CHAPTER-VII

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS
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Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are instruments for the implementation of the development programmes. In tune with the recommendations of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee, Rajasthan was the first State to take to Panchayati Raj, to make effective institution participating in the process of rural development in 1959. Contribution to growth and welfare is the main motto of Panchayati Raj. As these bodies are looked upon as institutions promoting rural growth, it becomes relevant and meaningful to assess their role in rural development.

The main objective of the present study is to evaluate the spatial aspect of governance in PRIs with special reference to Rajasthan. This has been done by making a detailed study of two sample districts, i.e. Alwar and Nagaur.

Local Government, in essence, means government at the local level for ‘promoting the well-being of the people’. It provides a sound basis for the establishment of healthy democratic traditions in India. Its development has been encouraged and fostered by the State to enable the mass of our people to participate in the administration and other aspects of community life.

In Rajasthan, Panchayats have existed through the ages and have played an important role in administering the functions of local importance. Although these bodies were in their primary stage till the formation of Rajasthan, yet they provided a firm foundation on which a sound structure of democracy could be built up. Introduction of Panchayati Raj in 1959 and its association with Community Development Programme are significant developments in the sphere of rural local administration. However, its significance depends upon the degree to which it makes people development conscious and inspired their constructive participation in local elective statutory institution.

There has been more continuity than change in Panchayati Raj system after 1959 in Rajasthan. In fact, the era from 1959 to 1966 was the golden period of Panchayati Raj in Rajasthan. During the period there was political stability in the State and the idealism generated by the freedom struggle and also idea of Mahatma
Gandhi were still fresh in the minds of the people. This also was the period when Central Government’s support to Panchayati Raj was assured. The basic structure has remained, by and large, the same ever since. But motto behind it has been forgotten largely. After this period there started decline. In this context George Mathew mentioned in his article where he compared the situations in Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh:

“Both Nagaur and Shadnagar present the picture of a moribund Panchayati Raj. The historic event of Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurating them is totally forgotten. True to our sense of history there is not even a memorial to commemorate it. The main reason for failure, whether it is Jats in Nagaur or Reddy in Shadnagar, they never wanted to change the status quo. The two auspicious days: Gandhi’s birth day in Nagaur and Vijaya Dasami in Shadnagar could not meet the challenges posed by feudalism and feudal values in the area. The interaction at societal level formed the major problem for proper understanding of Panchayati Raj system.”

Issues such as irregular elections, inadequate representation to women and weaker sections, insufficient devolution of powers and lack of financial resources are addressed in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act to make PRIs as effective units of self-governance. Now to conform to the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 has been enacted. The Government of Rajasthan has empowered the weaker sections like SCs, STs, OBCs and Women. It has increased the participation of these sections in the overall decision-making process.

Rajasthan adopted a three tier Panchayati Raj system with Panchayat Samitis at the block level and Zila Parishads at the district level, while the third tier, Gram Panchayat at the village level. Of these three, it is only in the case of the lowest tier that its head (Sarpanch) is elected directly by the people and is contested on the individual-base, not party base. For these two reasons- the post of Sarpanch is powerful because he is truly representative of democratic decentralization at the grass root level. On the other hand elections for the posts of Zila Parishads and Panchayat Samitis level were held on the political party basis.

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In the sample districts of Alwar and Nagaur, the highest representation of OBC population is exhibited by the districts of Alwar in 2000, 2005 and 2010 Panchayat elections being 44.72%, 17.81% and 44.00% (in 2000) and 49.45%, 45.14% and 46.00% (in 2005) at Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad levels respectively. In 2010 Panchayat elections, the representation OBCs is 50.43%, 41.46% and 60.00% at Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad levels respectively. Similarly, the highest representation of OBC population is exhibited by the district of Nagaur in past the panchayat elections representing 46.15%, 50.70% & 62.50% (in 2000) and 47.78%, 61.27% & 68.75% (in 2005) at Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad levels respectively. In 2010 Panchayat elections, the OBCs representation is exhibited as 52.93%, 48.24% and 47.92% at Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad levels respectively.

