

DYNAMICS OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS – A STUDY

DR S. SOMALINGAM

Abstract: The present study revealed that, Dynamics of Panchayati Raj Institutions-A study of Khammam district in Telangana State. The Panchayati Raj Institutions in India are the prime instruments of decentralization at the grass-roots level. The Panchayati Raj institutions are intended to be schools for learning lessons of democratic responsibility in political education. It is to prepare the citizens for responsible living and to develop leaders who could take control of democratic institutions at state and national level.

Keywords: PRIs, Political Parties, Caste, Leadership.

Introduction: The independent India inherited a modern type of rural local self government in place of traditional village Panchayats. The constitution of India promulgated in January 1950 for setting of a democratic and semi federal system also includes a provision relating to the Panchayats. The article 40 in the chapter on Directive Principles of State Policy, states that “The States should take steps to organize village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government”¹.

The concept of Decentralization is the central focal theme for the democratically elected governments throughout the world. All the modern governments have started decentralization process in political, financial, administrative and developmental sectors. The process of Centralized governance has created several problems in each and every sector. Hence number of hurdles were faced by several democratic countries in delivery of services, in mobilization of resources and proper allocations of resources, thus ultimately affecting the concept of equity in developing countries. Hence, India is no exception from these hurdles². Peoples participation is *sine qua non* for development.

The concept of peoples participation is to empower the common man to shoulder the responsibilities of administrative and political leadership and make them to discharge more effectively and efficiently and make them more accountable to the people to provide a good governance and transparent administration³. The whole process has to be initiated from below. Further, it could accommodate a every segment of the society especially women and marginalized sections of the society.

The government of India introduced 73rd constitutional amendment Act in 1993 to make the local bodies more viable and administratively

convinced, the government of India also provided them the constitutional entity. So these Panchayat Raj institutions enjoyed constitutional status and discharge the functions permanently and take part in the developmental process in national development⁴. The new Panchayati Raj Act has provided 33% of seats are earmarked for women. This amendment Act facilitated the states for creation of finance commission to share the resources from State and Central governments. By creating this provision in the amendment Act financial flow is ensured regularly and this provision enables Panchayati Raj institution to stand on a permanent footing⁵. In this context, the present study is more relevant to understand the political dynamics of the local body institutions. The present study identified certain gaps, and attempts to suggest his ways and means to fill the gaps. It is intended to take the functions of Panchayat Raj institutions in Khammam district of Telangana State. Hence the study is more relevant and viable to assess the performance.

Objectives and Methodology: The objectives of the present study is, To examine the perceptions and opinions of the local body political leaders, To analyze the operational dynamics of the political leadership in Panchayati Raj institutions, of Panchayati Raj institutions in the district. To assess the dynamics of Panchayat elections.

The present study conducted primary data as well as secondary data. The primary data collected a structured questionnaire in the district of Khammam in Telangana state. The collected data from 50 members of local body representatives like Ward Members, Sarpanches, MPTCs, ZPTCs were taken on random basis as a sample for this study. The secondary data collected by various research journals and books, researchers opinions.

Table – 01: The Respondents (age & caste wise) particulars.					
Caste	%	%	%	%	%
Age	Forward castes	O.B.C.	S.C.	S.T.	Total
18-30 Years.	6.67 01 (9.09)	20.00 03 (30.00)	20.00 03 (33.33)	53.33 08 (40.00)	100.00 15 (30.00)
31-40 Years.	15.00 03 (27.27)	25.00 05 (50.00)	20.00 04 (44.45)	40.00 08 (40.00)	100.00 20 (40.00)
41-50 Years.	44.44 04 (36.37)	11.12 01 (10.00)	-	44.44 04 (20.00)	100.00 09 (18.00)
Above 51 Years	50.00 03 (27.27)	16.67 01 (10.00)	33.33 02 (22.22)	-	100.00 06 (12.00)
Total	22.00 11 (100.00)	20.00 10 (100.00)	18.00 09 (100.00)	40.00 20 (100.00)	100.00 50 (100.00)

*Source: Field Survey.

The table-01 reveals that, majority (70.00%) of the respondents are considered as youngsters and village politics are predominantly dominated by the youth and the middle age people. And remaining (18.00%) are from the middle age people and a negligible (12.00%) are from above 51 years age group. The data indicates that, about (60.00%) of respondents are from S.C., S.T categories and are leading the village panchayaths, thanks to the reservations provided in

the constitution. And political reservations are made to lead the village panchayaths. Hence, they are getting training to get other higher political positions. In the absence of reservations, S.C., S.T's are not in a position to occupy the political positions. It also indicates that the domination of upper castes is wearing thin and Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backwards Caste's are ruling the roost of village panchayaths.

