

# Panchayati Raj Election, Its Challenges & Measures to Strengthen Panchayati Raj System: A Case Study of Election System in Western Odisha

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## **Abstract:**

Politics means decision making power of a society. The power of people increases when the system of election process comes out. Therefore, Election is the backbone to make strengthen of a government and Democracy is a such type of government, it believes in popular participation and free fair of election. The present research may explore the electoral behavior of people and also the depicts the challenges faced by people in the grassroot level election system. This research has been done both normative and empirical way to know the problems of people during election time.

**Keywords:** Panchayat Raj Election, Problems and Suggestions

## **Introduction:**

Modern age is known as the age of democracy. It is called as the most popular form of government. It has also got universal recognition and acceptance. If we may compare to the other form of political system, democracy is regarded as the best form of government. The only reason behind is that, it provides scope to the people to participate in the administration of the country and also based on the public opinion and rule of law. However, democracy, can't be successful without local self-government. Local-self-government ensures popular participation of people through giving necessary training to the people. Therefore, it can be rightly said that the real successes of democracy lie with the achievement of local self-government. Election is the life blood of democracy and democracy believes on free and fair election system. India is the largest democratic country of the world. It believes in popular participation of people. People despite their caste, colour, religion and language come together and equally exercise their franchise or right to vote and also elect their representative to form an accountable government.

In India, the election system is divided into two parts such as Urban and Rural self-government. The Urban local self-government has three tier system such as Corporation, Municipality and NAC (Notified Area Council) and also the Rural self-government has also three tier system such as Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad. The present studies may explore about the election system of rural self-government also known as Panchayat election. Since independence, the role and status of Gram Panchayat as an institution of governance has evolved in our country. It is also great initiative that through which powers are centralized from top level to grassroot level. According to Mahatma Gandhi, "Panchayati Raj Institutions is the foundation of India's political system, which represents decentralized of power, where

each village is responsible for its own development.” It is fact that, in panchayat election, the able candidates can ensure efficient delivery of service that can translate for the inclusive development of nation. Moreover, local self-governance institutions act as a force for reducing the dominance of any particular group or caste.

### **Methodologies**

The method of research has been done both empirical and normative way. Empirically, different villages of western Odisha have been visited and data was collected. The secondary sources are different books, journal, article in national and international level has been collected.

### **Review of Literature:**

Mohapatra (2016), explained about ‘empowerment’ which makes the people capable for tanking the decision and also changes their life style. It is only possible in the Panchayat Raj Institution. Due to the democratic decentralization process, the rate of participation basically, women and Dalits those who are the back side of an instantiation system, now they come to front and fight in election [1]. Basantaray (2019), depicted in his article about the political participation of women and takes their decision because of decentralization of democratic process. In his article, he has been suggested that utmost the importance of education should be given to women to increase the level of active participation, those women, who dropout at the schooling time proper education system should be provided and to increases participation first understand the traditional community in details, it would be easy to make effective policies [2]. Tandi and Prabha, in their article drew the role of elected representative after the winning of election and what type of uplift broacher they take for the uplift of village. In their research on field survey found that after attaining training programme, still there is no development of the capacity building for the development of their village. Only knows the responsibility for the implementation of policies [3].

### **Panchayati raj System:**

Democracy is the most popular form of government, where people are the real ruler. India is the largest democratic country of the world. Here powers are decentralized between central government and state government for smooth functioning of the countries. India has numerous election system, which are conducted every five years to run the government. The election system also grants from central to state election and also included to district election and even extend panchayat election. The reason behind here is that, through election system people can explore their demands, needs and problems to their candidates. Particularly in grassroot election system such as panchayat, it is seen that, people directly explore their problems to their candidates because they cannot go to the center directly, so that grassroot level election system brings more fruitful than central government.

Article 40, of Indian constitution provides the state to organize a village or gram panchayat and endow powers to enable them to function as units of self-government. Local self-government is found at the grassroot and it is also called as first school of democracy. Basically, local self -government is a government, which founds at the local by the local people for solution of various local problems. The history of local self-government is very old and its root can be founded in the Vedic civilization. During the British period, it was Lord Ripon, who made a bold step to strengthen the panchayat system in India. Therefore, he is regarded as the father as panchayat raj system in India. Another important report that on the recommendation of Balwant Rai Meheta committee a three-tire panchayat system was implemented

in Rajasthan first on 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct 1959. The history of local government in Odisha is also very old. After independence of India, the Odisha panchayat samiti and zilla parishad act was started on 26 Jan 1961. In mean time, zilla parishad was abolished in 1968 and again in the year 1991 zila parisad was revived [4].

### **Compositions:**

The term Panchayati Raj is also known as local self govt. Panchayati raj system has a pyramidal structure in India and it is based on decentralized of power. Panchayati system can be divided into two categories such as Urban local self-government and Rural self-government. The Urban local self-government came into force through 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 in the constitution of India and deals articles 243-P to 243-G. It consists of three level such as at the apex level found, Corporation, at the middle level found Municipality and at the bottom level found NAC (Notified Area Council). Similarly in Rural self-government came in to force through 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment act of 1992 and deals the article from 243 to 243 O. It is also divided into three tire system such as Zilla Parishad at the top level, panchayat samiti at the middle level and Gram Panchayat at the bottom level. The present studies may explore about the problems, remedies and election report of Gram panchayat election 2022 in Odisha [5].

