

PANCHAYTI RAJ INSTITUTIONS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

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Paper Received On: 22 JUNE 2022

Peer Reviewed On: 27 JUNE 2022

Published On: 28 JUNE 2022

Abstract

India is basically country of villages. Our entire system is based on the villages. Besides the increasing urban population, after more than seven decades of independence our economy is depending on agro based. Presently, more than Seventy percent of the population still resides in the villages. Keeping in broader prospect of Indian society, rural development is one of the major aspects of India System. Without rural development, development of Indian society is not possible. Our past experience proves that without participation of rural masses, rural development is not possible. Hence there is close relationship between the Panchayti raj Institutions and rural development. Panchayats have been the backbone of grassroots democracy in the Indian villages from ancient times. The 73rd constitutional Amendment Act granted constitutional status to the grassroots system and gave more powers to implementation of rural development programmes, policies and schemes. Himachal Pradesh is one of ideal state of India. It came in to being on 15th April 1948. Before the formation of Himachal Pradesh, no attention was paid to economic development and social welfare of the people in princely states. Only some efforts were made by the rulers in their states. The systematic evaluation of resources and their scientific exploitation was started in only after the formation of Himachal Pradesh as full-fledged state. It is only then that the people and the government of the Pradesh started making concerted efforts to improve socio economic condition of the people. Present paper evaluates the role of Panchayats in rural development in Himachal Pradesh. The study is based on the secondary data.

Keywords: Panchayats, Rural development, Himachal Pradesh, 73rd Amendment Act



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Introduction

Himachal Pradesh is one of the hilly states of India. It is situated between 30°22'40 to 33°12'20 north latitude and 75°47'55' to 79°04'20' east latitudes. The altitude in Himachal Pradesh is a wholly mountains region in the lap of Himalayas range 350 meter to 6975 meter

above sea level, (Atri, 2000:145). To its North lies the State of Jammu & Kashmir whereas Uttarakhand is in the South East. With Haryana on the South and Punjab on the West, in the East it forms India's border with Tibet, (Singh, 1994:1). Himachal Pradesh has five major perennial rivers – Beas, Chenab, Ravi, Satluj and Yamuna. These rivers have a large hydro-power generation potential for whose exploitation enormous capital investment is required. These rivers also provide fertile arable land, making agriculture the primary source of income for the people, (Thapar, 2014:36). Around 90% of the state's population lives in rural areas. Agriculture, horticulture, hydropower and tourism are important constituents of the state's economy.

Panchayati Raj in Himachal Pradesh

The Himachal region before 1947 consisted of small princely states, all independent but under the suzerainty of the British Crown. Hence there was no single Panchayat act in operation in all these states. But the Punjab Villages Act, 1939 had been adopted where the rulers were enlightened. The state of Himachal Pradesh came into existence on 15 April 1948 with the merger of thirty princely states. Panchayati Raj system in Himachal Pradesh was established under the provisions of the Himachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1952 in the year 1954. On 1st November, 1966, the hilly areas of Punjab were merged in the State and consequently the number of Gram Panchayats rose to 1695. With a view to bring uniformity in the Panchayati Raj system of the old and the newly merged areas, the Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1968 was enacted on 15th November, 1970 and the two tier Panchayati Raj system was established throughout the State. Besides this the Nayaya Panchayats were also in existence in this State for discharging judicial functions. During the year 1977 the Nayaya Panchayats were abolished and the judicial functions were transferred to the Gram Panchayats. With a view to bring law relating to the Panchayats in conformity with the provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, the Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1968 was repealed and the Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 was enacted w.e.f. 23rd April, 1994. Since 1994, for better implementation of welfare programme rural development State Government created new panchayats from time to time.

During the year 2005-2006 Government created 206 new Gram Sabha circles, thereby raising the number to 3243. No new Gram Sabha has been constituted during the year 2010. In the year, 2015 due to inclusion of 17 Gram Panchayats in the Municipalities the numbers of Gram Panchayats were 3226. In the year, 2020, before the general elections of Panchayati Raj Institutions; 412 new Gram Panchayats have been created by the Govt. and 23 Gram

Panchayats have been merged in the Municipality. Therefore, total number of Panchayats have been increased to 3615 and 81 Block Development in Himachal Pradesh.

Concept of Rural Development

Rural development is a direct and time bound plan of action for improving the living conditions of rural people, their quality of life, promotion participation of rural majority in decision making, mobilization and implementation process, the promotion of self reliance at local as well as provincial and national level in the achieving objectives. Mishra and Sunderam defined rural development as not merely development of rural areas but also the development of quality of rural masses into self reliant and self-sustaining modern little communities." Uma lata defined rural development in terms of raising standard of living of rural people. Thus rural development is a multi-dimensional process which includes the development of socio-economic conditions of the people living in the rural areas, and ensure their participation in the process of development.