Table – 02: The Respondents responses about the party affiliation (caste-wise).					
Party	%	%	%	%	%
Category	Congress	T.D.P	C.P.I	C.P.I(M)	Total
Forward Castes	(36.36) 04 (17.39)	(36.36) 04 (30.76)	(18.19) 02 (50.00)	(9.09) 01 (10.00)	(100.00) 11 (22.00)
O.B.C.	(50.00) 05 (21.73)	(20.00) 02 (15.38)	-	(30.00) 03 (30.00)	100.00 10 (20.00)
S.C.	(55.56) 05 (21.73)	(22.22) 02 (15.38)	(11.11) 01 (25.00)	(11.11) 01 (10.00)	100.00 09 (18.00)
S.T.	(45.00) 09 (39.15)	(25.00) 05 (38.48)	(5.00) 01 (25.00)	(25.00) 05 (50.00)	100.00 20 (40.00)
Total	(46.00) 23 (100.00)	(26.00) 13 (100.00)	(8.00) 04 (100.00)	(20.00) 10 (100.00)	100.00 50 (100.00)

*Source: Field Survey.

The table-02 indicates that, Congress party is quite popular among the respondents cutting across caste lines, next TDP is popular among the respondents of all the caste's. Congress party is highly influencing the S.C., S.T. sections, majority Upper Caste's are supporting either TDP or Congress party. Even O.B.C.'s are also supporting Congress, TDP and CPI (M) Parties. Another pertinent observation can be

made that both parties (Congress and TDP) have introduced populist policies for downtrodden sections. Hence these two political parties are garnering the support of all the categories of the caste's. Another observation is that, a considerable number of respondents from S.C., and S.T. categories are sympathizers of CPM party. This table reflects the district support structure of the political parties.

Table – 03: The Respondents responses about their entry into politics (education-wise)					
Introducers	%	%	%	%	%
Category	Family- members	Friends/ Relatives	On their own	Political Parties	Total
Illiterate	(20.00) 01 (7.69)	(20.00) 01 (10.00)	-	(60.00) 03 (12.00)	(100.00) 05 (10.00)
Primary	(46.15) 06 (46.16)	(30.78) 04 (40.00)	-	(23.07) 03 (12.00)	(100.00) 13 (26.00)
High School	(26.31) 05 (38.46)	(21.05) 04 (40.00)	-	(52.64) 10 (40.00)	(100.00) 19 (38.00)
Inter/ Degree	(7.69) 01 (7.69)	(7.69) 01 (50.00)	(15.38) 02 (100.00)	(69.24) 09 (36.00)	(100.00) 13 (26.00)
Total	(26.00) 13 (100.00)	(20.00) 10 (100.00)	(04.00) 02 (100.00)	(50.00) 25 (100.00)	(100.00) 50 (100.00)

*Source: Field Survey.

The table-03 shows that, 90% of the respondents are educated ranging from primary to professional courses. A majority respondents were introduced by the Political Parties into the politics. Only a few respondents were either introduced by family/ friends initiatives. Only 4% of the respondents were entered into politics on their own. It is observed that,

without the support of political parties or friends/family members support they could not have entered into politics. It can be concluded that, those who wants to join in politics they should be supported by either political parties or family/ friends support. Unless they muster the support of these people they cannot sustain in politics.

Table – 04: The Respondents perceptions about the party in power for longer period (caste-wise).					
Party	%	%	%	%	%
Category	Congress	T.D.P.	C.P.I.	C.P.I.(M)	Total
Forward castes	(27.27) 03 (20.00)	(9.09) 01 (9.09)	(18.18) 02 (22.22)	(45.46) 05 (33.33)	(100.00) 11 (22.00)
O.B.C.	(40.00) 04 (26.67)	(10.00) 01 (9.09)	(20.00) 02 (22.22)	(30.00) 03 (20.00)	100.00 10 (20.00)
S.C.	(55.56) 05 (33.33)	(22.22) 02 (18.18)	(11.11) 01 (11.11)	(11.11) 01 (6.67)	100.00 09 (18.00)
S.T.	(15.00) 03 (20.00)	(35.00) 07 (63.64)	(20.00) 04 (44.45)	(30.00) 06 (40.00)	100.00 20 (40.00)
Total	(30.00) 15 (100.00)	(22.00) 11 (100.00)	(18.00) 09 (100.00)	(30.00) 15 (100.00)	100.00 50 (100.00)

*Source: Field Survey.