The highest representation of SC has also recorded in each of the three-tiers of Nagaur district, the figures being 25.73%, 21.13%, 22.92% in (2000) and 25.72%, 21.83%, 20.83% in (2005) for the Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad levels respectively. In 2010 Panchayat elections, similarly the highest representation of SC has been seen in Nagaur as 21.16%, 20.01% and 18.67% at Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad levels respectively. The highest representation of ST has been found in the district of Alwar, the figures for Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad being 11.13%, 7.69% and 8.70% (in 2000) and 12.54%, 14.63% and 5.56% (in 2005) respectively. In 2010 Panchayat elections, the ST representation has been seen highest in Alwar only as the figures are 12.92%, 12.02% and 8.00% at Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad levels respectively. On the other hand, the lowest representation of ST population is found in the district of Nagaur, the figures for the Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad being 0.56%, 0.0%, 0.0% in (2000), 0.0%, 0.0%, 0.0% in (2005) and 0.22%, 0.00%, 0.00% in (2010) respectively. The fact that has to be noted is that the proportion of ST population to total population is as low as 0.20% to total population in the district. It can be concluded that weaker sections i.e. SCs and STs are adequately represented. While the women participation is weak but the situation is changing relatively. The presence of women and other weaker sections in the Panchayats are very vital because via their representation, they obtain the platform for
sharing benefits from the various rural development programmes, for which the Panchayati Raj Institutions are responsible.

Among these two districts namely, Alwar and Nagaur, the expenditure amount under Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)/ Swaranjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) was largest in Alwar in 1995-96, 1996-97, 1997-98, 1998-99 and 2000-01 being Rs. 985.00, Rs. 863.87, Rs.1072.79, Rs. 1067.75 and Rs. 1,018.37 lakhs. In 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10 years the expenditure amount was largest as the figures are Rs. 476.48, Rs. 587.41, Rs. 533.46, Rs. 490.68 and Rs. 698.78 lakhs respectively. While expenditure under IRDP/SGSY was largest in Nagaur in 1999-2000 being Rs. 621.50 lakhs. Again Alwar got first rank in terms of loan amount provided under IRDP/SGSY from 1995-96 to 2001-02 being 78.51%, 83.33%, 85.83%, 87.06%, 78.08%, 77.35% and 76.39% in respective years. On the other hand, Nagaur got the largest amount in terms of subsidy provided under IRDP/SGSY from 1995-96 to 2001-02, being 33.75%, 23.97%, 27.58%, 24.92%, 30.04%, 29.84% and 34.21% in respective years.

The total benefited families under IRDP/SGSY were largest in Alwar in the Year of 1995-96, 2000-02 and 2001-02 being 4,851, 3,458 and 2,745. In 2006-07, 2008-09 and 2009-10 years the beneficiaries were largest in Alwar. The figures are as 1,513, 970, and 1,397 in the years 2006-07, 2008-09 and 2009-10 respectively. While Nagaur has the largest total benefited families under IRDP/SGSY in 1996-97, 1997-98, 1998-99 and 1999-2000 having the numbers as 3,797, 3,808, 3,422 and 2,557. In the years of 2005-06 and 2007-08 the beneficiaries were largest in Nagaur as 1,300, 1,301 respectively. The number of benefited SC families under IRDP/SGSY was largest in Nagaur from 1995-96 to 2001-02 being 42.59%, 37.95%, 39.60%, 35.48%, 40.75%, 44.98% and 31.55%, while ST benefited families was largest in Alwar from 1995-96 to 2001-02. The figures are 13.67%, 16.46%, 9.40%, 14.34%, 12.22%, 11.91% and 11.91%.

Alwar got first position in terms of expenditure value under Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) in the period from 1995-96 to 2001-02, except 2000-01 year being amount Rs. 264.48, Rs. 534.86, Rs. 273.16, Rs. 339.83, Rs. 284.86 and Rs. 136.11 lakhs. In the year 2000-01 this amount was largest in Nagaur Rs. 227.69 lakh under IAY. Again, Nagaur got first rank in terms of expenditure amount under this scheme
during 2005-06 to 2009-10 except 2008-09 year. The figures for spending amount were Rs. 384.00, Rs. 431.50, Rs. 630.25 and Rs. 1,683.85 in 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2009-10 respectively. While in the year of 2008-09, the spending amount was largest in Alwar Rs. 1,152.69.

Under MGNREGS in Nagaur the number of beneficiaries and spending amount has been found largest from 2008-09 to 2010-11. The figures for the beneficiaries under the scheme are 234.42, 272.60 and 207.17 lakhs in 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11 respectively while the expenditure amount was found as Rs. 27,141.89, Rs. 34,084.80 and Rs. 17,582.53 lakhs in the years of 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11 respectively.

