



DECENTRALIZATION OF PLANNING IN THE RURAL AREA OF INDIA AT THE CROSSROADS: THE CONTEXT, CHALLENGES AND CONSEQUENCES FROM DECENTRALIZATION TO PEOPLE'S PLANNING

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ABSTRACT

Even while decentralized planning was not widely used in India before the nation obtained independence in 1947, the concept quickly gained traction. After India gained independence, many government commissions and committees advocated for implementing decentralized planning. The most significant development in this direction was the passage of a pair of constitutional amendments that defined the authority of municipalities and established formal channels for citizen involvement. The changes legitimized decentralized planning in the Constitution and served as a national planning example.

Keywords: *Decentralization; Self-government; Constitutional Amendment; Political will; Funds and functionaries; Parallel bodies*

I. INTRODUCTION

Every nation, including India, has accepted planning as a tool for development. Therefore a country's plans and programs have a better chance of running smoothly if its planning machinery is properly established. An educated and well-organized effort to narrow down a set of options in order to bring about desired social and economic change is what planners call "planning." It is worth noting that the planning movement, which had its genesis in a 1928 Soviet experiment emphasizing centralized, top-down planning, eventually spread to a sizable fraction of the world. As a result, a new trend is emerging, one that is sweeping the world's developing nations: decentralized planning. Decentralization and democracy are the theoretical underpinnings of bottom-up or decentralized planning. The former is just a format, while the latter is the real deal in emphasizing audience involvement.

Moreover, local self-government, which may institutionalize the involvement of the target populations, is the hub of decentralized planning. Organizations, institutions, individuals, and groups may all better carry out their missions and fulfill their obligations when they use a well-thought-out plan. In this approach to planning, people and organizations are responsible for decisive actions, including setting priorities, allocating means, and guiding procedures that impact the individual's life. Although "the independence and authority of the

people vary tremendously," Robert Chambers argues, "all can do something" (Chambers,1983). By taking this tack, we can better see how citizen engagement is essential as "a method of re-interpreting and re-enforcing the democratic ethos" [1]. This method is predicated on the idea that people can figure out what works best for them. Interestingly, Amartya Sen considers people's involvement a basic human right.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF DECENTRALIZED PLANNING IN INDIA

Few attempts were made toward creating decentralized planning before 1947 when India gained its freedom. Sir Vishveshwaraya's ideas for decentralized planning in India may be traced back to his District Development Scheme: Economic Progress by the Forced Marches (1942), in which he proposed a four-tier planning framework for the city of Mysore. To that end, the Gandhians have always advocated for planning at the community level as a foundation for national policymaking. Some have suggested that a more open and inclusive development process may be achieved via decentralized planning [1]. The Government of India appointed the Balwantray Mehta Committee in 1957, and its report recommended the creation of three levels of Panchayati Raj Institutions, each of which would be comprised of an elected statutory local bodied endowed with resources, authority, and power and would operate under the supervision of a decentralized administrative system. Decentralization of planning and development efforts has continued since then. According to the Second Plan document, "weaker sectors like tenant-cultivators, landless laborers, and craftsmen may not profit adequately from support offered by the Government unless there is a comprehensive village planning, which takes into consideration the requirements of the whole community." It was in 1969 that the Planning Commission of India first laid forth its recommendations on how to implement district planning. Local self-government groups, Panchayati Raj Institutions, cooperative organizations, and government agencies were urged to integrate their plans by the Planning Commission, which recommended that states choose the district as the unit of planning below the state level [2]. The Dantwala Committee on Block Planning [3] report highlighted the need for block-level planning and guided creating plans for specific blocks around the nation. Because of infrastructure issues at the neighborhood level, the committee recommended a gradual, methodical approach to introducing good block planning. With this in mind, the committee advocated combining the two separate exercises of creating block and district plans. Progress, though, was not very encouraging. When the Asoka Mehta Committee was formed in 1978, it ushered in a new age of decentralized planning and local administration in India. It also advocated formulating plans at the district level along the lines outlined by the Dantwala Committee, establishing the district as the first point of decentralization below the state level under public oversight. A report on the decentralization of development planning and implementation at the state level was delivered to the Prime Minister by the Economic Advisory Council in 1983. C.H. Hanumantha Rao's Working Group on District Planning [4] recommended a return to the district level in 1984.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To that end, we have combed through the research on rural development programs in India. Only a few of these articles addressed all of the many plans available. Therefore, in the present research, we have examined and analyzed the current situation of the numerous rural development plans adopted in India. In their paper "A Review of Rural Development Programmes in India," Panda and Majumdar [5] reviewed the many rural development initiatives that had been carried out in India. The research used secondary information from public domain sources such as www.gov.in, www.nrega.net, and others. Various rural development programs, including MANREGA, RSVY, IAY, SGRY, and PMGSY, were examined in this research. According to the study's findings, "MANREGA" is a "silver bullet" for combating rural poverty and unemployment in India. In his research paper "Rural Development Schemes in India- A Study," Rao [6] analyzed the function of numerous rural development programs in India. Specifically, he focused on the three programs (PMAY-G, PMGSY, and MANREGA) that were active in India at the time of his research. The research relied on

