective mobilization** among the women. They collectively protested against the system of measurement of work done under MGNREGA, payment of average man days of Rs.100/-, payment without signature etc. Support from the Gram Panchayat made them vocal and this was the beginning of People’s participation towards Social Audit.
Finally, when Mahila Sansad followed by Special Gram Sansad took place in the month of May, 2010 on and from 10-13, to our surprise, participation reached the maximum in both the sansad. Not only the women but also the men participated very actively. As stated in the Rule, representatives (both administrative and elected) from all the tiers and whole team of the Gram Panchayat were present there. All members of the study team, director and officials of SIPRD and the Honorable MIC attended the meeting as observers. The whole process was left with the Gram Panchayat. No intervention by the study team was there. All the meetings were presided over by the Pradhan as they were special Gram Sansads.

In Ashurali Dakshinpara Gram Sansad 270 (54.98%) women were present out of 491 and 282 (69.62%) women attended Mahila Sansad in Kusumadighi out of 405. In both the sansads, women were very much vocal and confident. At the same time the lady Pradhan was also very upright and full of confidence to face all the questions and very sensitive and calm to hear all the voices. Women discussed sector wise (Education, Health, Livelihoods, Infrastructure and Social Security) all the problems and scopes, as they think. All their proposals were written in the resolution and read out and signed. Next day all proposals were ratified in the Gram Sansad. It was found that a huge and better informed active participation of the people also affected the efficacy of the Gram Panchayat.

**Identifying the constraints in the process of mobilizing People’s Participation**

In the course of our study we faced some constraints like,

- **Male chauvinism**: Most of the male members disliked the attempts. The male folk opined that this attempt will indulge the women towards liberty. They will be obviously beyond control. It has been reflected in following voices:

  **Male**: *Why are you spoiling your time to gather all the ladie? Thrashing paddy can not be done by the goats.*
Male: You have come here only for few days. After that? None will care for them. Why are you disturbing their stability?

Male: Shyness is the ornaments of Women. Their place is within the family under her husband, not in a public place. They need not talk where their husband, father-in-law, brother-in-law and so many male kith and kins are there.

- **Distrust and Whispering Campaign:** People was in doubt about the identity of the study team. Thus many time we were unattended or refused to talk. Several times the team faced the fake rumor. In order to check the women folk, some people advised the women not to disclose anything as the team has come from the outside and they may harm for the family or may create any political chaos. In another hamlet women were told not to go to the meeting because this team was a big racket of girl-trafficking.

- **Passiveness:** It was also found that some people are very passive with the system. One part of the population believed that PRI system is not a democratic system, rather political space to exercise the power, both economic and political.

Male: Can you stop all these “Dadagiri”(dominance)? Have any idea about the nepotism of Panchayats?

Male: No need to go to Sansad Sabha. Because none has the curtsey to hear from us. It is pre-conceived that we have to go there to hear their lecture.

Female: Who cares us? I have been telling them for last three years for correction of age of my old mother in the voter list. But they don’t bother.

- **Discontent of local Party:** As the indifferent and apolitical discussions were going on and accordingly various attempts were initiated, the local party expressed some uneasiness and irritation.

Person A: You have come from outside and do not know the local equation. We
have to please all the people. If you tell them the exact wage rate, then all people will not get the equal justice. Stronger will get more and weaker will suffer. We have no way!

Person B: Who will care all these botherations as you told publicly the procedures of correction of ages in voter cards? It is easy to lecture rather than action.

- **Polarisation:** The political situation in rural Bengal is becoming grave and unstable —— we had this experience when our intention were politically questioned. Always we were asked about our political leaning. Somewhere the team was also attacked and harassed in context of political division.

**Comparison between the wish-list of male and female and its impact on planning**

It has been found comparing the wish-list of male and female that two lists are complementary to each other. For example,

- To combat the crisis of drinking water in the summer season of Bankura (drought-prone district), when male folk were suggesting about the installation of sub-marshaled pump, then women were suggesting not only pump, but also one water-tank with taps so that the wastage of ground water could be captured.
- Regarding identification of schemes under MGNREGA, when male voters were telling about the digging ponds, women were adding with it the construction of bathing wharf with a concealment for privacy of women.
- When male folk were suggesting the public places for installing the tube wells, then women told about places keeping out from other’s view, so that women can have also bathing there. It was their right choice as the women have to work mostly with water.

It has been found in the wish-list that somewhere ladies were wiser and justified rather than the male folk. For example,

- Their proposal for giving bleaching in order to clean the pond water and also in the kutcha drains to remove the flies and mosquitoes reflects their concern towards
the society.

- Their proposal for carrying some necessary medicines with Self Help Groups or ASHA for emergency at night proves their prudence.
- Their proposal for breaking the “Bhatikhana” (wine shop) in order to lower the domestic violence and health hazards establishes their sensitivity and consciousness.

It was very interesting that most of the demand placed by the women were not simply told, but also justified and sometimes showed the examples. Not only they placed their requirements, but also gave new ideas, e.g

- to solve the problem of transport for the school going children introducing **Auto service** by cluster of SHGs.
- introducing “Community latrine” to solve the problem of inhabitants of one hamlet due to lack of land for construction of latrine. SHG also may earn money by taking charges from user for maintenance of this latrine.
- to help the poor family (not under the BPL list) for the treatment of adolescent girls or old people for the infectious disease (which are mostly kept secret) out of the Health funding (CHCMI) for each sansad.

Analyzing the wish list of male and female, it is found that suggestions or plan proposals of the male folk mostly centered around the construction and occupations which is segregated and in refuted form. But that of women is in holistic manner and not segregated. Male members could perceive at gross level. But women’s tendency was on the nitty-gritty of any work. Thus in plan formulation if both the voices come, it would be a complementary, complete and participatory plan.

Conclusions

This study is actually the witness of the first Pilot Mahila Sansad as well as community mobilization. It has documented the whole process of encouragement of participation of a large size of population, both men and women towards the plan formulation at sansad level. This study also dealt with some problems like, deep-rooted factional village
politics, gender imbalances, lack of communication, lack of co-ordination, lack of political will, etc. But at the same time this attempts was supported by the higher tier and middle tier of the elected body of PRIs. It was successful for the strong team work of the Gram Panchayat members and also due to the non-interference of the local party politics.

This action research has snapped various local issues. But overall findings revealed three things:

- There has been a big gap or lack of communication between the people and the representatives of local self government.
- Democratic space has been hijacked by the party politics and
- Women’s Choices and Voices are ignored though these are the vital points for an overall Plan formulation.

Regarding first issue, our study reflected that there was no effective and active people’s participation in Gram Sansad or in Gram Sabha as from the Gram Panchayat’s end there was no craze towards the people’s participation. To them Gram Sansad or Gram Sabha is nothing but the routine meeting. Ultimate plan would be done by the Gram Panchayt. Peoples are also detached from the PRIs as because their voices are ignored or suppressed.

The second connotation we got as we saw the GUS members have no link with the people, no flow of information towards the people and prioritization has been done according to the wish of controlling authority.

Since last three five year plans the Planning Commission of India had stressed on the major commitment towards “empowering women as the agent of the socio-economic change and development”. In PRI structure, Gram sansad is such a platform to catch and incorporating the voice of not only the men but also of the women in the Annual Action Plan. But this aim was not properly disseminated to the people and not properly used. But our study reflected that the opinion of Women (if they are better informed) are very vital and fruitful for Plan formulation.
To overcome these issues following policy implications are suggested

- Efforts in large scale should be given from the PRI end to communicate the people to bridge the gap incurred since last few years. Otherwise the local self-government would be meaningless.
- Awareness should be built up regarding Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad among the people.
- If people are honoured and heard, participation would be encouraged.
- More people with leadership quality should be involved at the sansad level work.
- Women should be involved more in implementation of different development programmes.
- Separate sansad for women should be introduced so that the male dominance could be avoided and proper gender balance could be reflected in the Plan. At the same time views points of both the sexes could be blended together towards the completeness of Planning.
- Mahila Sansad should be mandatory before each Gram Sansad because it would steer up the process of active participation.

References


Grama Sabha experience in four districts of Karnataka state

Sundar Naik K.*

As per the provisions of the 73rd constitutional amendment all states have made provisions in their respective panchayath Raj Acts for the constitution of Grama sabha. Grama Sabha has been generally conceived as the primary body intended to facilitate direct participation of local people in various activities which are concerned with the planning and development of its area. Grama sabha has been considered as an integral part of Panchayath Raj system which is assigned with various functions. It facilitates for participatory process for the planning and development of the Grama Panchayath.

The concept of Grama sabha was in vogue in Karnataka even before the introduction of 73rd amendment. The then Mandal Panchayath had used to conduct Grama sabhas at local levels basically to ensure elements of transparency, accountability and social control over the panchayaths.

Grama sabha is a grassroots level organisation consisting of people rather than representatives of people.

Under Mandal Panchayath system the grama sabhas have conducted their deliberations very effectively in some districts. People were more vocal in some parts. In Mysore district under Mandal panchayath system, Pradhan being the Head used to preside over the Grama sabha. At one place in H.D.Kote taluk a complaint was received from the police station stating that the Grama sabha meeting is held up due to differences between two groups of people. I went there to sort out the problems. Two groups of people were found assembled separately with about 100-150 people in each group near the mandal Panchayath Office. A Police van with more than 15 police personnel were standing there. They were called to sit separately in front of the Panchayath Office.

*Chief Executive Officer, Zilla Panchayath, Chamarajanagar District, Karnataka
For almost one hour a brief introduction and significance of Grama Sabha was explained to them. Afterwards they were allowed to express their problems. One group was accusing the other group for selecting the wrong beneficiaries under housing scheme. Both the groups were explained about the selection process. Later Mandal Panchayath secretary was asked to read out the names of the beneficiaries and both the groups were asked to point out the mistakes committed in each case. About 10-15 members in the selected list were having lands measuring 5-15 acres each. About 5-6 beneficiaries were covering their face with towels just to hide from the humiliation caused in the Grama Sabha. During the enquiry it was found that they owned 5-15 acres of land. The entire list was modified by selecting the eligible beneficiaries. From this one can make out that Grama sabha under Mandal Panchayath were not free from erroneous acts. But such faults were noticed and people were quick enough to bring it to the notice of the authorities concerned to set it right.

The literacy level of the taluk was lowest in the district. In spite of that people were conscious about grama sabha concept and they knew how to set right the mistakes at Grama sabha only.

Udupi District

Udupi District is carved out of erstwhile Dakshina Kannada District having three taluks. The literacy level is more than 73%.

Grama Sabhas used to take place on scheduled dates. Most of the guidelines of Grama Sabha were followed religiously in this district. The Grama Panchayath used to finalize the agenda of Grama Sabha at least 7-10 days in advance. Print media and All India Radio were used very effectively to give wide publicity. Communication facilities like Road Transportation, Telephone etc., were used very effectively as they were the lifeline of the district. A good number of local NGOs are involved in strengthening the awareness level of the people about the Grama Sabha and local planning process. The involvement of people was effective due to the presence of Self Help Groups and Stree Shakti Sanghas. Apart from this the presence of Rotary and Lions Clubs in such forums
made the functioning of the Grama Sabha very effective. Another notable feature is time consciousness of the people who used to attend Grama Sabhas or Jamabandhi meetings on scheduled time and place. Any delay caused by officials in attending the meeting was taken seriously. There were instances where officials were made to apologise for having come late for the Grama Sabha. Therefore officials were also more attentive in attending such meetings to avoid humiliation. In fact in one such meeting I myself attended the gramha with prior intimation but due to unavoidable circumstances I was late by half an hour. Even that made me to apologise in the Grama Sabha.

