CHAPTER I
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Political milieu of any state witnesses dramatic configurations of democratic values, human rights and ethnic considerations today. India's glorious past, subjugation to colonial administration and insidious process of freedom movement reveals certain political characteristics after its independence. Virtually a village-dominated nation with little of industrial revolution sweeping over it has maintained its rural dominance in comparison to western and developed nations.

Following independence, the democratic socialist republic nation has sought ways to pierce into the rural polity and economy, that once upon in past formed a shield against any foreign influence. Still it was not easy on the part of the central government to deliver successfully any fruits of development to its people. People are not so passive to receive any thrown assistance, not also the bureaucratic instrument keen enough to deliver the goods at once. This is an instance of cutting edge failure in delivering the elements of social justice.

Popular participation is not merely a way of vigilance to the development process that is delivered by the government, but a guarantee to the democracy of the nation. Village dominated India has undergone innumerable models for development of its local political framework. What Indian village derived from its heritage goes with the name of Panchayat. The natural Panchayat has its popularity for judicial decision and advisory excellence in the village.

This prestigious name has been employed to revive the village structure since independence of the nation. Panchayat is an official name with records and persons attached to it, so that we can get glimpses of its activity from pages of administration of the state.

Gradual evolution of models of development by Community Development Projects, findings of Balwantrai Mehta Team, Five Year Plans, Ashok Mehta Study
Group, many other studies have evolved a consensus to bring about a constitutional amendment to target the local government institutions (Panchayats and Municipal Institutions in rural and urban areas respectively). All these influence the village life, evolution of Panchayat functioning, people's awareness and involvement in the Panchayat, changing role of the Panchayat, popular participation, popular outlook for the local institution and provide further suggestions to strengthen Panchayat to a more effective vehicle and above all to succeed in making direct democracy prevail in Indian village.

It is very easy to collect all the attempts of the national or state government that has been done for the village government, maybe legislation-wise, finance-wise, project-wise, specifically for weaker sections, specifically for Below the Poverty Line people and many other characteristics. But analysing a single Grama Panchayat from its date of inception till today can give a clear picture of what the central and state government means and what is reflected at the target organisation. Simple statement of reserving for the weaker sections must find proper benefit sharing by the incumbents. If no benefit is available, role of reservation is futile.

Thus study of a popular participation in a singular Grama Panchayat bears meaning for local development and democratic process. The changing patterns of Panchayati Raj structure and functions after 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments have contributed some changing role to people's participation.

Review of Literature:

Studies on singular Grama Panchayat institution is a ground level work and very few really go so low to evaluate any basic value there. On the other side, very few figures were maintained for the records of the grassroots organisation. It goes without saying that the Grama Panchayat Office has no bureaucrat to keep day to day figures. So study on a Grama Panchayat is more difficult than a Panchayat Samiti at block level and Zilla Parishad at district headquarter level.
Some of the available literature on singular Grama Panchayat studies has been reviewed below.

_Panchayati Raj - a Synthesis_, one of the earliest books on Panchayats written by S. K. Dey published in 1962 depicts the village scenario and existence of Sarapanch as a prominent person even much before the independence. The Nyaya and Vikas Panchayats existed though without any power and resource. In this treatise the author has given a status of Grama Panchayat of the period preceding Balwantrai Mehta, had foreseen a return of power and finance to the Grama Panchayat.¹

_Village Government in India - a Case Study_, published in 1963 and written by Ralph H. Reitzlaff is also one of the books of early 60s when the three tier Panchayati Raj picture was just being implemented. The author has analysed the traditional village organisation, the period of British Rule, the new introduction of Panchayati Raj. He had studied the village Khalapur in Uttar Pradesh with pictures of First Gaon Panchayat that started in July 1949 and the election for the Second Gaon Panchayat in 1957. He gives a detail picture of caste factor operating in those early years of vote enthusiasm.²