previously collected data. Based on the findings, these three programs were crucial to rural growth in India. As of the end of the 2017–18 fiscal year, 44.54 lakh homes have been built against the one crore home goal set for the end of March 2019. (MAY-G). A total of 5.12 billion families have been helped through MANGA.

According to Sawant's [7] research, "Agriculture Sector and Rural Development in India: An Empirical Analysis," the agricultural sector significantly influences rural improvement in India. Secondary data, including yearly reports from the Agriculture & Farmer Welfare Department, the Ministry of Rural Development, the Census Bureau, and the National Socioeconomic Survey, were utilized in the analysis. According to the findings, the agricultural industry plays a pivotal role in rural communities. The rural economy and economy as a whole in India benefit from this. India's economic growth is directly tied to the success of its rural areas. Recent developments and difficulties in rural education were examined by Das and Samanta [8] in their research, "Rural Education in India: As an Engine of Sustainable Rural Development." This study drew on data from several different rural education initiatives in India. Secondary information was used for the analysis. The research found that education in rural areas is crucial to ensuring the long-term success of rural communities. Without proper schooling, rural areas will never progress to their full potential.

Sushma and Phougat's [9] research titled "Role of NREGA in Rural Development" assessed progress in rural areas thanks to the NREGA program. The research used secondary sources of information collected from public domain resources such as www.nrega.nic.in and www.rural.nic.in. The research showed that NREGA had a major impact on rural development. The rural populace appreciates that NREGA serves a dual purpose—on the one hand, it creates jobs for them, and on the other, it helps improve rural infrastructure. Research by Singh and Mann [10] titled "A Discussion on Rural Development Strategies of Haryana" examined the state's involvement and rural development initiatives. Descriptive in nature, the research relied on already-existing information for its findings. This research indicated that poverty reduction, improved job prospects, and initiatives to encourage self-employment were the most common goals of rural development initiatives in Haryana [10].

Panchayat Raj Institutions play an important role in village development, and Gill et al. [11] explore how much the Amendment has helped decentralize authorities, speed up development, and improve democracy. More than 95% of respondents were unaware of the 73rd Amendment, while 90% of Panchayat leaders were unaware of their legislative, judicial, administrative or financial powers. It has been argued by Mohanty [12] that empowerment is a form of participation, that people's participation through decentralization, open administrations and strengthening of civil society and local communities' abilities and opportunities to develop their organizations, resources and activities is empowerment. According to the research, a decentralization process is important for effective local government. However, the Panchayat Raj system was effectively and efficiently implemented in various Indian states following the implementation of landmark acts 73rd and 74th CCAs, which provided constitutional support for local people, particularly those from marginalized groups such as Scheduled caste, Scheduled tribes, and women. It is also critical of the Act and decentralization process in India by researchers, policymakers, and academics. Panchayat Raj institutions in Kerala have been studied for their function, historical context, and various acts and committee recommendations. He tried to critically assess the decentralization process and point out new state developments on the much-discussed people's plan. He looked at how the Kerala Development Programme, at all levels of the state's rural and urban government, ensures the maximum engagement of the people in the decision-making process (2007). Wolf [13] examines the implementation of the 73rd Amendment Act and the functioning of the Panchayats in this legislation.