The guidelines indicate that the following officials shall attend the Grama Sabha:

1. Head Master of schools and SDM Chairperson.
2. Medical Officer of local Public Health Centre.
3. Doctor of local Veterinary Hospital.
4. Branch Manager of Local Bank.
5. Agricultural Assistant.
6. Village Accountant.
7. Chairperson Water and Sanitation Committee.
8. Anganwadi worker.
9. Junior/Assistant Engineer of PRED.
10. One Officer nominated by the Executive officer of Taluk Panchayath.

Generally in every Grama Sabha the officials used to present without fail.

A Large number of people used to attend the Grama Sabha; generally it was found that at least one or two persons used to be present from each family. The general feature of this district is that the villages are scattered. Due to the increased awareness level the participation used to be good.

Generally discussions used to take place as per agenda items. Usually lengthy discussions never used to take place except in matters of serious concern like irregularities, and delays, if any caused in the implementation of the development works or matters which required attention of larger sections of the society.
Another notable feature was regarding the preparation of perspective plan by the Grama Panchayath. In Kundapur taluk with active involvement of one NGO (by name Namma Bhoomi) the plans were prepared in the entire taluk having 56 grama panchayaths. A thread bare discussion took place in the camp where all chairpersons of the Grama Panchayaths attended, who in turn took up the task of preparation of perspective plan at Grama Panchayath level. The school children were also involved in the collection of data for preparation of resource inventory. The entire process was done through grama sabha. The NGOs prepared the plan with good documentation. Subsequently it was replicated in Udupi and Karkala Taluks.

After the finalisation of perspective plans it was discussed at Block level in the presence of grama panchayath Chairpersons, Taluk Panchayath Members and Taluk Level line departmental Officers. There was an association of Grama Panchayath Chairpersons at Taluk level which used to follow up these issues at different levels: At one point of time under SGRY scheme development of minor irrigation tanks were planned by sharing Zilla Panchayath, Taluk Panchayath and Grama Panchayath funds. But later due to some reluctance at Zilla and Taluk Panchayaths level the implementation did not continue. Even the works being implemented by Zilla and Taluk level were certified by the Grama Panchayaths before final payment. Though it worked well initially later onwards. The Zilla Panchayath discontinued this system.

**Kodagu District (Coorg)**

The district is located in western ghat region and partly stretching towards plain area with three taluks. The awareness level and literacy is also quite high in this district.

Due to the geographical conditions like hills and valleys and a large area under coffee plantation and forests, the problems are quite different compared to other districts. Generally drinking water, street lights, narrow roads where encroachment is common etc were major issues in the district which used to be the main agenda for discussions in the Grama sabha.
Grama sabha used to take place on the scheduled date and time. Comparatively the gathering was not much but the participation used to be meaningful. One notable point observed in the Grama sabha is updation of Grama Panchayath records. Previously the records were not up-to-date; especially the registers like immovable assets, assessment register etc which were not documented systematically. There were no records to show that Grama panchayath buildings and sites were listed in the assets register as a result of which the ownership had often lead to disputes. In another taluk people raised a serious objection about letting out of shopping rooms by the Grama Panchayath without following procedures and due to its faulty decision there was huge revenue loss to the Grama panchayath. The tenants went on appeal against the order of GP to the High Court. High court asked the Grama Panchayath to substantiate the procedure followed by them in leasing out the shops. On verification of the records it was found out that the Panchayath had not framed necessary bye laws to this effect. Ultimately Grama Panchayath prepared its bye laws and only afterwards system was streamlined.

In another taluk a grama Panchayath finalised the action plan to prepare project report under Suvarna Grama scheme. Before implementation of the project the local legislator got those villages changed at Government level. After hearing this, the entire Grama Panchayath opposed it and succeeded in retaining the funds in the same Panchayath. Even members mobilized the support of local people to stop such interference.

**Chickmagalur District**

In Chickmagalur district there are 8 taluks of which Tarikere, Kadur and part of Chickmagalur are in plain area whereas Mudigere, Sringeri, Koppa and NR Pura are in Malnad region. Culturally there is lot of difference between these two regions. It is seen that even the Grama Panchayat secretaries working in Malnad region are reluctant to work in plain areas as the work culture differs. In Malnad region the literacy level is higher than the maidan area and villages are scattered, unlike in maidan area where the habitations are compact.
In the grama sabhas of Malnad region though the gathering is not as big as compared to the maidan region the discussion used to take place generally as per agenda. People used to follow it up in the next grama sabha more methodically. People were quite conversant about the problems and their approach to take decision in Grama sabha was noteworthy.

In maidan region though the grama sabha used to meet at regular intervals attendance used to be satisfactory. It was even observed that the meetings are taking place in the Panchayath hall, where the attendance was very thin. Lack of proper propaganda and publicity were responsible for poor attendance. Frequent intervention and follow up action was needed in this region as most of the complaints related to Grama sabha decisions and meetings where timely meeting did not take place and even if they were held the important matters were never being discussed. Grama sabha proceedings were drawn with lot of mistakes like decision were not recorded properly and more over the agenda was not prepared in advance. As a result discussion used to take place on petty issues. Now due to the intervention of self help groups and SKDRDP, people are more vocal and their participation is increasing in gram sabhas.

Chamarajanagar district

This is located in the southern most part of the Karnataka. 50% of the district is covered by forest and the remaining part is agricultural land. Less than 30% of the agricultural area is covered with irrigation facility. Rest of the area is dry due to scanty rain fall. Literacy level is less than 57%.

The publicity media like news paper and AIR is not wide spread in the district. Publicity is made by beating of drums in the village one day in advance of Grama sabha. Though a grama Panchayath consists of 5-10 habitations all the habitations do not receive wide publicity in advance. Pamphlets are being distributed 3-4 days in advance. The General complaint of the people is that they do not get prior intimation or advance publicity about Grama sabha meeting. The powerful members are dominating in the grama sabha and proceedings are drawn accordingly. In one of the Grama sabhas,
under Ashraya Scheme beneficiaries were selected in the meeting where local legislator presided over the grama sabha. Another group of people objected to this and due to this the beneficiaries’ list was rejected. As a result the Grama Panchayath lost the target for that year. The officials who conducted the enquiry in this regard did not have any idea about the procedures to be followed in the Grama sabha.

There is lack of basic information like assessment register, licensing procedure, cash book maintenance and knowledge about the preparation of the budget which is causing unwarranted discussion in the grama sabha.

Most of the Adyakshas are not able to conduct the grama sabha as per the procedure as officials attending Grama sabha are also lacking required knowledge to be followed in the Grama sabha meetings. By and large Grama sabhas are viewed as forums to blame against each other. Proceedings are not properly drafted. Wherever the woman chairpersons are there, their husbands dominate the show and this is the important reason that causes commotion in the community. 90% of the grievances received at the district level are related to Grama Sabha and Grama Panchayaths meetings and other civic amenities like improper maintenance of water supply schemes etc. For one such meeting where I attended Stree Shakti members were informed in advance through CDPO to attend the meeting. In that meeting the participation was more fruitful and their involvement in questioning the capacity of Grama panchayath members even caused humiliation to many members.

Based on this experience the following inferences could be drawn:
1. In Udupi, Coorg and part of Chickmagalur the literacy and awareness levels are very high.
2. In Udupi district a number of private educational Institutions and Christian missionaries have created self help concept and people centred approach.
3. A large number of Rotary clubs and Lions clubs (> 50) and SKDRD projects which are doing public service in the field of health, economic and other social development activities have created a good work culture.
4. A good communication facility like roads with public transport, telephone, electronic media and AIR has developed a good network of community participation (Udupi, Coorg and Chickmagalur).

5. Cultural activity, Temple tourism etc is creating a harmonious relationship among the people.

**Recommendations**

1. Grama sabha is an entry point where all aspirations, demands of community get concretised. Hence there is a need for strengthening Grama Sabha with more autonomy i.e., the demand/aspirations of people listed out on priority should be considered at Taluk Panchayath and Zilla Panchayath level. Since they are the felt needs of people and only those listed demands should be included while preparing the annual action plan, unlike in the present situation where the needs keep on changing at each tier of Panchayath raj.

2. The DPC should be empowered to scrutinize the plans prepared by the ZP, TP & GP only to ensure that the demands listed by grama sabha are reflected in the Action plan.

3. The time place and period of Grama Sabha meetings are to be scheduled to suit the requirement of local people to ensure maximum participation.

4. Involvement of Sree shakti/SHG women members should be made compulsory to have more meaningful participation.

5. It should be made mandatory for the officials to attend the Grama Sabhas and they should be free from departmental work load during this time since they have to be hold on campaign mode.

6. It should be made mandatory to the local TP/ZP/GP members to attend the Grama sabha of their respective jurisdiction and this should be counter checked at the time of finalisation of annual action plans, so as to ensure that the works proposed by Grama Sabha are included in the plan.

7. The decision of Gram Sabha should not be subject to review or reconsideration by GP/TP/ZP. If there is any review it should take place only in Grama sabha.
8. The Social audit of different Government departmental works of GP/TP/ZP should be carried out by the gram sabha and all three tiers of Panchayath Raj should be made accountable to this extent.

9. Grama Sabha should have their say so far as the issue of licenses to granite quarry, sand mining etc and other industrial units while issuing licenses.

10. The School children/Students may be involved in Grama Sabha where they will use such forums to express their unbiased opinion and aspirations.
ಮೇಲತ್ತು ಜೀವಿಕೆಯ ರೇಟ್ಟಿ ಸಂಘಟನೆ

ನಾಗಾರ್ಜನ್ ವಿಜಯ್


1992ರಲ್ಲಿ, ಸಂಘಟನೆಯು 73 ರ ಹೆಸರು 74ರೆ ವರ್ಷದ ಸಂಘಟನೆಯು ತಮ್ಮ ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಸಾಮರ್ಥ್ಯದ ಮೇಲೆ ರೇಟ್ಟಿಯಿಗೆ ಪ್ರಾರಂಭಿಸಲಾಯಿತು.
ಷರವಾಡದ ಮೂಲಕ ಬುಂಬಳು ಅವರು ರತ್ನಾಂಶ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆಯ ಸಿದ್ಧಾಂತಗಳು ನೋಡಿದಂತಹ ಇಂದಾಗಿತ್ತು ಮಹಾಪ್ರಭು ಪ್ರಬಂಧನೆ ತೊಡ್ಡೆಗೊಂಡಿದ್ದವು. ಇನ್ನೊಂದಿಗೆ ಅಸಾಧ್ಯತೆಯ ಮೂಲಕ ಅನೇಕ ರೇಳೆಗಳನ್ನು ಸಹಾಯ ಮಾಡುತ್ತಿದ್ದ ಸಿದ್ಧಾಂತಗಳೆಂದು ಬಳಸಿದರು. ಇದರಲ್ಲಿ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಸ್ವತಂತ್ರತೆಯ ಸಿದ್ಧಾಂತಗಳು ನೋಡಿದಂತಹ ರತ್ನಾಂಶದ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆಯ ಸಿದ್ಧಾಂತಗಳು. 10 ರೇಳೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯ ಮಾಡಿ ಸ್ವತಂತ್ರತೆಯ ಸಿದ್ಧಾಂತಗಳು ನೋಡಿದಂತಹ ರತ್ನಾಂಶದ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆಯ ಸಿದ್ಧಾಂತಗಳು. 2002ರಲ್ಲಿ ರತ್ನಾಂಶದ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆಯ ಸಿದ್ಧಾಂತಗಳು ನೋಡಿದಂತಹ ರತ್ನಾಂಶದ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆಯ ಸಿದ್ಧಾಂತಗಳು. 10 ರೇಳೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯ ಮಾಡಿ ಸ್ವತಂತ್ರತೆಯ ಸಿದ್ಧಾಂತಗಳು ನೋಡಿದಂತಹ ರತ್ನಾಂಶದ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆಯ ಸಿದ್ಧಾಂತಗಳು. 10 ರೇಳೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯ ಮಾಡಿ ಸ್ವತಂತ್ರತೆಯ ಸಿದ್ಧಾಂತಗಳು ನೋಡಿದಂತಹ ರತ್ನಾಂಶದ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆಯ ಸಿದ್ಧಾಂತಗಳು. 10 ರೇಳೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯ ಮಾಡಿ ಸ್ವತಂತ್ರತೆಯ ಸಿದ್ಧಾಂತಗಳು ನೋಡಿದಂತಹ ರತ್ನಾಂಶದ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆಯ ಸಿದ್ಧಾಂತಗಳು.
ಸೂರಹದ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ, ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಯ ಸ್ಥಳದ ಸ್ವತ್ತಿಗಳು ಅನುಭವವನ್ನು ಮತ್ತು ಸುಭದ್ರತೆಯನ್ನು ಬಹುದಾತ್ಮಕವಾಗಿಸಲಾಯಿತು. ಸೂರಹದ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ, ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಯ ಸ್ಥಳದ ಸ್ವತ್ತಿಗಳು ಅನುಭವವನ್ನು ಮತ್ತು ಸುಭದ್ರತೆಯನ್ನು ಬಹುದಾತ್ಮಕವಾಗಿಸಲಾಯಿತು. ಸೂರಹದ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ, ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಯ ಸ್ಥಳದ ಸ್ವತ್ತಿಗಳು ಅನುಭವವನ್ನು ಮತ್ತು ಸುಭದ್ರತೆಯನ್ನು ಬಹುದಾತ್ಮಕವಾಗಿಸಲಾಯಿತು. ಸೂರಹದ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ, ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಯ ಸ್ಥಳದ ಸ್ವತ್ತಿಗಳು ಅನುಭವವನ್ನು ಮತ್ತು ಸುಭದ್ರತೆಯನ್ನು ಬಹುದಾತ್ಮಕವಾಗಿಸಲಾಯಿತು. ಸೂರಹದ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ, ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಯ ಸ್ಥಳದ ಸ್ವತ್ತಿಗಳು ಅನುಭವವನ್ನು ಮತ್ತು ಸುಭದ್ರತೆಯನ್ನು ಬಹುದಾತ್ಮಕವಾಗಿಸಲಾಯಿತು. ಸೂರಹದ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ, ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಯ ಸ್ಥಳದ ಸ್ವತ್ತಿಗಳು ಅನುಭವವನ್ನು ಮತ್ತು ಸುಭದ್ರತೆಯನ್ನು ಬಹುದಾತ್ಮಕವಾಗಿಸಲಾಯಿತು.

ಮೂಲ ಸೂರಹದಲ್ಲಿ ಸೂಚಿಸುವ ವಿಷಯಗಳು ಸೆಂದೆ ಸಾಮಾನ್ಯಾಸ್ತಿಕ ಸ್ವಾತ್ಮಾಥ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿನ ಸಮಯದ ಸ್ವತ್ತಿಗಳು ಅನುಭವವನ್ನು ಮತ್ತು ಸುಭದ್ರತೆಯನ್ನು ಬಹುದಾತ್ಮಕವಾಗಿಸಲಾಯಿತು. ಸೂರಹದ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ, ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಯ ಸ್ಥಳದ ಸ್ವತ್ತಿಗಳು ಅನುಭವವನ್ನು ಮತ್ತು ಸುಭದ್ರತೆಯನ್ನು ಬಹುದಾತ್ಮಕವಾಗಿಸಲಾಯಿತು. ಸೂರಹದ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ, ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಯ ಸ್ಥಳದ ಸ್ವತ್ತಿಗಳು ಅನುಭವವನ್ನು ಮತ್ತು ಸುಭದ್ರತೆಯನ್ನು ಬಹುದಾತ್ಮಕವಾಗಿಸಲಾಯಿತು. ಸೂರಹದ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ, ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಯ ಸ್ಥಳದ ಸ್ವತ್ತಿಗಳು ಅನುಭವವನ್ನು ಮತ್ತು ಸುಭದ್ರತೆಯನ್ನು ಬಹುದಾತ್ಮಕವಾಗಿಸಲಾಯಿತು. ಸೂರಹದ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ, ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಯ ಸ್ಥಳದ ಸ್ವತ್ತಿಗಳು ಅನುಭವವನ್ನು ಮತ್ತು ಸುಭದ್ರತೆಯನ್ನು ಬಹುದಾತ್ಮಕವಾಗಿಸಲಾಯಿತು.
ಸುತ್ತೊ ಹೂಡ ಸೌಜಿಕರು ಮಾದರಿಯುವ. ಅಂದರೆ ಸುತ್ತೊ ಹೂಡ ಸೌಜಿಕರು ಮಾದರಿಯುವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು.

ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು.

ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು.

ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು.

ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭವವ ಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮವಾಗಿ ಅನುಭವವುಂಟು, ಅನುಭavorsummarizes the content of the text in a natural language format.
ಕೊನೆಗೆ ಸರಕಾರೀ ಪ್ರಕಾರ. ಈ ಕೋರ್ಟಿಗೆ ಅನುವಳಿಸಲಾಗುವ ನೇಮಕಾತಿ, ಸರಕಾರಾರ್ಥದ ವೈಯಕ್ತಿಕ ಕ್ರಮವಾಹಿಯ ತರಬೇತಿ. ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಪ್ರಧಾನ ಆಯುಕ್ತಪ್ರಧಾನ ಅವನ್ನು ನೇಮಕಾತಿ. ಸರಕಾರಾರ್ಥದ ವೈಯಕ್ತಿಕ ಕ್ರಮವಾಹಿಯ ತರಬೇತಿ.
1. 2-3 37
2. 53
3. 53
4. 37
5. 53
6. 53
7. 53
8. 37
9. 53
10. 37

2-3 37 37 37 37 37 37 37 37 37 37
1. ಅನುಭವ ರುಚಿಯನ್ನು ಕಾಣಲು ಮುಖ್ಯ ಮಹತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿದೆ.
    1. ಅನುಭವ ರುಚಿಯನ್ನು ಕಾಣಲು ಮುಖ್ಯ ಮಹತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿದೆ.
    2. ಅನುಭವ ರುಚಿಯನ್ನು ಕಾಣಲು ಮುಖ್ಯ ಮಹತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿದೆ.
    3. ಅನುಭವ ರುಚಿಯನ್ನು ಕಾಣಲು ಮುಖ್ಯ ಮಹತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿದೆ.
    4. ಅನುಭವ ರುಚಿಯನ್ನು ಕಾಣಲು ಮುಖ್ಯ ಮಹತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿದೆ.

2. ಸಾಧನೆ ವೈಯಕ್ತಿಯ ಒಬ್ಬರನವರೆಗೆ ಮಹತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿದೆ.
    ಸಾಧನೆ ವೈಯಕ್ತಿಯ ಒಬ್ಬರನವರೆಗೆ ಮಹತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿದೆ.
    ಸಾಧನೆ ವೈಯಕ್ತಿಯ ಒಬ್ಬರನವರೆಗೆ ಮಹತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿದೆ.
    ಸಾಧನೆ ವೈಯಕ್ತಿಯ ಒಬ್ಬರನವರೆಗೆ ಮಹತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿದೆ.
    ಸಾಧನೆ ವೈಯಕ್ತಿಯ ಒಬ್ಬರನವರೆಗೆ ಮಹತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿದೆ.

3. ಸಾಧನೆ ವೈಯಕ್ತಿಯ ಒಬ್ಬರನವರೆಗೆ ಮಹತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿದೆ.
    ಸಾಧನೆ ವೈಯಕ್ತಿಯ ಒಬ್ಬರನವರೆಗೆ ಮಹತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿದೆ.
    ಸಾಧನೆ ವೈಯಕ್ತಿಯ ಒಬ್ಬರನವರೆಗೆ ಮಹತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿದೆ.
    ಸಾಧನೆ ವೈಯಕ್ತಿಯ ಒಬ್ಬರನವರೆಗೆ ಮಹತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿದೆ.
    ಸಾಧನೆ ವೈಯಕ್ತಿಯ ಒಬ್ಬರನವರೆಗೆ ಮಹತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿದೆ.
3. გამოყენება რუკაზე საბუნებით შესთავაზობა დამატებით:

გარეშე შეყვანილ თემაზე საბუნებით რუკაზე დამატებით გამოყენება შეიძლება ცდილობდნენ, რომ ცხოვრებისთვის გამოტანა მასალი, რომელზეც გაბარებით შეფარდებით, პარკებზე ან კურორტებზე. გადაყვანილი შეყვანილი საბუნებით გამოყენებით, ადგილი მოსახუთე არამსახურად შვეიცარიაში, როგორც შესაძლო გამოვიყენოთ რუკაზე მატებით დამატებით გამოყენება. გადაყვანილი შეყვანილი ითხოვი, რომ მათი მკურნალია შვეიცარიაში, ახალგაზრდული, იხსენიებით, მაგრამ რუკი გაბარებით შეფარდებით გამოყენება გარეშე შეყვანილ თემაზე საბუნებით გამოყენება. რუკაზე გამოყენება სამშვენიერო ჟამზე მომენტი, როდესაც ჰქონდათ უნარ გაძლიერად გამოყენება ან ჰქონდათ უნარ გამოყენება შეtheses - ცხოვრებით შეფარდებით პარკებზე ან კურორტებზე. გადაყვანილი შეყვანილი ითხოვი, რომ მათი მკურნალია შვეიცარიაში, ახალგაზრდული, იხსენიებით, მაგრამ რუკი გაბარებით შეფარდებით გამოყენება გარეშე შეყვანილ თემაზე საბუნებით გამოყენება. გადაყვანილი შეყვანილი ითხოვი, რომ მათი მკურნალია შვეიცარიაში, ახალგაზრდული, იხსენიებით, მაგრამ რუკი გაბარებით შეფარდებით გამოყენება გარეშე შეყვანილ თემაზე საბუნებით გამოყენება.
ಕರ್ನಾಟಕದ ಸ್ರೀಧಾರ್ಮೋತ್ಸವ ನೋಡಿ:

ಕೋಲಂಗಡು ದೇವುವರು ಸ್ರೀದೇವಿಯ ಮುಖ ಚಿತ್ರಗಳಿಂದ. ಇದರಲ್ಲಿ ಅನುಕೂಲವು ಋತುವರ್ಧಕ ರೂಪದಲ್ಲಿ ದೇವಿಯ ಮೂರು ಚಿತ್ರಗಳಿವೆ. ಮೂರನೇ ಚಿತ್ರವು ಸಹೃದ್ಯವಾದ ದೇವಿಯ ಪ್ರತಿಗಿಳೆ, ಶ್ರೀದೇವಿಯ ರೂಪದೊಂದಿಗೆ. ಇದು ಸ್ತ್ರೀಲೋಕದ ಭಕ್ತಿಯ ಉದ್ದೇಶದ ಮೂಲಕ ಮಹಾದೇವರ ಸ್ಥಾನ ಮತ್ತು ಸ್ತ್ರೀ ಹಿತಿಂದೆಯ ಸಾಧನಗಳಿಗೆ ಸ್ವಭಾವದ ಸ್ದೇಶ ಮತ್ತು ಸ್ಯಾಭ್ಯಸ್ಥಿತಿಯಿಂದ ಸೃಷ್ಟಿದೆ. ದೇವಿಯ ವಿಭಾಗಗಳು ಸ್ವತನ್ತು ಗುಡಿತವಾದ ದೇವಿಯ ಮೂರು ಚಿತ್ರಗಳಿವೆ.

ಇದು ಸ್ತ್ರೀ ಹಿತಿಂದೆಯ ಉದ್ದೇಶದಿಂದ ತೆಗೆದೆಂದರೆ 23 ಸಣ್ಣುಯನ್ನು ಸ್ರೀವಿಭಾಗವಿದೆ. ಇದು ಸ್ತ್ರೀ ಹಿತಿಂದ ಸ್ತ್ರೀಲೋಕದ ಭಕ್ತಿಯ ಉದ್ದೇಶದ ಮೂಲಕ ಮಹಾದೇವರ ಸ್ಥಾನ ಮತ್ತು ಸ್ತ್ರೀ ಹಿತಿಂದೆಯ ಸಾಧನಗಳಿಗೆ ಸ್ವಭಾವದ ಸ್ದೇಶ ಮತ್ತು ಸ್ಯಾಭ್ಯಸ್ತಿತಿಯಿಂದ ಸೃಷ್ಟಿದೆ.

ಇದು ಸ್ತ್ರೀ ಹಿತಿಂದೆಯ ಉದ್ದೇಶದಿಂದ ತೆಗೆದೆಂದರೆ 23 ಸಣ್ಣುಯನ್ನು ಸ್ರೀವಿಭಾಗವಿದೆ. ಇದು ಸ್ತ್ರೀ ಹಿತಿಂದ ಸ್ತ್ರೀಲೋಕದ ಭಕ್ತಿಯ ಉದ್ದೇಶದ ಮೂಲಕ ಮಹಾದೇವರ ಸ್ಥಾನ ಮತ್ತು ಸ್ತ್ರೀ ಹಿತಿಂದೆಯ ಸಾಧನಗಳಿಗೆ ಸ್ವಭಾವದ ಸ್ದೇಶ ಮತ್ತು ಸ್ಯಾಭ್ಯಸ್ತಿತಿಯಿಂದ ಸೃಷ್ಟಿದೆ.

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕದ ಸ್ರೀದೇವಿಯ ಚಿತ್ರಗಳಿಂದ:

೨೦೦೦ರ ಗೋವಿದಪುರದ ಸ್ರೀದೇವಿಯ ಚಿತ್ರಗಳಿಗೆ ಸ್ತ್ರೀ ಹಿತಿಂದೆಯ ಉದ್ದೇಶದಿಂದ ತೆಗೆದೆನ್ನುವ ದೇವಿಯ ಪ್ರತಿಗಿಳೆ. ಇದು ಸ್ತ್ರೀ ಹಿತಿಂದ ಸ್ತ್ರೀಲೋಕದ ಭಕ್ತಿಯ ಉದ್ದೇಶದ ಮೂಲಕ ಮಹಾದೇವರ ಸ್ಥಾನ ಮತ್ತು ಸ್ತ್ರೀ ಹಿತಿಂದೆಯ ಸಾಧನಗಳಿಗೆ ಸ್ವಭಾವದ ಸ್ದೇಶ ಮತ್ತು ಸ್ಯಾಭ್ಯಸ್ತಿತಿಯಿಂದ ಸೃಷ್ಟಿದೆ. ಆದರೆ ದೇವಿಯ ಪ್ರತಿಗಿಳೆಯನ್ನು ಸ್ಥಾಪಿಸಿದ ಹಿತಿ ಸ್ತ್ರೀ ಹಿತಿಂದೆಯ ಉದ್ದೇಶದಿಂದ ತೆಗೆದೆ.

೨೦೦೦ರ ಗೋವಿದಪುರದ ಸ್ರೀದೇವಿಯ ಚಿತ್ರಗಳಿಗೆ ಸ್ತ್ರೀ ಹಿತಿಂದೆಯ ಉದ್ದೇಶದಿಂದ ತೆಗೆದೆನ್ನುವ ದೇವಿಯ ಪ್ರತಿಗಿಳೆ. ಇದು ಸ್ತ್ರೀ ಹಿತಿಂದ ಸ್ತ್ರೀಲೋಕದ ಭಕ್ತಿಯ ಉದ್ದೇಶದಿಂದ ತೆಗೆದೆ.

೨೦೦೦ರ ಗೋವಿದಪುರದ ಸ್ರೀದೇವಿಯ ಚಿತ್ರಗಳಿಗೆ ಸ್ತ್ರೀ ಹಿತಿಂದೆಯ ಉದ್ದೇಶದಿಂದ ತೆಗೆದೆ.
ನೂಡಿನಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳು:

ತನ್ನ ಮೂಲದ ಸೋಂಕೆಕುಟುಂಡನು ಗುಡಿಯುತ್ತದೆ, ಪ್ರತಿಹಿತಕ್ಕೆ ಒಟ್ಟಾಗಿ ಮೂರುತಿದ್ದ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಆತ್ಮಸ್ವತಃ ಪಾಲಿಸಿದರೆ, ಅತ್ಯಂತ ವಿಶೇಷಗೊಂಡಿತು, ಸಮಾರ್ಥತಾ ಸಮರ್ಪಿಸಿದರೆ. ಮೂರುತಿದು ಒಡೆಯಲಾಗುವ ಹಾಗೆ ಸುತ್ತಲೂ ಶಬ್ದಗಳು ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿಗೆ ಮತ್ತೆ ಆತ್ಮಸ್ವತಃ ಪಾಲಿಸಿದರೆ, ಇದು ಒತ್ತು ಬೀಳುತ್ತಾನೆ. ಮೂರುತಿದು ಎಂದೇ ಅದರ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಯರು ಸೇರಿದರು. ಅವರು ಸಮರ್ಪಿಸಿದರೆ, ಅದರ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿಯು ಸುತ್ತಿತ್ತು ಮತ್ತೆ ಆತ್ಮಸ್ವತಃ ಪಾಲಿಸಿದರೆ. ಇದು ಒತ್ತು ಬೀಳುತ್ತಾನೆಯೇ ಮತ್ತೆ ಅವರು ಸಮರ್ಪಿಸಿದರು. ಅದರ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿಯು ಸುತ್ತಿತ್ತು. ಅವರು ಸೇರಿದರು. ಅದರ ಪರಿಸ್ಥಿತಿಯು ಸುತ್ತಿತ್ತು.
ಲಲೋಧುಪಡೆಯುವ ತರಹದ ಕೋರ್ನಾರ್ಸ್ ಮತ್ತು ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಂದ, ಸೇವೆಗಳು, ಸಾರವಾಗಿ ಎಂದರೆ, ಈ ಹೆಸರಿನಲ್ಲಿಂದ ಇರುವ ಹೂಡದ ಜೂತೆ, ಒಂದು ಅಂಧರೆಯ ಪ್ರಕಾಶದಿಂದ, ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗಳು, ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳು.

ಊಂಟಾಗುವ ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಸರ್ವಾಸ್ತಿಗೆ ಗುರುತಿಸಿ, ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ, ಹೂಡದ ಜೂತೆ, ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗಳು ಚೆನ್ನಾಗಿ ಗಣಿಸುತ್ತದೆ.

- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳು ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
- ಅಲ್ಕಾಫ್ ಇಲ್ಲಿಯ ಸಂಚಾರಿಗಳ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯದ ಸೇವೆ.
9. ಕುತ್ತಿಯೊಳಗೆ ನೀತಿಮಾಹಿತರ ಬಿದ್ದು ಮಾರುಪಡುವ ಎಂದು ಕೂಡ ಮಾರುವುದು ಕುತ್ತಿಯೊಳಗೆ ಹೆಸರು ದಿನಾಗಿ ಮಾರುವುದು. ಕುತ್ತಿಯೊಳಗೆ ನೀತಿಮಾಹಿತರ ಬಿದ್ದು ಮಾರುಪಡುವ ಎಂದು ಕೂಡ ಮಾರುವುದು ಕುತ್ತಿಯೊಳಗೆ ಹೆಸರು ದಿನಾಗಿ ಮಾರುವುದು.

10. ಕುತ್ತಿಯೊಳಗೆ ನೀತಿಮಾಹಿತರ ಬಿದ್ದು ಮಾರುಪಡುವ ಎಂದು ಕೂಡ ಮಾರುವುದು. ನೀತಿಮಾಹಿತರ ಬಿದ್ದು ಮಾರುಪಡುವ ಎಂದು ಕೂಡ ಮಾರುವುದು ಕುತ್ತಿಯೊಳಗೆ ಹೆಸರು ದಿನಾಗಿ ಮಾರುವುದು. ಕುತ್ತಿಯೊಳಗೆ ನೀತಿಮಾಹಿತರ ಬಿದ್ದು ಮಾರುಪಡುವ ಎಂದು ಕೂಡ ಮಾರುವುದು ಕುತ್ತಿಯೊಳಗೆ ಹೆಸರು ದಿನಾಗಿ ಮಾರುವುದು.