S. Bhatnagar, in _Rural Local Government in India_ gives a contemporary Panchayati Raj picture up to 1970s. He depicts the importance of local councils, personnel and finance of rural local government in detail. Over and above, there is a clear description of Gram Sabha. In the chapter "Panchayati Raj: In Retrospect and Prospect", he emphasizes the political and development impacts. Lastly, he gives an optimistic outlook for future.³

A. Y. Darshankar, in his book _Leadership in Panchayati Raj_ makes a review of Beed District in Maharashtra and displays the implementation of Panchayati Raj programme. He mentions that Panchayati Raj is considered as heart of Indian politics. The health of Indian democracy depends upon its sound working. It is the agency of economic prosperity, social progress and political development. He studies
the political parties in PRIs, examines the socioeconomic profile of the leaders, making of leadership, functions of leadership, attitude and opinion of leaders and people's perception of leaders.4

*Panchayati Raj - From Legislation to Movement* by George Mathew deals with a historical background, Karnataka experience, and the experience of Orissa, West Bengal and China. It has a chapter on role of politics on Panchayats. Some critical issues regarding the Panchayati Raj Institutions have been discussed in detail. 5

Wadhwam and Mishra6 in their edited book, *Dreams and Realities - Expectation from Panchayati Raj*, published by Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, introduce with statement that Mahatma Gandhi conceptualized national development through autonomous rural organisation on the lines of Panchayat System prevalent in ancient India. He envisaged 5-tier system of village Panchayats, Taluka Panchayats, District Panchayats, Provincial Panchayats and finally, all-India Panchayat. In a number of articles contributed by 20 of its contributors, the book focuses on different aspects of Panchayati Raj in general.

Girish Kumar and Buddhadeb Ghosh7 in their *West Bengal Panchayat Elections 1993: A Study of Participation* published on behalf of Institute of Social Science by Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi is indeed an excellent survey on villagers awareness and participation in Grama Panchayat in West Bengal. It analyses the autonomy of local government, popular mandate, and functioning of Grama Panchayat. However, it analyses how far the Grama Panchayat is working on 'local will' as distinguished from its agency functions of State and Central Government and preoccupation with such projects as JRY.

*Karnataka Panchayat Elections 1995: Process, Issues and Membership Profile* by K. Subha8, published for Institute of Social Sciences by Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1997 discusses democracy at work and details the social background of elected representatives and gives major findings on the election
process at grassroots and the rudimentary drives of caste and money in supporting a candidate in the Panchayat elections.

Bijoyini Mohanty\textsuperscript{9} in her treatise \textit{Glimpses of Local Government (Post Amendment Scenario)} analyses all the events converging to the significance of local administration in India and specifically highlights the Panchayati Raj Institutions in a comparative way. The institutional structure and function after the 73\textsuperscript{rd} and 74\textsuperscript{th} constitutional amendments have been elaborated. The Grama Panchayat and the Gram Sabha have been discussed in detail.

\textbf{Scope and Objective of the Study:}

The Indian village, with all its inherent story of tradition and heritage, had been an experiment ground of state and union governments since independence of India in 1947. Once upon a time left to the care of the state government, the union did not bother for the Panchayats or Municipalities. Lack of success in implementing the development procedures and elements of degeneration in local governance had stimulated the union government for remedial measures in the way of legislation. The new constitutional amendments of 1992 have heralded a new phase of the local governance in India in the sense of regular elections, proportional representation of weaker sections, reservation for women and regular financial support.

The Grama Panchayat is the remotest system in centrifugal democratic order, though true democracy should be centripetal, convergence of people's command from grassroots to centre. The pattern of administration that evolved in India is declaration of democratic order at independence, creation of administrative set up at states and lastly after decades, gradual penetration to districts, administrative blocks and the Panchayats. Had there been centripetal manner of democratic spread, it must have started from the village.

Thus Indian village had been a platform where the democratic features have appeared from time to time. The villagers have witnessed Community Development
Programmes, Five-Year Plans one after other, state-amended Panchayat procedures and lastly the implementation of new legislation of 1992. There is a new orientation in the village.