When looking at the decentralization process from the perspective of the individuals involved, Sethi [14] found that active community engagement helps to eliminate socioeconomic inequities and empower poor rural people. People's engagement in local planning and development, as well as their involvement in organizations

or agencies, are explored, as are the factors that contribute to the social and economic empowerment of those in society who are marginalized. An investigation of the Grama Sabha in Madhya Pradesh's scheduled area was undertaken by Patton [15]. Local leadership and bureaucracy prevented the Grama Sabha from thriving in Madhya Pradesh, which he claims is the most potent basis for decentralized administration. According to Singh, a thriving Grama Sabha is needed to empower the people of Madhya Pradesh, and the Grama Sabha at the grassroots level has seen limited stakeholder engagement. In two Indian states, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, attention was drawn to concerns of decentralization and delegation of authority. As a result of their presence on the Mandal Prajaparishads, they noted new cooperative characteristics.

A critical assessment of the 73rd constitutional Amendment to change the decentralization process in India was emphasized by Tinker [16]. After the 73rd Amendment Act was implemented, the constitutional clause provided a 33 percent reserve for marginalized groups. Thanks to reservation, women, scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes gained a foothold in local self-government institutions. The execution of the People's Plan campaign in Kerala in 1996 gave the locals a bigger say in the development process. People's struggle for decentralization in Kerala, India, has been considered in this groundbreaking research. According to the survey, the first four years of reforms may be accurately referred to as the campaign. Regardless of their function or political affiliation, respondents agreed that the campaign positively impacted progress. According to their findings, the campaign has developed frameworks for participatory government where none previously existed. The compilation of local development plans, the debate on and the design of thousands of projects, and the innovation have injected fresh ideas into development. When it comes to planning, Chathukulam and John advocate for decentralization rather than planning in their paper. According to the authors, Kerala aimed to include participatory planning within the five-year plan framework. The people's Plan campaign in Kerala was explained in detail by them. Regarding strengthening the Panchayats, Kerala's experience demonstrates that participatory planning alone would not be enough. The People's Campaign in Kerala is the subject of Sharma's [17] investigation.

According to her, the state's distinct socioeconomic and political culture is well-positioned to achieve democratic decentralization. As an example of popular mobilization, the People's Campaign stood out. According to her, the decentralization debate in Kerala is significant to the nation since the People Campaign has provided a new paradigm for participatory planning. According to her, the People's Campaign in Kerala's Grama Sabha, Panchayat and task force members, and resource individuals in planning for development and welfare, is a vital part of the campaign. Muraleedharan [18] examines some of these challenges in light of Kerala's local-level planning and people's campaign for development. Using dynamics, we can see how participation has changed over time and how the government's increased efforts have affected it during the last three years. Some of the conceivable and tentative factors that may influence women's involvement in development have been examined by him. Kerala's path towards strengthening and practicing local government to make democracy relevant, long-lasting, and beneficial was examined in depth by Oommen [19], who wrote an essay outlining the state's significant concerns and challenges. He emphasized the need to include the excluded in the solution to Kerala's inequality issue and the importance of making political leaders more visible in today's political climate. He stated that Kerala's decentralized government experience has shown that democracy is more than a simple vote. However, advancing democracy necessitated a never-ending search for fairness. An energetic and politically engaged populace lives in Kerala; nonetheless, the state's associational life has become disjointed.