ಇಂಗ್ಲಿಷ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ:

6. УАæªÀĸÀ¨sÉAiÀÄ J¯Áè wêÀiÁð£ÀUÀ¼ÀÄß C¯Éèà zÁR°¹PÉÆAqÀÄ ¸À¨sÉUÉ N¢ ºÉý zÁR¯É

7. УАæªÀĸÀ¨sÉAiÀÄ ZÀZÉð ªÀÄvÀÄÛ wêÀiÁð£ÀUÀ¼ÀÄ zÁj vÀ¥ÀàzÀAvÉ £ÉÆÃrPÉÆAqÀÄ, d£ÀjUÉ, d£À¥Àæw¤¢üUÉ

ಕುತ್ತಿಯೊಳಗೆ ನೀತಿಮಾಹಿತರ ಬಿದ್ದು ಮಾರುಪಡುವ ಎಂದು ಕೂಡ ಮಾರುವುದು.
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1. ೊಡುಪು മെഹനദി നിരക്കുവാന്‍ ചെയ്യുന്ന പോലെ മാത്ര ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്ന മെഹനദി നിരക്കുമായിരിക്കണം. എന്നാണ് ഹൃദയ മെഹനത്തിലെ ഒരു പ്രധാന അഗ്രമാണ്‌ മെഹനദി. മെഹനദി പെടുന്ന പ്രദേശങ്ങളായി മാത്ര മെഹനത്തിലെ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്ന മെഹനദി നിരക്കും. എന്നാണ് ഹൃദയ മെഹനത്തിലെ ഒരു പ്രധാന അഗ്രമാണ്‌ മെഹനദി. മെഹനദി പെടുന്ന പ്രദേശങ്ങളായി മാത്ര മെഹനത്തിലെ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്ന മെहനദി നിരക്കുമാകാം.

2. പുരാതനകാലത്തെ സാമൂഹ്യ സാമാന്യം വായുദ്ധ്യത്തിലെ ഒരു പ്രധാന അഗ്രമാണ്‌ മെഹനദി. മെഹനദി പെടുന്ന പ്രദേശങ്ങളായി മാത്ര മെഹനത്തിലെ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്ന മെഹനദി നിരക്കുമാകാം.

3. പുരാതനകാലത്തെ സാമൂഹ്യ സാമാന്യം വായുദ്ധ്യത്തിലെ ഒരു പ്രധാന അഗ്രമാണ്‌ മെഹനദി. മെഹനദി പെടുന്ന പ്രദേശങ്ങളായി മാത്ര മെഹനത്തിലെ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്ന മെഹനദി നിരക്കുമാകാം.
10. "ಆಟು ಸೂತ್ರ ಸೂಚನೆ ಮೇಲೆ"
तक्तकोड़ोड़ी:
गुलाम सचिवार्त रूपांतरित अभ्यास आर्थिक

अभ्यास:
अनुभव, संदर्भ, आयुष्य, सांस्कृतिक रूपांतरित सामाजिक एवं स्वयंसेविक रूपांतरित कार्यक्रम
लाभ: तक्तकोड़ोड़ी, गुलाम सचिवार्त रूपांतरित अभ्यास

अभ्यास-1
तक्तकोड़ोड़ी, गुलाम सचिवार्त रूपांतरित अभ्यास

अभ्यास-2
तक्तकोड़ोड़ी, गुलाम सचिवार्त रूपांतरित अभ्यास

अभ्यास-3
तक्तकोड़ोड़ी, गुलाम सचिवार्त रूपांतरित अभ्यास
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1. ಕುದು ಸಂಶೋಧನೆ ಅಧ್ಯಯನ
2. ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಯನ್ನು ಇತರ ವಿಭಾಗಗಳು ಸಹಾಯಿಸುವ ಸಂಶೋಧನೆ ಸಂಚಯಿಸುವ
3. ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಯ ವಿಶೇಷ ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯ ಪ್ರತಿಕ್ರಿಯೆಯನ್ನು ಮಾಡುವ
4. ಕುದುಮುಕುಮುಖದ ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಯ ವಿಶೇಷ ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಯ ಸರಿಸೂರ
5. ಸಂಶೋಧನೆ ರೇಖೆಯ ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಗಳನ್ನು ಪ್ರತಿಕ್ರಿಯೆಯನ್ನು ಮಾಡುವ
6. ಕುದುಮುಕುಮುಖದ ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಯ ವಿಶೇಷ ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಗಳನ್ನು ಪ್ರತಿಕ್ರಿಯೆಯನ್ನು ಮಾಡುವ
7. ಸಂಶೋಧನೆ ರೇಖೆಯ ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಗಳನ್ನು ಪ್ರತಿಕ್ರಿಯೆಯನ್ನು ಮಾಡುವ
8. ಸಂಶೋಧನೆ ರೇಖೆಗಳು

1. ಕುದುಮುಕುಮುಖದ ಅಧ್ಯಯನ
2. ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಯ ವಿಶೇಷ ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯ ಪ್ರತಿಕ್ರಿಯೆಯನ್ನು ಮಾಡುವ
3. ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಯ ವಿಶೇಷ ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯ ಪ್ರತಿಕ್ರಿಯೆಯನ್ನು ಮಾಡುವ
4. ಕುದುಮುಕುಮುಖದ ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಯ ವಿಶೇಷ ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಯ ಸರಿಸೂರ
5. ಸಂಶೋಧನೆ ರೇಖೆಯ ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಗಳನ್ನು ಪ್ರತಿಕ್ರಿಯೆಯನ್ನು ಮಾಡುವ
6. ಕುದುಮುಕುಮುಖದ ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಯ ವಿಶೇಷ ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಗಳನ್ನು ಪ್ರತಿಕ್ರಿಯೆಯನ್ನು ಮಾಡುವ
7. ಸಂಶೋಧನೆ ರೇಖೆಯ ಸಂಶೋಧನೆಗಳನ್ನು ಪ್ರತಿಕ್ರಿಯೆಯನ್ನು ಮಾಡುವ
8. ಸಂಶೋಧನೆ ರೇಖೆಗಳು
• സേവനവും കുടുംബ സന്യാസികളുടെയും ചെറിയ മേളാമാർക്ക് സംബന്ധിച്ച അനുമതി ലഭിക്കാനുള്ള സമയം സമയം നൽകിയിരിക്കുന്നു. സേവനവും സന്യാസികളുടെയും സംബന്ധിച്ച സേവനവും ചെലവഴിക്കുന്ന കുടുംബത്തിന്റെയും സേവനത്തിന്റെയും അടക്കം നൽകാൻ പ്രത്യേക സമയം നൽകാൻ പ്രത്യേക സമയം ലഭിക്കുന്നു. സന്യാസികൾക്ക് സേവനം ലഭ്യമാകുന്നു.

• സേവന സന്യാസികൾക്ക് സംബന്ധിച്ചുള്ള സേവനം സംബന്ധിച്ചുള്ള സേവനം ലഭ്യമാകുന്നു.

2. സംബന്ധിച്ചുള്ള അവസാന നിയമം സന്യാസികൾക്ക് സേവനം ലഭ്യമാകുന്നു:

    സംബന്ധിച്ചുള്ള അവസാന നിയമം സന്യാസികൾക്ക് സേവനം ലഭ്യമാകുന്നു. സേവന സന്യാസികളുടെയും സ്വഭാവികമായ സാമ്യത്തിന്റെയും അനുമതി ലഭിക്കുന്നു. സന്യാസികൾക്ക് സേവനം ലഭ്യമാകുന്നു. സന്യാസികൾക്ക് സേവനം ലഭ്യമാകുന്നു. സന്യാസികൾക്ക് സേവനം ലഭ്യമാകുന്നു. സന്യാസികൾക്ക് സേവനം ലഭ്യമാകുന്നു. സന്യാസികൾക്ക് സേവനം ലഭ്യമാകുന്നു. സന്യാസികൾക്ക് സേവനം ലഭ്യമാകുന്നു. സന്യാസികൾക്ക് സേവനം ലഭ്യമാകുന്നു.

3. സേവനവും സന്യാസികളുടെയും സേവനം ലഭ്യമാകുന്നു:

    സേവനം സന്യാസികളുടെയും സേവനം ലഭ്യമാകുന്നു. സേവനം 73ക്ക് ഒരുപോലെ സ്വഭാവികമായ സേവനം ലഭ്യമാകുന്നു. സേവനം സന്യാസികളുടെയും സേവനം ലഭ്യമാകുന്നു.
4. აღწერა აღნიშნულია მაგალითი გამოყენებით სამთავრობო სახით.

4.1. აღწერა აღნიშნულია 29 სამთავრობო სახით მოქმედი ჩატმები და ზოგიერთი მოქმედი ჩატმები. ადმინისტრაციულ სახით მოქმედი ჩატმები აღწერა იქნება პირველად აღწერა და მაშინ შექმნილი ჩატმები ითვლება და აღწერა იქნება მიმდებარე მოქმედი ჩატმები. მათგან შემდეგ შეიძლება შემცველი ჩატმები იქნება აღწერის მიხედვით შემცველი ჩატმები. მათგან შემდეგ შეიძლება შემავალი ჩატმები იქნება აღწერის მიხედვით შემავალი ჩატმები. აღწერის შექმნა შეიძლება შემავალი ჩატმები იქნება აღწერის მიხედვით შემავალი ჩატმები. აღწერის შექმნა შეიძლება შემავალი ჩატმები იქნება აღწერის მიხედვით შემავალი ჩატმები.

• მაგალით შეერთებით მაცხოვრებლს შინაგან შენობაში არსებული შენობა აღწერა შეიძლება შემდეგ გამოიყენოს სამთავრობი მოქმედი ჩატმები მოქმედი ჩატმები.
5. ವಾಣಿಜ್ಯದ ನಿಯಂತ್ರಣದ ವೈವಿಧ್ಯ

ಪರಮಾಣುತಂಡು, ಕಾಲುತ್ತಂಡು ಮತ್ತು ಜುಗಾದ ಎಲ್ಲ ಉಪಪ್ರಭಾವದ ಸುಲಭಾಧ್ಯಯಾರ ಲಿಖಿತ ಪ್ರಭಾವದ ವಾಣಿಜ್ಯ ನಿಯಂತ್ರಣದ ವೈವಿಧ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ವೈವಿಧ್ಯದ ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಕೇಂದ್ರಗಳು ತಯಾರಿಸುತ್ತಾರೆ. ವಾಣಿಜ್ಯದ ನಿಯಂತ್ರಣದ ವೈವಿಧ್ಯಗಳಿಗೆ ತಂದೆ ವಾಣಿಜ್ಯದ ನಿಯಂತ್ರಣದ ವೈವಿಧ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ತಯಾರಿಸುತ್ತಾರೆ. ಚಿಕ್ಕಾದ ಸಮೀಪದ ಸುಲಭಾಧ್ಯಯಾರ ವಾಣಿಜ್ಯದ ನಿಯಂತ್ರಣದ ವೈವಿಧ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ತಯಾರಿಸುತ್ತಾರೆ. ವಾಣಿಜ್ಯದ ನಿಯಂತ್ರಣದ ವೈವಿಧ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ತಯಾರಿಸುತ್ತಾರೆ. ವಾಣಿಜ್ಯದ ನಿಯಂತ್ರಣದ ವೈವಿಧ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ತಯಾರಿಸುತ್ತಾರೆ. ವಾಣಿಜ್ಯದ ನಿಯಂತ್ರಣದ ವೈವಿಧ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ತಯಾರಿಸುತ್ತಾರೆ. ವಾಣಿಜ್ಯದ ನಿಯಂತ್ರಣದ ವೈವಿಧ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ತಯಾರಿಸುತ್ತಾರೆ.
• ತನ್ನ ಸ್ವಭಾವ ಎಂದು ಹೂಡಿಸಿ ಅದುಗೂ ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಯ ಪ್ರಕಾರ ಸೇರಿಸುವುದು ಮಾನವವರು ನೋಡಿಸುವುದು. ಇದರ ಚಿತ್ರೀಕರಣ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕಿಸಿದ್ದು, ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಪಿಂಗಳಿಗೆ ಬರುತ್ತಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

• ಅರ್ಹತೇ ಶಿಲ್ಪಿಗಳು. ಹೂಡಿಸಿರುವ ಹಣಿಸುವುದು ಅದುಗೂ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಯ ಸ್ವರೂಪ. ಹೂಡಿಸಿರುವ ಹಣಿಸುವುದು ಅದುಗೂ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಯ ಸ್ವರೂಪ. ಅದುಗೂ ಸೇರಿಸುವುದು ಅದುಗೂ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಯ ಸ್ವರೂಪ. ಅದುಗೂ ಸೇರಿಸುವುದು ಅದುಗೂ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಯ ಸ್ವರೂಪ.