The table-04 reveals that, irrespective of their caste categories, those who have been affiliating with their political parties are still continuing their respective political parties. Their commitment and bindover with their political ideology is stronger than any other people. Nearly 60% of them are from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes category, since they

were encouraged by the political parties. It makes them to bindover to their respective ideologies. The sample respondents are more or less equally divided between left parties and Bourgeoisie parties. A small edge is there towards Congress and Telugu Desham Party because of populist policies.

Table – 05: The Respondents perceptions about Controlling/ Domination of the Panchayat (age and caste-wise).					
Age \ caste	%	%	%	%	%
Forward castes	O.B.C	S.C	S.T	Total	
18-30 Years.	(66.68) 10 (33.33)	(66.66) 01 (20.00)	(20.00) 03 (33.33)	(6.66) 01 (16.67)	(100.00) 15 (30.00)
31-40 Years.	(45.00) 09 (30.00)	(25.00) 03 (60.00)	(25.00) 05 (55.56)	(15.00) 03 (50.00)	100.00 20 (40.00)
41-50 Years.	(55.56) 05 (16.67)	(11.11) 01 (20.00)	(11.11) 01 (11.11)	(22.22) 02 (33.33)	100.00 09 (18.00)
51- above Years.	(100.00) 06 (20.00)	-	-	-	100.00 06 (12.00)
Total	(60.00) 30 (100.00)	(10.00) 05 (100.00)	(18.00) 09 (100.00)	(12.00) 06 (100.00)	100.00 50 (100.00)

*Source: Field Survey.

The table-05 shows that, a majority (60%) of the category of Upper Castes are controlling the village politics. Even S.C and S.T categories also expressed similar opinion that their village politics are being dominated by the Upper Castes. However, after reservations in the local bodies, only downtrodden sections S.C., S.T and OBC's are slowly contesting the

elections and asserting their political rights, since Forward castes are in a entrenched position in village politics. Even younger generation is more conscious than the older generation people. Older generations sway is still continuing in village politics. Without their support not a single soul from S.C., S.T and OBC's cannot withstand in politics.

Table – 06: The Respondents responses about the violence in Panchayath elections (age-wise).			
Violence \ Age	%	%	%
Yes	No	Total	
18-30 Years.	(20.00) 03 (18.75)	(80.00) 12 (35.00)	(100.00) 15 (30.00)
31-40 Years.	(30.00) 06 (37.50)	(70.00) 14 (41.17)	100.00 20 (40.00)
41-50 Years.	(33.33) 03 (18.75)	(66.67) 06 (17.65)	100.00 09 (18.00)
51 & above years.	(66.67) 04 (25.00)	(33.33) 02 (5.88)	100.00 06 (12.00)
Total	(32.00) 16 (100.00)	(68.00) 34 (100.00)	100.00 50 (100.00)

* Source: Field Survey.

The table-06 indicates that, nearly 70% of the respondents irrespective of their age group expressed that they never witnessed any kind of violence in Panchayath elections of village politics. Interestingly 80% of youngsters are also expressed that there is no violence in village elections. It indicates that, majority of the respondents are participating in democratic elections and they are also peace loving

people. It is also observed that, a considerable number of respondents felt that, very few sporadic and stray incidents of violence take place in Panchayath elections. It can be concluded that majority of the respondents are peace loving and participating with democratic spirit in Panchayath politics.

Conclusion: Major findings of the study are discussed and to the intensity of polemics and performance of the Panchayath Raj institutions. Political dynamics of the Political parties and the role of caste and community are playing a predominant role. It is also found that more or less all the political parties contributed their mite for the strengthening of the local body institutions and good governance to the rural and needy people in their respective localities. But certain entrenched castes are ruling the roost from the introduction of Panchayati Raj institutions. At times they clashed each other for providing basic civic amenities to the rural people.

The constitution provisions and reservations, helped women, hitherto the most neglected section of the society. It paved the way for their active participation in Panchayat Raj institutions and encouraged them to learn administrative skills and they proved as worthy administrators with in the short stint of period as

administrators and they are also providing good and efficient solutions to the local issues which are confronted by the local bodies.

It is also found that, the impact of reservations is a boon to the illiterate and poverty ridden people to aspire for important political positions in Panchayati Raj Institutions. It is also found that introduction of Panchayati Raj Institutions has given new lease of life and injected a new blood to the body of political system.

Another finding is that, cutting across the caste and economic status and irrespective of literacy levels every citizen became more conscious and interested to participate in politics with voluntary zeal and interest. It shows the positive impact of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. They are training grounds for the upcoming and new emerging leaders at the grassroot levels.

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Dr. S. Somalingam/ U.G.C. Post-Doctoral Fellow/Dept./ of Political Science/ Kakatiya University/
Warangal/Telangana/ Mobile No.09177909931/ssomalingam@yahoo.in