The marginalized part of the population has been given a significant role in local planning due to the people's plan movement. Ramakantan, Vijayanand, and Lakshmanan [20] stated that the people's plan campaign is an innovative strategy to improve the operation of LSGs through community engagement in democratic

decentralization and empowerment. People's Plan campaigning in Kerala is a one-of-a-kind phenomenon. Gender-based research has been conducted on decentralized planning. Through their work with marginalized communities in Kerala, Seema and Mukherjee [21] attempted to address problems of gender equity, environmental sustainability, and environmental injustice. In Kerala, they looked at the Peoples Plan Campaign's gender component. Women have been marginalized in the development process, and how may decentralization help change this trend? To what extent has rural women's empowerment been facilitated by the planning process and a shift toward female leadership in rural areas? Women have been represented in many LGS institutions, but have they participated? How much of the People's Plan campaign's transformative initiatives have been based on gender planning? Due to the PPC, the decentralization and the inclusion of gender equity in local government and development in Kerala have been widely publicized. As Khattak [22] noted, non-gendered features of decentralization are the most important ones to consider while studying the topic and implementing it. According to him, women's issues may be better addressed by having them represented on municipal councils, and he makes specific proposals. He studied the evolution of municipal government and its role in the nation-state's emergence. He briefly compares women's participation in local administration in India and Pakistan. According to Khattak, a possible explanation for women's increased involvement in municipal politics is the trickle-down impact of their legal and policy liberation at the national or provincial level. A woman's ability to participate in her community depends on her economic status. People in Pakistan have greater faith in male council members than female council members. The country's major political parties remain mute regarding women's roles and participation in local government.

According to Gangrade [23], a new political culture was established by women's roles as proxy reserves in the villages of north Indian states. Panchayat Raj institutions will remain a dead letter if land reforms are not implemented. The 73rd Amendment, implemented in 1992, was a crucial factor in the gradual devolution of authorities, duties, and responsibilities to the Panchayat Raj Institutions. As a result, when women have positions in municipal governments, the administration of affairs is more effective and transparent. It raises some questions about the future of decentralization regarding human rights. Political space was provided in Panchayat for marginalized groups and women in Panchayats and for subsequent exposure to decentralized governance, planning development, and capacity building through imparting training. The 73rd Amendment Act, according to Bohra [24], was primarily intended to decentralize authority and eliminate gender imbalance and prejudice in local self-governance organizations. "One-third of seats are reserved for women under Article 243, which encourages participation from individuals traditionally excluded from the decision-making process."

IV. ANOTHER MODE OF BUREAUCRATISATION: DISTRICT RURAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

After the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution, the bureaucratic District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs) that operate independently from the Zilla Parishad and manage crores of rupees should have been no more. Still, no such indicators have emerged almost a decade after the constitutional change. Instead, India's central and state governments are maintaining and expanding these restrictions, which undermine the panchayats' legitimacy and influence. In Goa, the DRDAs weren't established until the year 2002. Implications and Recommendations There is little doubt that the liberal Western idea of local self-government inspired by the grassroots level has never been implemented in India. Colonial rulers' economic, political, and administrative needs gave rise to a local government system throughout that era. Even though the liberation movement led by Gandhi brought attention to the need to create and strengthen rural local administration, the resulting enthusiasm has since waned due to a lack of concrete factors. Democratic decentralization was given lip service by the new governing classes (politicians and the bureaucracy combined), but their real goal was

to consolidate power. Inadequate political backing and bureaucratic opposition, along with the socioeconomic realities of rural India, doomed the first generation of rural local administration. On the ground where casteism, communalism, and economic inequality were already strongly dividing the people, the institutions imposed from above helped mold them. The elites took control of the institutions and utilized them to gain influence and favor in the towns. In post-colonial India, the colonial practice of devolving power to the local level persists unabated.