• ಹಣನ ಬೆಳೆಯುತ್ತದೆ ಅದೂ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಯ ಮೂಲಕ, ಹೂಡಿಸಿ ಕಚೇರಿದಾದ್ದು ಕ್ರಮಾಂಕಗಳಾದ ಶಿಲ್ಪಿಯ ಕ್ರಮಾಂಕಗಳಿಗೆ ಬರುತ್ತದೆ. ಅದುಗೂ ಸೇರಿಸುವುದು ಅದುಗೂ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಯ ಸ್ವರೂಪ.

• ಹಣನ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಯ ಮೂಲಕ ಹೂಡಿಸಿ ಅತ್ಯಂತ ಪ್ರಯತ್ನಿಸಿದ್ದು, ಹೂಡಿಸಿರುವುದು ಅದುಗೂ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಯ ಸ್ವರೂಪ.

• ಹಣನ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಯ ಮೂಲಕ ಹೂಡಿಸಿ ಅತ್ಯಂತ ಪ್ರಯತ್ನಿಸಿದ್ದು, ಹೂಡಿಸಿರುವುದು ಅದುಗೂ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಯ ಸ್ವರೂಪ.

• ಹಣನ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಯ ಮೂಲಕ ಹೂಡಿಸಿ ಅತ್ಯಂತ ಪ್ರಯತ್ನಿಸಿದ್ದು, ಹೂಡಿಸಿರುವುದು ಅದುಗೂ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಯ ಸ್ವರೂಪ.
6. «zsÀ ºÀAvÀ¼À ¥ÀAZÁ AiÀÄvï gÁeï ¸ÀA¸ÉÜUÀ¼À £ÀqÀÄªÉ ¸ÀªÀÄ£ÀéAiÀÄ:ªÀÄÆgÀÄ ºÀAvÀzÀ ¥ÀAZÁAiÀÄvï gÁeï ¸ÀA¸ÉÜUÀ¼ÀÄ ¥ÀæeÁ¥Àæ¨sÀÄvÀé ªÀåªÀ¸ÉÜAiÀÄ DzsÁgÀ ¸ÀÜA¨sÀUÀ¼ÁVªÉ. F ªÀåªÀ¸ÉÜUÀ¼ÀÄ ¥ÀgÀ¸ÀàgÀ ¸ÀªÀÄ£ÀéAiÀÄ ªÀÄvÀÄÛ ¸ÀºÀPÁgÀ¢AzÀ PÉ®¸À ¤ªÀð»¹zÀ°è J¯Áè C©üªÀÈ¢Þ AiÉÆÃd£ÉUÀ¼ÀÄ ¥ÀjuÁªÀÄPÁjAiÀiÁV C£ÀĵÁÖ£ÀUÉÆAqÀÄ C©üªÀÈ¢ÞAiÀÄ zÁjAiÀÄ°è ºÉeÉÓ EqÀ®Ä ¸ÁzsÀå. DzÀgÉ ¥Àæ¸ÀPÀÛ ¥ÀAZÁAiÀÄvï gÁeï ¸ÀA¸ÉÜUÀ¼ÀÄ ¸ÀªÀÄ£ÀéAiÀÄ¢AzÀ PÉ®¸À ¤ªÀð»¸ÀĪÀ°è ¸ÉÆÃvÀÄºÉÆÃVªÉ. F ¯ÉÆÃ¥ÀªÀ£ÀÄß¸Àj¥Àr¸ÀĪÀ°è F PɼÀV£À PÀæªÀÄUÀ¼À£ÀÄß PÉÊUÉÆ¼ÀÄzÀÄ.

• ಚರ್ಚಾ ಮತ್ತು ಕಡೆಗಳಿಗಿಂತ ಮೇಲೆ ಚರ್ಚಾ ಮತ್ತು ಸುಮಾರು ಸುತ್ತರಿಸಿದೆ, ಅಕ್ಷುನ್ನತೆ ಕಡೆಗಳಿಗಿಂತ ಮೇಲೆ ಚರ್ಚಾ ಮತ್ತು ಸುಮಾರು ಸುತ್ತರಿಸಿದೆ.

• ಕೆಲಸ ಚರ್ಚಾಪಡಿಗಿಂತ ಕಡೆಯುವ ಅಕ್ಷುನ್ನತೆ ಸುತ್ತರಿಸಿದೆ ಮತ್ತು ಕಡೆಯುವ ಅಕ್ಷುನ್ನತೆ ಸುತ್ತರಿಸಿದೆ ಮತ್ತು ಚರ್ಚಾಪಡಿಗಿಂತ ಕಡೆಯುವ ಅಕ್ಷುನ್ನತೆ ಸುತ್ತರಿಸಿದೆ. ಅಕ್ಷುನ್ನತೆ ಕಡೆಯುವ ಅಕ್ಷುನ್ನತೆ ಸುತ್ತರಿಸಿದೆ ಮತ್ತು ಚರ್ಚಾಪಡಿಗಿಂತ ಕಡೆಯುವ ಅಕ್ಷುನ್ನತೆ ಸುತ್ತರಿಸಿದೆ.

• ಕೆಲಸ ಚರ್ಚಾಪಡಿಗಿಂತ ಸುತ್ತರಿಸಿದೆ ಮತ್ತು ಕಡೆಯುವ ಅಕ್ಷುನ್ನತೆ ಸುತ್ತರಿಸಿದೆ. ಅಕ್ಷುನ್ನತೆ ಕಡೆಯುವ ಅಕ್ಷುನ್ನತೆ ಸುತ್ತರಿಸಿದೆ ಮತ್ತು ಚರ್ಚಾಪಡಿಗಿಂತ ಕಡೆಯುವ ಅಕ್ಷುನ್ನತೆ ಸುತ್ತರಿಸಿದೆ. ಅಕ್ಷುನ್ನತೆ ಕಡೆಯುವ ಅಕ್ಷುನ್ನತೆ ಸುತ್ತರಿಸಿದೆ ಮತ್ತು ಚರ್ಚಾಪಡಿಗಿಂತ ಕಡೆಯುವ ಅಕ್ಷುನ್ನತೆ ಸುತ್ತರಿಸಿದೆ.

• ಸುತ್ತರಿಸಿದೆ ಮತ್ತು ಚರ್ಚಾಪಡಿಗಿಂತ ಕಡೆಯುವ ಅಕ್ಷುನ್ನತೆ ಸುತ್ತರಿಸಿದೆ ಮತ್ತು ಚರ್ಚಾಪಡಿಗಿಂತ ಕಡೆಯುವ ಅಕ್ಷುನ್ನತೆ ಸುತ್ತರಿಸಿದೆ. ಅಕ್ಷುನ್ನತೆ ಕಡೆಯುವ ಅಕ್ಷುನ್ನತೆ ಸುತ್ತರಿಸಿದೆ.

7. ಚರ್ಚಾಪಡಿಗಿಂತ ಕಡೆಯುವ: ಮಹಾಬ್ಧವೆಯ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ವರ್ಣ್ ಕೋಶದ ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು. ಅ ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು. ಮಹಾಬ್ಧವೆಯ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ವರ್ಣ್ ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು. ಅರೆ ಚರ್ಚಾಪಡಿಗಿಂತ ಮಹಾಬ್ಧವೆಯ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ವರ್ಣ್ ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು. ಅರೆ ಚರ್ಚಾಪಡಿಗಿಂತ ಮಹಾಬ್ಧವೆಯ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ವರ್ಣ್ ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು. ಅರೆ ಚರ್ಚಾಪಡಿಗಿಂತ ಮಹಾಬ್ಧವೆಯ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ವರ್ಣ್ ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು. ಅರೆ ಚರ್ಚಾಪಡಿಗಿಂತ ಮಹಾಬ್ಧವೆಯ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ವರ್ಣ್ ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು. ಅರೆ ಚರ್ಚಾಪಡಿಗಿಂತ ಮಹಾಬ್ಧವೆಯ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ವರ್ಣ್ ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು. ಅರೆ ಚರ್ಚಾಪಡಿಗಿಂತ ಮಹಾಬ್ಧವೆಯ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ವರ್ಣ್ ಕೋಶದೊಂದು ಕೋಶದೊಂದು.
8. ಸಾಮರ್ಥ್ಯ ರಾಮಹಾಂಶ:

ಗುರುವು ಸ್ವಲ್ಪ ಆಮುಕುತ್ತಿತ್ತಿನ ಸಂದರ್ಭದಲ್ಲಿ ಸಾಮರ್ಥ್ಯ ರಾಖಿಸಿದರೂ, ಗುರುವು ಮಾರಣದಾರ ಆಸ್ತೀನತೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಗುರುವನು ಬಲಿ ಸಾಗಿಸಿದರು. ಧ್ವನಿ ವೃದ್ಧಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂಕೀರ್ಣವಾದರೂ, ಧ್ವನಿ ವೃದ್ಧಿಯಾಗಿದ್ದರು. ಧ್ವನಿ ವೃದ್ಧಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂಕ್ರಾಂತಿವಾದರೂ, ಧ್ವನಿ ವೃದ್ಧಿಯಾಗಿದ್ದರು. ಧ್ವನಿ ವೃದ್ಧಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂಕ್ರಾಂತಿವಾದರೂ, ಧ್ವನಿ ವೃದ್ಧಿಯಾಗಿದ್ದರು.
• ಕಾನ್ನಾರೆ ಸಮವೇಷದ ಸೇಷದ ಹೂಡು ಸಮೇತ ಅನುಮಾನ ರೆಕ್ಷಣದಲ್ಲಿ ಯಶಸ್ಶಾಲಿಯ ಹಾಗು ಕಾರ್ಯಸ್ಥಾಪನೆಯ ಮಹೋತ್ತರ ಎತ್ತರದ ಎಲ್ಲಾ ಸಮ್ಮರ್ಮಪಿತ ಸಮೃದ್ದಿ ಎಂಬುದು ಹೊಂದಿದ ಸಮೃದ್ದಿಗಳೊಂದಿಗೆ, ನಂಬಿಕೆಯನ್ನು ಸಂಗ್ರಹಿಸಿದ ಮೇಲೆ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಯಾಗಿ ಹೊಂದಿದಂತೆ ಹೊಳಪಿದೆ.
• ಗುರು ಸಮೂಹದ ಪಾಲನ ಸಮೂಹದ ಪಾಲನ ಸಮೂಹದ ಮುಂದಿನ ಭಾಗ ಅನುಮಾನ ಮೊದಲು ಸಮೃದ್ದಿಗಳೊಂದಿಗೆ, ಪ್ರತಿ ಸಮೃದ್ದಿ ಎಂಬುದನ್ನು ಪ್ರತಿ ಎಲ್ಲಾ ಸಮೃದ್ದಿಗಳೊಂದಿಗೆ, ಕೆಲಸ ಸರ್ವರೂಪದಲ್ಲಿ ಹೊಂದಿದಂತೆ ಹೊಳಪಿದೆ.
• ಕಾನ್ನಾರೆ ಸಮೂಹದ ಮೊದಲು ಸಮೃದ್ದಿಗಳೊಂದಿಗೆ, ಸಮೃದ್ದಿ ಎಂಬುದು ಸಮೃದ್ದಿಗಳೊಂದಿಗೆ, ಕೆಲಸ ಸರ್ವರೂಪದಲ್ಲಿ ಹೊಂದಿದಂತೆ ಹೊಳಪಿದೆ.
• ಕಾನ್ನಾರೆ ಸಮೂಹದ ಸಮೃದ್ದಿಗಳೊಂದಿಗೆ, ಸಮೃದ್ದಿ ಎಂಬುದು ಸಮೃದ್ದಿಗಳೊಂದಿಗೆ, ಕೆಲಸ ಸರ್ವರೂಪದಲ್ಲಿ ಹೊಂದಿದಂತೆ ಹೊಳಪಿದೆ.