The expenditure under Members of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) was highest in Alwar in 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1998-99, figures being 138.04, 82.16 and 83.98 lakhs. The percentage of fund utilization was highest in Nagaur in 1995-96 was being 89.31% to the total allocation while Alwar got the largest percentage of fund utilization in 1998-99. The completed work percentage under MPLAD in Nagaur in the year of 1999-2000 was 95.24% while lowest percentage of completed works was in Alwar in 1997-98 being 5.88%.

Under Bio-gas programme, Alwar has the largest percentage of working plants among the installed plants in the district was 100% in 1995-96 to 2001-02. While lowest ration of working plants was found in Nagaur in 1998-99 being 37.29%.

Social development in Alwar district is influenced by a number of factors. Villages nearer to administrative centres, educational institutes obviously are progressive in terms of social development. That is why, locational advantages play major role in defining social development. Literacy level, general awareness of people about education, women development in terms of maternal and child mortality defines measures of social development. Nature of economy also influences social development. The villages which have high level economic activities, i.e.-industries, services sector growth, exhibits positive sign of social development. While, southwestern and eastern villages have lowest social development due to lack of it.

Networks of roads and communications and nearness to National Capital Region (NCR) of Delhi defined the infrastructure development in Alwar district. That
is why villages situated nearness to road and communication network shows high level of infrastructural development to push the development up to higher ladder. In the same way, villages positioned in the interdistrict boundary also have high infrastructure development for cater the need of man and material.

Rajgarh Panchayat Samiti under Alwar district shows poor state of social development. However Sitapura, Rundh Beegota and Rundh Rajor are advance than other villages. On the other hand, in terms of infrastructure level development only those villages near interdistrict boundary show highest level. Those villages are namely Shobhapura, Roopbas, Rundh Dabkan, Shivnagri, Tahla, Talab and Shreenagar.

Nagaur district is lesser developed in terms of social and economic development than Alwar district. Here, highly developed villages are scattered in Central and Western parts of the district. Village’s nearness to district Capital exhibits high levels of social development.

Infrastructure development in Nagaur district is centralized in some Panchayat Samities only namely Riyan, Makrana, Parbatsar, and Didwana. Those areas are connected by well-organised roadways and railways.

Some villages of Kuchaman Panchayat Samiti under Nagar district shows exceptional in infrastructure development. Generally, where small and micro enterprises such as oil mills are present, that area promotes infrastructural development. Examples of such villages are Kanpura, Gurha Salt, Chosla, Lunwa, Mundgsoi and Meenda.

Social development in the same Panchayat Samiti is highly uneven. Only a few villages show highest level of social development such as Karkeri, Jhiya, Kanpura, Gurha Salt, Takiya and Meenda. Thikariya Khurd, Dediya Ka Bas are poorest in terms of social development as such area suffers from illiteracy and lack medical facilities.

Among eight Gram Panchayats namely Thana Rajaji, Gola Ka Bas, Mallana, Talab in Alwar and Meenda, Mundgsoi, Lunwa, Indokha in Nagaur, we found that the number of Gram Sabha meetings (six) were highest in Talab in Alwar during the year 2010 and in 2011 (upto July) the numbers of Gram Sabha meetings (three) were
highest in Mallana in Alwar. The number of General category members was highest (55%) in Talab Gram Panchayat (Alwar) that was found in the first GS meeting among total 6 meetings in 2010 year. The number of OBC members was highest (61%) in Lunwa (Nagaur) in fourth meeting among the GS meetings in 2010. The highest number of SC members (45%) were found in Gola Ka Bas in Alwar in the second meeting among the total GS meetings held in 2010 year. Similarly, the highest number of ST members (47%) was found in Gola Ka Bas Gram Panchayat in 2010 year.

Among eight Gram Panchayats of Alwar and Nagaur, the Indokha Gram Panchayat (Nagaur) has the highest rank in infrastructure index (CI value 8.2) while Meenda (Nagaur) has the lowest rank in infrastructure index (CI value 1.2). The Mallana Gram Panchayat of Alwar has the average rank in infrastructure index (CI value 5.6) among these eight Gram Panchayats.

The beneficiaries under SGSY were highest in Talab Gram Panchayat in Alwar in 2010 year. The total 14 families were benefited under this scheme in Talab. While the Meenda Gram Panchayat in Nagaur has lowest number of beneficiaries (2 families) under SGSY in 2010 year. Whereas in remaining other Panchayats, no beneficiaries were found in both Alwar and Nagaur districts. Under IAY scheme, Thana Rajaji Gram Panchyat has the largest beneficiaries (31 families) in the year 2010 in Alwar while Meenda Gram Panchayat in Nagaur has the lowest beneficiaries (10 families) under this scheme in 2010.

