

Rural Development through Panchayati Raj System: Prospects and Challenges

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Abstract:

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) is a basic step towards Indian democratic decentralisation that provide the administrative apparatus for the implementation of programmes of rural development. Panchayati Raj Institutions are the only source which not only provides opportunity to locals to participate in the process of planning & development but also in the selection of beneficiaries and implementation of programmes. As these institutions are very effective in creating political awareness of the masses, protection of rights of the beneficiaries and also very helpful in making people self-dependent, self-sufficient, self-reliance etc. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, too had categorically said that in a country like India, village panchayats can play an important role in strengthening democracy at the grass root level in general and rural development in particular.

Key Terms: Rural Development, Gandhi's Ideal on Panchayati Raj, Decentralisation, Perceptions and Problems in Decentralisation, Grass-Root Level Planning.

Introduction:

To think rural development without Panchayati Raj is a very difficult question to answer. The objectives of rural development are multi-dimensional and multi-functional. As such rural development should be not looked upon merely as improving the socio-economic conditions of the rural poor but also as motivating rural people, rural communities to take up an integrated development of rural areas. In this direction, there is a need to strengthen the process of development at the individual level, then linking it to a family and then to a group of families and the village. The whole process will increase active participation of the rural people in all the stages of rural development programmes. In this context, Panchayati Raj system has the potential to empower the rural people through the active and meaningful participation in various activities of the process of rural development schemes i.e. planning, identification, selection, rejection,

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