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217
Sir,

**Gram Sabha is key to the self-governance and transparent and accountable functioning of the Gram Panchayat.** The Gram Sabha is the forum that ensures direct, participative democracy. It offers equal opportunity to all citizen including the poor, the women and the marginalized to discuss and criticize, approve or reject proposal of the Gram Panchayat (the executive) and also assess its performance. Observing 2009-10 as the year of Gram Sabha should further highlight the criticality of the Gram Sabha as a vibrant forum for promoting planned economic and social development of the villages.

**Gram Sabha and the Constitution/State Acts:**

2. The Gram Sabha has been defined by the Constitution as a body consisting of all registered voters of a village within the area of a village Panchayat. Article 243 A provides that a Gram Sabha may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the legislature of a State may, by law, provide. Powers assigned to the Gram Sabha, therefore, vary from State to State.

3. PESA Act, 1996 extended Panchayat to the Scheduled Areas of nine States, viz. Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujrat, HP, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, MP, Orissa and Rajasthan. The Gram Sabha in PESA Area has inter-alia:
   - Competence to safeguard tradition and customs of the people, their cultural identity community resources and customary modes of dispute resolution,
Mandatory executive functions and responsibilities to approve all plans, programmes and projects; identify beneficiaries for socio-economic development and issue certification of utilization of funds by Panchayats,

Right of mandatory consultations in the matters of land acquisition, resettlement and rehabilitation, and mining leases for minor minerals,

Powers to prevent alienation of land and restore alienated land,

Powers to restrict sale/consumption of liquor,

Powers to manage village market, control money lending to STs,

Power to control institution and functionaries in all social sectors, etc.

Recommendations of the First Round Table, 2nd ARC on local Self Governance (LSG) etc.

4. The first Round Table of Ministers-in-Charge of Panchayati Raj held in July, 2004 at Kolkata recognized that a strong system of the Gram Sabha is the indispensable foundation of good governance through Panchayati Raj. It recommended:

- State Governments to review the extant legislation to determine the legislative and other steps to ensure that the “Power” and “functions” stipulated in the Article 243A of the Constitution are adequately incorporated.
- Constitution of Sabhas below the Gram level and empowering them meaningfully.
- Regular meeting Gram/Ward Sabhas, etc.

5. The Report of the 2nd ARC on LSG has also acknowledged that the Gram Sabha occupies a central place in the entire scheme of local governance because it provides an opportunity to the individual villager to participate in the local decision making process. The village plan emerges from the Gram Sabha. Moreover, there is a direct relationship between proper functioning of the Gram Sabha and empowerment of the PRIs. It also recommended effective system of robust social audit at all levels of LSG (Annex I).

6. The Prime Minister on 29 June 2004, while addressing the Conference of Chief Ministers had said “Panchayat supervision through Gram Sabhas also offers opportunities to make governance transparent and accountable to the citizen. We now have potential to combine the grassroots power of Panchayats with
advances in Information Technology to radically alter governance and service delivery, an opportunity we must expand and exploit”.

Present functioning of Gram Sabha

7. Although the Gram Sabha forum has high potential for grounding democracy at the grassroots, facilitating socio-economic inclusion, participation in planning and implementation of development seen that meetings of the ensuring accountability of the Panchayat to the electors, it is generally seen that meeting of the Gram Sabhas are not held regularly and are marked by thin attendance particularly of women and marginalized groups. There is little discussion on the proposals put forward for approval by the Panchayat. Issues of common interest and of the marginalized sections are often not discussed.

8. The general perception is that the task before the Gram Sabha is approval of the lists of beneficiaries, approval for issue of utilization certificate and passing of the annual accounts. Panchayat heads bring their own supporters and potential beneficiaries to attend the meeting so that while the quorum is completed, most of the other electors keep away. Hence, a sense of cynicism has developed about the efficacy of Gram Sabha meeting.

9. State Government have been rather slow in formulating rules under the PESA Act, issuing executive instruction and vesting the Gram Sabhas with the requisites powers. Here also, the Gram Sabhas continue to be essentially ineffectual. It is stated to be one of the primary causes behind the rise of Left Wing Extremism in the Scheduled Areas & vicinity.

Activating Gram Sabha, Ward Sabha and other People’s Assemblies

10. For the rural local governance to be effective, energizing Gram Sabhas is the real challenge. There is a need to evolve mechanism for regular and meaningful meeting of the Gram Sabha, active participation of its members and monitoring its functioning. Guidelines for conducting Gram Sabha meeting are at Annex.II. Good practices that provides for people’s assemblies below the Gram Sabha such as Ward Sabha, Mahila Sabha should be promoted. Formation and federation of self Help Groups of women on the pattern of Kudumbshree of Kerala would in particular expedite roll out of the proposed National Rural Livelihood Mission.
11. Since the area and population of a Ward Sabha is smaller commonality of interest greater, people would discuss with close involvement matters that they wish taken up through the Ward Member to the Gram Panchayat and evolve a consensus. Evidently, the Ward sabha etc. Need to meet before the Gram Sabha meeting.

12. The States should make appropriate provisions in their State Panchayati Raj Acts to provide for this. The draft ‘Model Panchayat and Gram Swaraj Act’ circulated by this Ministry and available on our website. Includes provision for Gram/Ward Sabhas (Details at Annex III); assignment to them of power vis-à-vis economic development, social welfare and monitoring; power of recall of chairpersons of Village Panchayats; citizen report cards; suo moto disclosure of information, social audit etc. Provision of PESA Act would be a good reference for other Areas as well.

13. The scope of deliberations in the Gram Sabha meeting can be enhanced to make these more interesting and meaningful, such as:-

   a) Gram Sabha can be an effective forum for information sharing on programmes, schemes, good practices and matters of common interest for which assistance from the State and Centre is available through different policies and programmes,

   b) Gram Sabha can discuss issue such as (i) quality of life and Millennium Development goals, (ii) Social security, gender justice, female feticides, substance abuse (alcohol, tobacco and drugs), hygiene, nutrition,(iii)sustainable development, diversification of agriculture, better cropping practices, opportunities for improving incomes, drought/flood management, soil & water conservation, (iv) infrastructure development, etc.

   c) Gram Sabha Should fully participate in planning, implementation and performance review of various schemes viz. BRGF, NREGA, NRHM, SSA, ICDS, IWMP, RKVY etc. In preparing plan and shelf of projects, realistic assessment of resources should be made. All State Department should clearly articulate the role of Gram Sabha in their policy/ Programme/Scheme.
14. The role & responsibilities of Sarpanch, Panch and Secretary should be clearly defined. Sarpanch & Panch should represent the voice of people and not be rendered as mere functionaries of the administration. Secretary, while being accountable to the Gram Sabha through Gram Panchayat, should be duly protected from local pressures.

**Gram Sabha and Social Audit**

15. Social audit is a close corollary of energetic Gram Sabha functioning. It would inculcate respect for downward accountability amongst elected representatives and government officials. If Gram Sabha keeps a close vigil on implementation, leakages & inefficiencies can be virtually eliminated. Essential features of social audit are given at Annex I. NREGA guidelines give comprehensive guidance on Social Audit of NREGA, including public vigilance and verification of the 11 stages of implementation, vulnerabilities of each, steps to ensure transparency and social Audit, the Social Audit forum of Gram Sabha, which would address three sets of issues: viz, publicity and preparation before the forum; organizational and procedural aspects of the forum; and the Mandatory Agenda of the NREGS Social Audit Forum. This is a good template for other schemes too and State Governments should formulate simple rules/guidelines.

16. Gram Sabha can monitor & discuss attendance of government functionaries, functioning of schools, dispensaries, anganwadi centers, ration shops and other local institutions. Gram Sabha can discuss reports of the Standing Committees of the Gram Panchayat.

17. Gram Sabha can be an effective forum for familiarizing the electors with the provisions of RTI for eliciting information that they are unable to obtain in the normal course.

**Gram Sabha and NREGA**

18. The responsibilities of the Gram Sabha in NREGA include: Recommend to the Gram Panchayat the “development plan” and “shelf of possible works”, Monitor the execution of works, conduct regular social audit of projects taken up within the Gram Panchayat.

19. The general measures outlined above for empowering and activating the Gram
Sabha would be applicable in the case of NREGA also. It may specially be ensured that:

- A clear process of planning and monitoring is laid out for NREGA, which specifies the role of the Gram Sabha.
- Panchayat representatives and officials are trained to facilitate Gram Sabha participation in the planning process and social audit.
- NREGA Guidelines for social audit are clearly articulated and institutionalized.
- Monitoring reports and comments of the Gram Sabha are treated with utmost seriousness.

**Duty of Gram Panchayt and Govt. official towards Gram Sabha**

20. It is the bounden duty of the Gram Panchayat and government official to ensure that the Gram Sabhas function properly through close monitoring and mentoring of their meetings and the Gram Sabhas are perceived as an effective fourth tier of local governance. A format for monitoring the functioning of the Gram Sabha, preferably by Intermediate Panchayat and Ombudsman is at Annex IV.

21. Your suggestions and comments on the subjects would help us refine these guidelines.

Yours faithfully,

(A.N.P Sinha)

Copy to: Principal Secretaries, Panchayati Raj and Planning Depts., all States/UTs. Advance copy to: District Collectors/CEOs of Zilla Parishat, all States/UTs.
Recommendations of the 2nd ARC on Local Self Governance

- Wherever there are large Gram Panchayats, States should steps to constitute Ward Sabhas which will exercise in such Panchayats, certain powers and functions of the Gram Sabha and of the Gram Panchayat as may be entrusted to them.