Rural Development Programmes in Himachal Pradesh

In Himachal Pradesh 80 percent of the population lives in the villages and gradually due to the spread of education and political awareness rural people awakened. Now rural people started demanding equal share in public funds. After implementation of new panchayati raj in Himachal Pradesh rural development has attracted a more attention from all political parties and state govt. HP state govt has taken many serious step for the development of rural masses and department of rural development also playing tremendous role for the implementation of the govt schemes, programmes for the welfare of rural people. The details of the development programmes being implemented in the State are as under:-

Community Development Programme (Cdp)

Present scheme is playing very important role in the development of community with the initiative and participation of the community itself. In this scheme funds are provided to the Blocks for the construction. Grants are also provided for the promotion/strengthening of Mahila Mandals, incentives awards to Mahila Mandals, and organization of awareness camps etc. In the year 2020-21, an amount of Rs. 8911.36 lac was spent on the above set of schemes up to 31st March, 2021.

National Rural Livelihood Mission (Nrlm)

In order to strengthen and provide greater financial support to the poor with the goal of Poverty alleviation through social mobilization, institutions and capacity building, Govt of India restructured the Swarn Jayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana (SGSY) into National Rural

Livelihood Mission w.e.f. April 1, 2013. The National Rural Livelihoods Mission's aim is to reach out to all poor families, mobilize them into Self-Help-Groups. This programme focuses on women empowerment hence, the rural poor Household (HHs) under NRLM is covered through their women members. At present NRLM is being implemented in 81 Blocks of 12 Districts.

Mukhyamantri Gramkaushal Yojna

To Create opportunities of livelihood to rural people and keep the traditional art and crafts of Himachal alive, *"Mukhya Mantri Gram Kaushal Yojana"* was launched on 6th January 2020 by Rural Development Department H.P. under Himachal State Rural Livelihood Mission. To fulfill the objective of scheme Training on traditional courses started w.e.f. 1st July 2020 in entire state covered with 63 Blocks of 12 District with 72 traditional courses.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was notified by the Government of India in September, 2005 and was made effective w.e.f. 2nd February 2006. The salient feature of the scheme is to provide for the enhancement of livelihood security for the households in rural areas of the State by providing 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. From the Financial Year 2018-19, State Government has increased number of days from 100 to 120 to provide additional wage employment days to needy persons. All adult members of the household of the local Gram Panchayat who have been registered can apply for work. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MG NREGS) provides an significant platform for rural people participation in planning execution in the local development

Pradhanmantri Awaas Yojna (Gramin)

Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) was launched by the GOI during 1985 for SCs, STs and bonded laborers', the benefits of which were extended to General Category also from January, 1996. The scheme has been replaced by a new scheme "Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana" (PMAY-G) from 2016-17. Aim of Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (PMAY-G) is to provide financial assistance to the poor family in rural for construction of a house. The Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (Gramin) was launched in the Himachal Pradesh during 2016-17 by scheme revamping the erstwhile scheme of Indira Awaas Yojana. The main feature of the scheme are cost of financial assistance is shared in the ratio of 90:10 between Centre and State Government.

Mukhyamantri Awaas Yojna (Mmay)

The Mukhya Mantri Awaas Yojana (MMAY) was launched in the State during 2016-17. It is one of the important scheme which provide financial assistance to the rural poor for construction of a house. To avail the benefit of this scheme, beneficiaries are identified through Gram Sabhas and amount of Rs.1.50 lakh per unit is being provided. The scheme is financed 100% by the State Government out of its own resources..

Matri Shakti Bima Yojna

The Matri Shakti Bima Yojna was launched in 2000 by the State Government out of its own resources to provide financial benefit to the women members of BPL households in the State. The scheme provides relief to family members / insured women in case of their death or disablement arising due to any kind of accident, surgical operations like sterilization, mishap at time of child birth/delivery drowning washing away in floods, landslide, insect bite & snake bite etc. The scheme covers all rural women living below the poverty. During the year 2020-21 Rs.262.00 lacs was released.

Watershed development programme

With the objective to develop wastelands, degraded lands, prone and desert areas and to restore the ecological balance by harnessing, conserving and developing natural resources, employment generation, poverty alleviation, community empowerment and development of human and other economic resources of rural areas, to mitigate the adverse effects of extreme climatic conditions, the Rural Development Department is implementing Integrated Watershed Development Component-Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (Erstwhile IWMP) -2008 in the State as per Common guidelines of Watershed Projects issued by GOI in the year 2008. main feature of this scheme are all existing activities of Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) will be continued under PMKSY-Watershed Development Component.

Deendayal Upadhyay Kaushalya Yojna

This is an important govt. sponsored scheme for the rural development. aims to skill rural youth who are poor and provide them with jobs having regular monthly wages at or above the minimum wages. Under this scheme placements are provided in Private or Public formal sectors.

Conclusion

The involvement of rural masses is essential for rural development. In Himachal Pradesh, Panchayati raj Institutions and Rural Development Department are playing

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significant role in the implementation of schemes and programmes in the rural areas of the State. The main objectives of these Centre and state programmes are to reduce poverty, increase the income, provide employment, shelter, irrigation facilities, improve health of women, improve access of the depressed classes to social services and improve infrastructure of rural areas. It is the result of well organized and planned programmes by the rural development and Panchayati Raj Institutions that all the development programmes are being successfully run in the rural area and consequently socio-economic conditions of the rural masses are becoming better from the other part of the country.

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