The risks to local democracy in rural India are firmly rooted in the Indian Constitution, government, and economy [25]; thus, the 1992 constitutional effort to overcome colonial tradition does not appear to operate correctly on the ground. After the re-organization of the nation in the 1950s, when inconsistencies emerged between the decentralized polity and the centralized Constitution, the need for a thorough reorganization of the center-state relationship gained momentum. Even though the Indian government established a Committee to look into this again in the 1980s, no concrete results have been found as of yet. The National Democratic Alliance administration in Delhi made attempts in this direction, but little progress was made. The current administration, the United Progressive Alliance, is not behind the eight ball, but they have accomplished nothing of note thus yet. These efforts highlight the need to reevaluate this section of the Indian Constitution to strengthen municipal institutions in rural areas. These fundamental inconsistencies remain unresolved even though the Constitution was changed to empower local administration in rural India. The state list still includes local government.

V. METHODOLOGY

A. Study Design

Online survey tools will be used to collect responses from the sample population. The titles and abstracts of the remaining papers were reviewed in detail as part of the screening phase of the systematic review process, and some publications were eliminated based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Eligibility examination, the second step, included a more in-depth review of the complete texts of the studies that made it through the screening phase. The same was done to weed out several additional studies that were not relevant to the topic at hand.

B. Sampling design and sample size

Sampling involves choosing a subset of a population to examine. The research method determines how many people are included in the sample. Cases, individuals, or persons who have received a certain therapy could make up the research population. Sampling techniques range widely and include the more intuitively named "basic random," "systematic and stratified," "cluster," and others. It is important to take precautions to guarantee a large enough sample to draw reliable conclusions. Enough people should be included in the sample for all relevant statistical significance tests. In order to be trustworthy, the samples must accurately represent the population at large. Thus, the likelihood of false positives is reduced.

C. Data collection

This is a well-thought-out procedure through which several types of data (i.e., relevant, pertinent, suitable, and essential) are gathered for the research project.

Both primary and secondary sources were used to compile this study's findings. Similarly, various data-gathering techniques were used to arrive at the same result. By "primary data," we mean the information gathered at the beginning of a study. Data that come close to these ideals of veracity, uniqueness, and error control are sought after. Respondents were polled for the information.

Annual reports from several departments and articles from various periodicals and online databases were used as secondary sources in this study. This analysis suggests the general trends despite the quantitative nature of the questionnaire/survey answers.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study of statistical data often requires the use of statistical techniques which are beyond the capabilities of a non-statistician. Several programs exist for analyzing data statistically. In the field of social sciences, this statistical software package (SPSS). Variables are the building blocks of data in statistical analysis (s). Univariate and multivariate data may both be encountered. The quantity of variables dictates the statistical methods used by the researcher. Numerous multivariate analyses may be conducted on statistical data if multiple variables are considered. This category includes techniques like factor analysis, discriminant analysis, and other forms of statistical data analysis. Similarly, univariate statistical analysis is carried out if there is only one piece of data to analyze. The t-test, the z-test, the f-test, etc., all fall under this category.

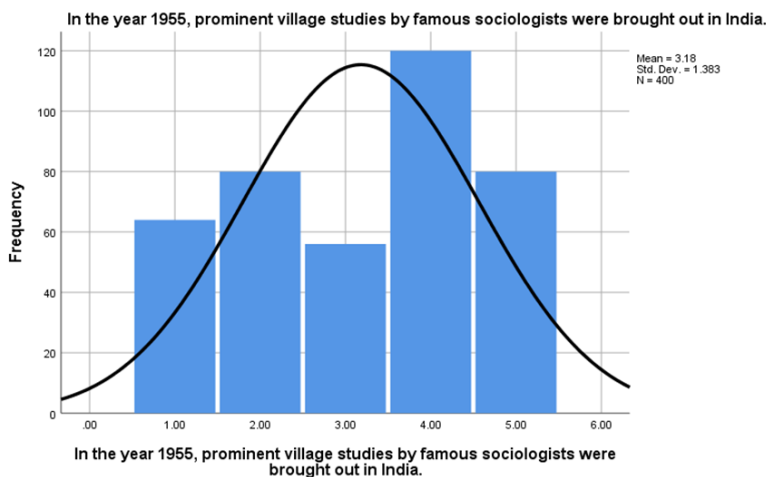
- The analysis's findings are supposedly from a sample of 400 people. In the Population Density, 112 respondents were very much in agreement, 80 respondents agreed, 120 were neutral, 48 disagreed, and 40 were very much in disagreement.

Density of Population					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	112	28.0	28.0	28.0
	agree	80	20.0	20.0	48.0
	neutral	120	30.0	30.0	78.0
	disagree	48	12.0	12.0	90.0
	strongly disagree	40	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

- "Population Homogeneity" Eighty percent (80%) of respondents strongly agreed, ninety-six percent (24%) agreed, seventy-two percent (18%) were ambivalent, eighty percent (20%) disagreed, and eighteen percent (18%) severely disagreed.

Homogeneity of Population					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	80	20.0	20.0	20.0
	agree	96	24.0	24.0	44.0
	neutral	72	18.0	18.0	62.0
	disagree	80	20.0	20.0	82.0
	strongly disagree	72	18.0	18.0	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

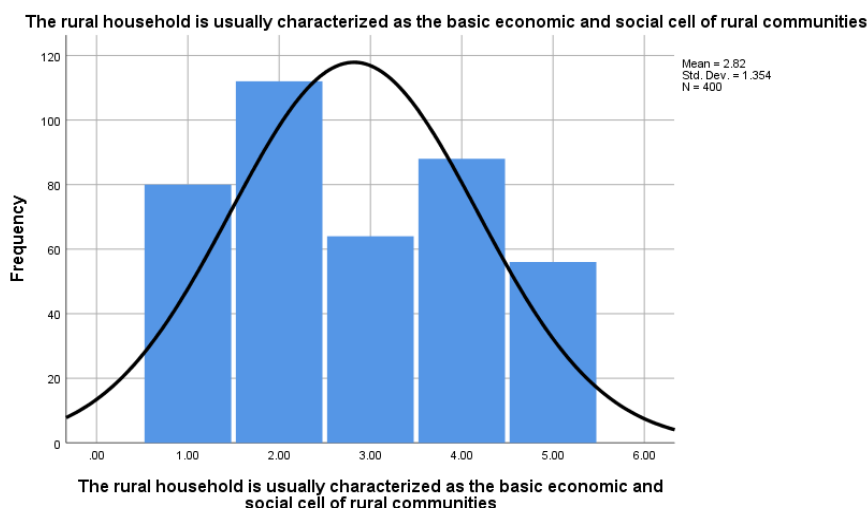
- It was in 1955 when "notable rural studies by eminent sociologists were published in India." Sixty-four percent of respondents gave a strong agreement, eighty percent gave an agreement, fifty-six percent gave a neutral response, twenty-twenty percent gave a disagreement, and twenty percent gave a strong disagreement.



- "Households and communities are the backbone of rural society." One hundred twelve respondents reacted with a strong agreement, 72 responded with an agreement, 96 responded with a neutral response, 64 disagreed, and 56 strongly disagreed.

Rural societies are organized on the basis of a network of households and communities.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	112	28.0	28.0	28.0
	agree	72	18.0	18.0	46.0
	neutral	96	24.0	24.0	70.0
	disagree	64	16.0	16.0	86.0
	strongly disagree	56	14.0	14.0	100.0
Total		400	100.0	100.0	

- The rural home "is often seen as the region's fundamental economic and social cell." Of those polled, 20% (80 people) strongly agreed, 28% (11 people) agreed, 16% (64 people) were ambivalent, 22% (88 people) disagreed, and 14% (56 people) were opposed.



VII. CONCLUSION

According to the public's perception, the government has fulfilled its goals for rural development, although with a few hiccups in executing these programs. Many people appreciate the contribution of DRDAs to rural development programs. Based on religion, sex, age, education, and other factors, there is no distinction in

providing help to the people. As a result, it is recommended that the government focus on rural development issues.

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