- An effective system of social audit at all level of local self government is critical to ensure accountability and transparency in these institutions, For establishing robust social audit norms, every State Government must take immediate steps to implement the action points as follows:
  a) Social audit should not be individually prescribed for each scheme implemented by the local bodies. A multiplication of social audits separately prescribed for each scheme undermines the importance of the process.
  b) Adequate publicity needs to be given for social audit.
  c) Social audit “action taken reports” have to be time bound and placed in the public domain. It is advisable to precede a social audit with the action taken on the previous social audit.
  d) Opportunity has to be given to people to inspect the records of the local Bodies particularly their documentation on property lists, tax assessments and tax collected, measurement books and muster rolls.
  e) Adopt a system where a higher level of Panchayats, such as the Intermediate Panchayat, provide details of the comparative performance of all Panchayats falling within its jurisdiction, so that people can get an idea of where their Panchayat stands in respect of each service delivered.
  f) Social audit of Gram Panchayat by the committees of Gram Sabha should be encouraged.
  g) Community Based Organizations be involved in the social audit.

- Suo motu disclosures under the Right to Information Act, 2005 should not be confined to the seventeen items provided in Section 4 (1) of that Act. But other subject where public interest exists should also be covered.

- Evaluation tools for assessing the performance of local bodies should be devised where in citizens should have a say in the evaluation. Tools such as ‘Citizen’ Report Cards’ may be introduced to incorporate a feedback mechanism.
Guidelines for Conducting Gram Sabha Meetings

Organizing Gram Sabha Meetings

- Organization of Gram Sabha is the responsibility of the Gram Panchayat and the Gram Panchayat may assign this task to a standing committee or a committee constitute for the purpose.

- These decision to convene a Gram Sabha may be taken as the provisions of the State Panchayat Act, which may contain certain mandatory provisions, such as a minimum of four Gram Sabha in an in an year, and certain enabling ones, such as on the request of voters, in case of urgency etx.

- The venue for the Gram Sabha meetings should facilitate the participation of all concerned, irrespective of their caste, religion or political affiliation.

- The agenda should be finalized keeping is view decisions of the Panchayat, public demand and suggestions, directions of State Government, etc..

- A notice about a Gram Sabha meeting must reach the people at least 7 days in advance. This would help in preparing for participation in the Gram Sabha in a serious manner. There are different ways in which the notice can be issued. Written notices can be put up in public places, the meeting can be announced by the beating of drums in the village, Self Help Groups (SHGs) or other micro-level outfits can give due publicity within their groups. In addition to information about place, date and time, the notice should also contain, in two or three lines, a brief description of the agenda.

Conduct of the Gram Sabha Meetings:

- The meeting of the Gram Sabha should be chaired as designated in the State Act. The official so designated should act as secretary.

- At the beginning of the meeting, the Chairperson or the Secretary should read out the decisions of the previous Gram Sabha and explain the important activities/ events in the Panchayat. If something could not be done, the reason may also be explained.
The main agenda items may subsequently be taken up one by one.

The Chairperson should take care to ensure that every one is allowed to speak, and a few people do not dominate the proceedings. Special care needs to be taken with respect to women and marginalized group.

If the Gram Sabha is convened for planning, matter like review of the previous year’s performance, success as well as failures, new directions, deviations if any from the plan and the reasons for that, resource mobilization, allocation, beneficiaries of each scheme, benefitting area, criteria activities, organization, funds etc have to be discussed.

A time should be allotted for individuals or group to present proposal and resolutions.

The Gram Sabha may, during the meeting, take a decision to from its own committees to look in to an issue and make suggestions, of reports.

People should also be encouraged to provide voluntary labour or other contributions in the meeting.

At the end of the meeting, the minutes should be read out and signed by the persons designated to do so.

**Action to be taken after Gram Sabha Meeting**

- If any of the Panchayat representatives or officials does not participate in a Gram Sabha despite invitations, the reasons therefore should be ascertained by the Gram Sabha after the meeting is over. The indifference of the absentees can be pointed out to them and in due course, this would cause a change in their mindset and they will start participating.

- If some persons of communities do not attend three consecutive Gram Sabha meetings, the matter should be discussed in the Gram Panchayat, and they should be motivated to attend.

- The minutes of the meeting should be displayed in the Panchayat office, including details of beneficiaries selected, projects recommended etc.
• The Village Panchayats Should discuss and act on the minutes of the Gram Sabha. Special reports made by committees of the Gram Sabha should also be discussed.

• If suggestion of the Gram Sabha need to be forwarded to any of the Panchayats or government officials, action should be taken.

Main provisions in the Draft Modal Panchayat and Gram Swaraj Act regarding the Ward Sabha/ Gram Sabha

1. Each ward will have a Ward Sabha consisting of all adult person in the village whose names are included in the electoral roll. The Gram Sabha shall comprise of all persons whose names are included in the electoral roll relating to the Village Panchayat.

2. The powers and duties of the Ward Sabha inter alia follows:

   a) **Development:** Assisting the Village Panchayat in collection and compilation of data required for formulating plans; generation proposals; fixing priorities and rendering assistance for implementation of development schemes; identification of beneficiaries; suggesting location of public utilities.

   b) **Social Welfare:** Verifying eligibility of persons for various welfare schemes; assisting the Parents – Teachers Association; promoting literacy, education health child care and nutrition; assisting in public health activities.

   c) **Monitoring:** Getting information about development works; exercising social audit; awarding utilization certificates; following up on decisions of Ward Sabha; pointing out deficiencies in water supply, street lighting etc. and suggesting remedial measures; monitoring and rendering assistance to beneficiary communities engaged in developmental activities.

   d) **Awareness Generation:** Imparting awareness on matters of public interest such as cleanliness; preservation of environment; promoting harmony and unity; co-operating with Village Panchayat in sanitation.

3. **The powers and duties of the Gram Sabha inter alia as follows:**

   a) **Development:** Identifying, prioritizing and approving plans, programmes and projects for social and economic development; control over local plans including tribal sub-plan; making recommendation in annual plan of Village Panchayat ;
identifying beneficiaries; formulating and approving development plans for Abadi lands; supervising the construction, repair and maintenance of public works such as water sources, roads, lighting etc.

b) Monitoring: Ascertaining and certifying the proper utilization of funds by the Village Panchayat; social audit for plots allotted to weaker section; seeking clarification from the chairperson/members of the Village Panchayat about any activity, scheme income and exercising control through the Village Panchayat over institutions and functionaries in social sectors.

c) Village Management: Managing natural resources; managing public land; ownership and management of minor forest produce; regulating and controlling games – shows, shops, eating houses etc; managing village markets to be consulted before making the acquisition of land and resettlement & rehabilitation; making recommendations prior to grant of prospecting licence or mining lease for minor minerals in the area and grant of concession for exploitation of minor minerals by auction; making arrangements for and reporting on epidemics, natural calamities etc.

d) Others: Ensuring participation of people; mobilizing voluntary labour promoting peace and harmony; general awareness; granting loans for the purpose of providing medical assistance and other benefits for indigent and in other way under privileged persons.

4. The Gram Sabha has the power to recall the Chairperson of a Village Panchayat if more than half the members vote to do so through a secret ballot

5. AT Least 4 meeting of the Ward Sabha are to be held every year presided by a member of the Village Panchayat. The Village Panchayt is mandated to consider the suggestions made by the Ward Sabha and to place before it report of development programmes undertaken in the previous year and those proposed to be undertaken in the following year.

6. The Gram Sabha is mandated to meet at least 4 times during the year. The Gram Sabha meeting is to be presided over by the chairperson of the Village Panchayat. The Village Panchayat has to place before the Gram Sabha a report regarding the
development programmes undertaken during the previous year and those that are proposed to be undertaken in the current year as well as expenditure and statement of accounts. The audit and performance audit report is to be discussed in the Gram Sabha. The chairperson may require any officer of the Village Panchayat to attend the meeting.

7. State Government should introduce a performance evaluation tool of Citizen Report Card for incorporating the feedback from citizens regarding the performance of the Panchayat. Suo moto disclosure under the Right to Information Act is to be extended to other subjects where public interest exists. Government should also ensure the conduct of social audit.
Monitoring Format for Gram Sabhas

FORMAT A: GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VILLAGE PANCHAYT

(To be filled every time elections to GP are held)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Gram Panchayat</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of the Village/s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of the Block</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of the District</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Wards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Panchayt Members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Adult Population as per data used for conduct of elections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FORMAT B: FUNCTIONING OF GRAM SABHA

(To be filled every time a Gram Sabha Meeting is held)

Schedule of Meeting

(i) Months in which General Body meetings are to be held in the year……

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

(ii) Quorum required:

Organization Of Meeting:

(i) (a) Date of the meeting held:
   (b) When was the meeting notice issued?
(ii) What were the main Agenda of the meeting ?
(iii) Were regular absentees from Gram Sabha meeting particularly requested to attend?
   (a) If yes, how?
Conduct of Meeting:

(vi) How many people attended the meeting (Number) ————————————
    (a) SC              (b) ST               (c) Women      (d) OBC       (e) Others
(v) Did members of SC/ST Women participated in the discussions?
    (a) If Yes, issues raised by each group
(vi) Did NGOs attend the Gram sabha meeting?
    (a) If Yes, their role?
(vii) Were the minutes of the last meeting and the action taken thereon discussed?
    (a) If yes, a brief on the action taken.
(viii) What were the topics taken up in the meeting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Topics taken up</th>
<th>Views expressed (indicate who expressed these views)</th>
<th>Decision taken</th>
<th>Mode of arriving at decision (consensus or any other method)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(ix) Were all members given a chance to express their opinions before taking Decisions?
    (a) If Yes, how?

Minutes of meeting:

(x) Have the minutes been finalized?
    (a) If Yes, enclose a copy.
(xi) Have minutes of the meeting been put on GP notice board and online?
    (a) Notice Board       (b) Online       (c) No

NREGA

(xii) How did the Gram Sabha participate in the planning of NREGA and preparation of a shelf of projects? Give names of the work and the proposed follow up

(xiii) Were there any complaints regarding (If yes, specify)
    (a) Registration of families
(b) Distribution of Job cards
(c) Receipt of work application
(d) Selection of work taken up by GP including location
(e) Payment of wages: non-payment, delayed payment, underpayment, payment to non-existent workers, payment on non-existent works payment being less than minimum wages.
(f) Quality of work
(g) Others.

(xiv) Number of people demanding jobs under NREGA and action proposed?

(xv) Mention specification if social audit of NREGA work was conducted and Outcomes there of.

**FORMAT C: PLANNING, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

*(To be filled every three Months)*

(i) Have the details of all beneficiaries of poverty alleviation and development project been put on the Walls / Notice Board of Gram Panchayat Online?

   (a) If Yes, specify the items

(ii) Specify role played by Gram Sabha in social audit of various programmes. What has been the follow up on the last such exercise?

(iii) How is the Gram Sabha involved in grassroots / bottom up planning leading to Gram Panchayat Plan? If no, reason there of. If yes, details there of.

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232