Under MGNREGS, the highest beneficiaries (1,360 families) have been found in Meenda Gram Panchayat in Nagaur in 2010 year while the lowest beneficiaries (252 families) have been found in Indokha in Nagaur in the same year.

Among eight Gram Panchayats in Alwar and Nagaur, we found that the largest allocation and expenditures were found in Meenda Gram Panchayat in Nagaur in 2010, (Rs.3.84 crores) and the lowest fund was found in Indokha Gram Panchayat, in Nagaur district, (Rs.34.76 lakhs). The Meenda (reserved for SC) and Indokha (General seat). Gram Panchayat Sarpanch of Meenda belongs to Meghwal community and Indokha belongs to Jain community respectively. It shows that capability of leader, liaison with the government officials and population of Gram Panchayat are the influential factor to the sanctioning of funds to Panchayat.
As far as participation of villagers in the Gram Sabha meetings in Panchayats of Alwar and Nagaur is concern, the in Gola Ka Bas Panchayat the villagers are highly aware (95%) about the membership of Gram Sabha as well as awareness about the powers of GS (85%) meetings in Panchayat in Alwar Panchayats. The same situation is also found in Lunwa Gram Panchayat in Nagaur but some variation also have been as in Thana Rajaji, the villagers are highly aware (95%) about the membership of Gram Sabha but they are not much aware about the powers of GS (35%) which shows lowest status among the Panchayats in Alwar and Nagaur. In Meenda Panchayat, the villagers responded that they are aware about the power of GS (75% respond yes), but if we ask the villagers to tell about a particular name of power of GS then, they don’t know the powers (0% responded yes). Similar case has been seen in the Panchayats that they know the GS meetings held regularly but they don’t know the dates on which the GS meetings held in the Panchayat. In Thana Rajaji, the villagers know (100% respond yes) that whether GS meetings held regular or not but 70% villagers know that the GS meetings are held on 26th January, 1st May, 15th August and 2nd October. The attendance in GS meetings by the villagers is found highest (75%) in Meenda Gram Panchayat in Nagaur but the one or two meeting attending villagers are in large number in all Panchayat and very few cases are found who have attended the all Gram Sabha meetings in Panchayats.

In case of participation of villagers in the spatial aspect of planning process of Gram Sabha in Alwar and Nagaur Panchayats, we found that mostly villagers suggested plans about power supply and water supply because in Alwar and Nagaur, there is concurrent crisis of both power and water supply. The most important factor is considered in suggesting plan by the villagers is need basis (80-90%) in all Panchayats. The location of infrastructure development in the Panchayat is common land, fellow or pastures land but no private land or individual land in all Panchayats.

The new Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 has not so far led to major transformation in the way of Panchayati Raj powers & functions in Rajasthan. Though it have to some extent invigorated Panchayats in the State despite the fact that due to resource crunch the State Government is finding it difficult to provide sufficient funds for development works and accordingly financial devolution to the Panchayats has been limited. The Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) of the area are ex-officio members of the PRIs. The people’s representatives
at the local level cannot even overcome their influence and dominance. They cannot even express their views freely in their presence. Consequently, the MPs and MLAs can easily impose their decisions on the PRIs.

The Panchayati Raj can be successful only when these institutions are accorded fully autonomy in decision-making and sufficient financial powers. There are several provisions in the Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 itself which prevent such autonomy. For instance, sections 92 to 107 provide that the State government can dissolve Panchayats on specific grounds. The Panchayats also require prior permission of the government for performing their duties of introducing new programmes. It is obvious that Panchayats are working under excessive bureaucratic and government control. This is against the concept of Panchayati Raj. Therefore, the efforts for strengthening Panchayats are still at the state of conceptualization. The objective of Panchayati Raj is not only an instrument of public relation but also is people’s movement in which healthy dialogue, proper communication, greater participation and time-bound programmes are necessary for success. Village level planning requires understanding of local problems by the people themselves. It should also be backed with sufficient financial and other resources.

The State of Rajasthan is very keen to strengthen the PRIs and from time to time various efforts have been made to improve the working of Panchayats. Still more needs to be done for making Panchayats as self-governing institutions. The following suggestions may be considered in this context.