With this background, Garudagaon Grama Panchayat was taken for study. Being one of the oldest constituted Grama Panchayats it has some records and evidences of Grama Panchayat activities. People of Garudagaon have plenty of experience of participation in Grama Panchayat, Gram Sabha and election procedures.

Respondents were taken randomly from Garudagaon or any one of the revenue villages constituting the Garudagaon Grama Panchayat. Only a citizen of the Grama Panchayat being a voter with his / her name appearing in the voter list of the area for the election of Member of Legislative Assembly of Orissa is taken as a respondent.

Hypotheses:

1. People's participation is more after implementation of the new constitutional amendments than earlier as reflected in Garudagaon Grama Panchayat.
2. People of Garudagaon find it easy to work in a system of reservation for women and weaker sections.
3. Election is regular and smooth at present in comparison to pre-amendment period.
4. Participation in Gram Sabha / Palli Sabha is growing more than before.
5. The development work taken up by Panchayati Raj System is more effective than before.
6. Caste in Grama Panchayat affairs continues to be a dominant sociological factor.
7. Poor people are finding difficult to get identified as Below Poverty Line at Garudagaon Grama Panchayat.
8. Garudagaon Grama Panchayat gets more funds these days than pre-amendment days.
9. Political parties in Grama Panchayat sphere make social and political life cumbersome.

10. Raising the internal income is a right way of fostering growth of Grama Panchayat.

11. If Garudagaon revenue village alone will constitute a Grama Panchayat, the area development and participation will be more than the present.

**Method of Study:**

For the present study, survey method has been used. Empirical analysis has been made on the available data. Data are collected from both primary and secondary sources. The secondary sources of data are the available published books on Panchayati Raj System, Grama Panchayats, and popular participation. Apart from that, published governmental and non-governmental reports and unpublished documents are used as secondary sources of data for the purpose. Data from primary sources are also collected through survey research where the techniques of interview and schedule were used.

**Interview Schedule:**

The interview schedule was administered individually to each of the respondents. Care was taken to see that they correctly interpreted each question before recording any of their opinion. In some instances, where the language of the questionnaire was not understood, appropriate translation into local Oriya language was done and explained properly in order to have the same form and content of the question for all respondents to obtain exact response for each desired question.

The interview schedule aimed at primary method for eliciting information from the respondent villagers of Garudagaon Grama Panchayat (Garudagaon revenue village proper and 10 other revenue villages that constitute the Garudagaon Grama Panchayat) relating to the core area of study - profile, awareness, interest, evaluation, orientation and last but not the least their suggestions for improvement.
and smooth functioning of Garudagaon Grama Panchayat. Direct interview of the respondents added an empirical dimension to behavioural approach in such a study of social sciences.

The scholar has also taken care to interact with some personalities with knowledge and experience on Panchayati Raj Institutions and specifically on Grama Panchayat. These experienced personalities have enabled the scholar to grasp some integral fields of Grama Panchayat picture.

Sample Coverage:

The study has been confined to Garudagaon Grama Panchayat area (Garudagaon proper and the 10 other revenue villages constituting Garudagaon Grama Panchayat) in Tangi Choudwar Panchayat Samiti in Cuttack district of Orissa. In all, two hundred respondents were there selected randomly from the study area, only with a confirmation that each one of them has his name in the voter list during election of last MLA or MP in that area.

Data Analysis:

After collection of data, an elaborate codebook was prepared and the data were posted in the code sheet. Then the data were tabulated and analysed. Because of the heterogeneity of the answer pattern to some open-ended questions in the questionnaire, only those respondents whose answers could be coded in a particular category were used as a base for computing percentage. The findings have not been tested with the test of statistical significance, nor the correlation coefficients have been found out, but only the frequency and percentage distributions have been deduced in interpreting the findings.
END-POINTS: