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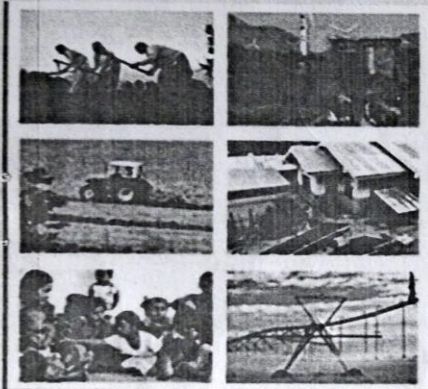
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Democratic Decentralization And Rural Development: A Framework At Understanding Through the Assam Panchyatiraj Act.

Dr. Kakali Borah

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science Marangi Mahavidalaya.
Contact Number : 8638419725 ,Email ID : kakaliborah751@gmail.com

Abstract

Democratic decentralization is a popular concept in the area of political discourse. Democratic decentralization is a process by which the activities of an organisation, particularly their regarding planning and decision making, are distributed or delegated away from a central, a authoritative location or a group. To remove the all obstacles of rural areas people as well as to understood the meaning of decentralisation the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution was made which come into force in 1993. This Act has given scope to revive the democratic spirit of rural people by providing an opportunity to associate and participate their own local development affairs Under this Act, State legislature is supposed to develop powers and responsibilities to the local bodies to enable them to function. as Institution to the local-self government. In this context the Assam Panchyati Raj Act was adopted in the year 1994 in accordance with the 73rd amendment of the Constitution. The main aim at this Act is to transfer the power in real the hands of the rural people and appreciated them to active part in all government activities in the absence of discrimination

Introduction :

Democratic decentralization is a popular concept in the area at political discourse. Democratic decentralisation is a Process by which the activities of an organisation, particularly those regarding planning and decision making are distributed. Decentralisation. means transfer of planning, decision-making or administrative authority from the Central government to its field organization, local government, local administrative authority "semi-autonomous organizations, local administrative units or non- government organisation. Now a days democratic decentralisation is a global phenomenon. It should be seen development, variety at institutions for empowering and upliftment the marginalized and the poor."²

In the context of the third world, decentralised governance has specially significance because the target group of development in the third World is the poor people. Many Countries like India have embarked on Constitutional amendment to strengthen the process of decentralization. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments in India have sought to create a new tier in Country's governance structure by giving constitutional sanction to Panchyats and urban local bodies. The Constitution of independent India incorporated the idea of establishment of Panchyatiraj institution in the Directive principles at state Policy (Article 40)³

After independence, the first Panchyati Raj Act was the Assam Rural panchyat Act, 1948. The Act provided for two tire panchyatiraj system i.e. Primary" Panchyat at the village level and rural panchyat at the apex level. Act Provided for an election of Panchyatiraj institution of Universal franchise. In 1957 a Committee was Constituted under the Chairmanship at Balwant Rai known as Mehta Committee and the main aim of this committee is to the involvement of local People in the process of development and lay emphasis on three-tier. panchyats mainly Gaonpanchyat at the village level, Anchalike parchyat at block level and Mahkuma parishat at the sub-divisional level.⁴

At the same, in order to revitalize the local self- government, 1959 Act was replaced by Assam panchyatiraj Act 1972 and a two- tier structure was introduced. The main aim at this Act was to provided scope for people's Participation in rural decision making Process along with reservation of weaker section at the society. In 1986, Government of India has set up a Committee to prepare a scheme on the revitalization of the panchyats. The Committee The commended that panchyats should be constitutionally recognized and protected by inventing a new provision in the Constitution. The committee also recommended that panchyats should be constitutionally recognized and protected by inserting a new provision in the constitution. The committee also recommended that the provision should ensure regular, free and fair election at the panchyats. In conformity with there recommendation the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 came into force and it become effected on 24th April 1993. As per this Act, the Government of Assam enacted the Assam



Panchyatraj Act, 1994 repealing the Assam Panchyati Raj Act, 1986. This Act introduced the three-tier panchyat system i.e. Gaonpanchyot, Anchalik Panchyat and Zilla parishads. 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act has given scope to revive the democratic spirit of the rural poor people by providing an opportunity to associate and participate their own local developmental affairs. It also provided decentralization and devolution of fund, functions and functionaries:

It is felt that unless the people are associated with the formulation and implementation of the development programmes, it will not be successful. The aims and objectives of the new Act is decentralization and devolution of Powers and functions and empowering the panchyati raj institution and can regarded as the third tier at the Indian federation. The article 243 (B) of the Constitution and the Assam panchyat Act, 1994 defines Gram Sabha an "a body consisting of person registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of panchyat at the village level."⁵

The Assam panchyat raj Act 1994 can further amended in the year 1997. Here, it emphasised that the Ministers-in-charge of the respective District to be certified by the Government and chairman of the District planning Committee and the President of the Concerned Zilla Parishad shall be the vice-chairman of the District planning Committee.⁶

Again Assam Panchyat Amendment Act was passed in the year 2018 to strengthening the Powers and functions of Gaon panchyats and facilitated the rural people take part in various developmental activities without any barriers. The main aim at this Act was -

1. That this provision shall not be applicable in respect at those person who have more than two children prior to the date at Commencement at this Act.
2. The members must be passed at least VI Standard
3. There who are not passed under HSLC or equivalent examination under any Council or Board recognised by the state or Central government are exempted to the post of Gaon panchyats president and Anchalik Panchyat's members.
4. On the case of candidates belonging to ST, OBC and MOBC, the minimum educational qualification shall be class VIII examination passed from any educational institutions.⁷

Despite frequent change of structures at Panchyatiraj institutions, it has not been able to fulfil the expectation of the people due to the lack of political will, over dominance of administration, pressurize the political authority over Government officials corruption etc are the some major causes behind the failure of local bodies to act as the arm of democratic decentralization. At the same time due to the poverty, unemployment, illiteracy are the barriers to the rural peoples for active participation in panchyats. In the following we discuss some reasons of the failure to achieve the goals of panchyati raj system are as follows -

1. Lack at awareness of the people in panchyat activities and absence of favourable environment at people's participation.
2. Conscious voters are not interested in local affairs.
3. Party organisation always tried to influence the panchayat bodies.
4. The Panchyats have lost its self governmental character. Besides they have become implementing agency of the government scheme.
5. Lack of proper circulation and information of the different schemes of the government to the common people.
6. There is no proper communication between common people and government official.
7. Elected members are only interested in satisfying their higher level political leaders than the voters.
8. The official formalities and red tapism has dissatisfied the poor people.

Suggestions :

Here we focussed some suggestion as-

1. The panchyat functionaries should be made accountable to Gaon Sabha. Gaonsabha should perform their role as a people's parliament which imposes checks and balances on the executive authority of the panchyat.
2. To develop awareness about their rights and duties, the Right to Information Act may popularized.
3. The government official should reduce their gape with the common people so that poor villagers can meet them without hesitation to express their problems and grievance. The red-tapism should also be minimized in Panchyats activities.
4. Panchyats should organize meetings, seminar, popular talks, workshops and other means to popularize the rural development scheme taken by the government.

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