First, reservation should be at least for two terms so that the first time elected representatives can understand the rules and powers of Panchayati Raj Institutions and perform their duties perfectly in the next term. The elected representatives, particularly the marginal sections require training programmes from time to time. The training should not be imparted once in five years, rather training programmes should be organized in such a way that their potential should be explored. They should be given development projects in which they should be kept free to manage them according to their own needs. Participative training should be encouraged. Trainers should also take responsibility as part of Panchayati Raj to develop the capabilities of the PR leaders.
The training should not be imparted in formal institutes. Rather training modules should be such which can be managed easily and organized in small groups. Some training programmes should be organized at the block or Gram Panchayats levels. These types of training programmes will be more effective and successful because women folk would be easily able to attend these programmes. Trainer as well as PR leaders would be able to discuss the local needs and issues freely.

To overcome the existing disparities based on caste, class and gender bias, the marginalized sections should be provided congenial atmosphere to develop their capabilities and to overcome their inferiority complex. Panchayats led by the female and SC/ST leaders should be encouraged by recognizing their efforts as leaders of rural local bodies.

Second, Gram Sabha’s meetings should be convened regularly and Panchayat members should be held responsible to inform and motivate the people from there are specifically female members to attend the meetings. Agenda of Gram Sabha (GS) should be decided on the basis of the demands from different wards and sections of the society. Demands from the GS members should be given priority. Panchayat should be responsive to these demands and the feedback should be given in time. The quantity of representatives of marginalized sections has been increased considerably. But quality has not improved as yet. To improve the quality of participation it is essential to provide the effective training to all those who are part of Panchayati Raj as well as affect the Panchayati Raj system and bureaucracy.

Third, to eradicate corruption there should be regular social auditing and vigilance committees at the village level, nominated by the Gram Sabha in general meeting by consensus. This committee should be empowered to handle the complaints filed by the people in GS meetings or personally approached to the vigilance committee. Report of enquiry should be presented before GS within the stipulated period. The GS should be empowered to recall the PR leaders who do not enjoy the confidence of the people. To enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of Panchayati Raj, e-governance should be made part of the functioning. Proper training facilities in IT should be imparted to the rural leaders as well as at the village level like Primary schools. Computer centres should be established to make the masses computer literate with the help of which the masses would be able to collect information easily and they
would become aware citizens and would be able to take decisions objectively. Furthermore, RTI can also prove to be a revolutionary step if the people get aware about RTI, it should be popularized at the village level. It would be the most effective channel to check the working of PRIs as well as facilitate the functioning of PRIs and PRIs would be able to get up-to-date information.

Fourth, development functions are the basic functions of the local bodies. But the local bodies do not get sufficient finances. The funds meant for the rural development schemes should be transferred to the Gram Panchayats directly instead of transferring to DRDA from the government. To generate their income sources the tax system should be restructured and the local bodies should be directly empowered to levy taxes according to the local conditions such subjects as agriculture, tourist vehicles, special amenities restaurant, theatres etc. They should be encouraged to raise their resources to meet their developmental needs. Faulty system of MLA’s and MP’s area development fund should be modified. There should be some objective criteria for allocation of funds. Funds for the schemes where individual or village as a unit should be directly allocated to the Panchayats. In this way, Panchayati Raj will not remain a system introduced by the government only. This will become instruments for increasing capacity of the people and of preparing them for planning and management of their own affairs in the own way.

Fifth, Panchayati Raj Institutions must be freed from the influence and dominance of MPs and MLAs of the area by ending their ex-officio membership. Second, since Panchayats are not only developmental agencies but they are also the instruments of overall social transformation, for this adequate measure should be introduced for generation awareness among the people.

Sixth, there should be a Master Plan for each and every Panchayat for the development of infrastructure facilities and proper utilisation of Panchayat resources available at the local level.

In conclusion, we can say that Panchayati Raj Institutions is an opportunity to provide the people to feel the sense of real democracy at the grass root level. It also provides an opportunity to the members of communities no matter whether weaker sections or even of women, to participate in the governance. We can say that it is a governance of the people, by the people and for the people. It follows
the principles of bottom-up approach and benefit sharing among the participating members. It is supposed to be striving to reduce the workload of the government, to increase the responsibilities and provide facilities to the people, to protect the environment, to revive the traditional science and technology to harness the resources for development, to build people organization to manage the affairs of community and to achieve equity and social justice.