### **Gram panchayat Election Result**

Some of the Gram panchayat result has been descried bellow:

#### **1. Case study-I**

Sarpanch is directly elected by people in village level through adult frashise. One case study has been done in the panchanyat election of 2022, in Lakhanpur Panchayat of Jharsuguda district of Odisha. In that Panchayat six women candidates contest for the post of Sarpanch such as Arati Padhan, Alima Sahu, Puranbasi Bhoi, Jyotimayee Mishra, Jharana Padhan and Tanaya Behera. Among them some women are highly educated and some are intermediate. It shows that now educated person enters in the sarpanch post. It may bring so many changes in the grassroot level problems. Basically, it is known that local self-government means for providing political education and training to the people. Finally, Arati Pradhan won the election as the post of Sarpanch.

*Election Campaigning:* Particularly in village area, it is seen that for winning the election the candidates make more exaggerating words. Basically, election campaigning take place for a period of two weeks between the announcement of final list of candidates and the date of polling. All the candidates go to the door to door, along with eight to ten supporters, play the major role and ask vote for their candidates.

*Voting behaviors:* In that panchayat, it was seen that voters were provided money in the previous right of the polling day of panchayat. Now money is playing a major role to win the election, and there is no ethics of morality. In present day, if one candidate wants to win election using morality nature, very hard for success. The whole system is now coming under corruption, no one is free from it. Caste factor also plays a major role to win the election. In that panchayat, it was found that, people caste votes, who belongs to their own caste. Therefore, The Election Commission of Odisha should check time to time during election time and also brings some changes in election system.

#### **2. Case study: II**

Panchayat raj system in India signifies the rural self-government. In Panchayati raj system, Gram panchayat occupies a prominent role for the village governing institute in Indian villages. It works in the grass root levels of village in India. In this institution, People directly elect their candidates. The present

studies explore one Gram Panchayat election 2022, such as Bhukta Gram Panchayat, which is located in Ambabhona block of Bargarh District in Odisha. This Gram Panchayat constituted seven villages and divided into 16 wards. There are around 4,692 villagers stay in Bhukta Gram Panchayat among them 2407 are male voters and 2285 are female voters. In Bhukta Gram Panchayat some seats of Sarpanch are reserved for schedule caste and schedule tribe. It was observed that 5 candidates are fulfilled the nomination for the sarpanch in Bhukta Gram Panchayat. It was seen that one reserved candidate applied and un contently win the election. When nomination result came out, it was observed that those who are supported by major political parties, full carefully made campaigning and those who are stood independently, did not make any interest. Here it is seen that parties also plays a major role to win the election. Voting is the first criteria for the successful working of a democratic system and as for the democratic decentralization, people established democracy at their grassroot level for solving their own problems. So here, we can say that the success and failure of democracy depends upon voting behavior of citizen, if people may become aware of the voting.

### 3. Case study:

Generally, we know that Politics means the decision-making power of societies. It is seen that during election time people take decision and elect a right candidate for their own development. In this way, in Gram Panchayat election, people choose a right candidate for their grassroot level of development. Panchayat election plays a vital role in village area, which brings in progress in child and women development, health, primary education, women empowerment and local participation in electoral system which is a part of true electoral system. According to Mahatma Gandhi, “the success and failure of India, depends upon grassroot level of development in Panchayati raj system.” One panchayat has been chosen to know the behavior of citizen in 2022 Gram Panchayat election. There are approximately 3000 voters live in Sargul Gram Panchayat in Kalahandi district, Odisha. It is divided into 12 wards, where two stood for Sarpanch, five samiti sabhya and five Zila Parishad. The two sarpanch were Barun Chhatria (he is the former Sarpanch), and Babulal Sahu (his sister was the current sarpanch at the time of election). It was observed that people select the current sarpanch or former sarpanch looking their work performance in previous five years. Here we can say that performance of working factor is also most important during the Sarpanch time, through which people select the right candidates. Some of the problems also occurred in the Panchayat election in Sargul Gram panchayat in 2022 election.

**Money factors:** Generally, we know that one man one vote. To get one vote, candidates do hard struggle and make different type campaigning. Now distribution of money for vote is a common factor and particularly it is looked in the candidates who belongs to major political parties. Here it is seen that a higher capabilities and potential person, if stands independently in election, it becomes very hard to win. Now the voters are also money minded. Therefore, this type of nature should bring change in election system.

### **Lack of a good leadership:**

It becomes very difficult on the part of voter to choose a right candidate who can understand the problems of voters and solve it without to fill his own pocket. It is observed that, now good person is not taking any part in election, because of their thinking politics as dirty and unnecessary things. For eradication of this type of mindset from people, awareness is the first important, then only democracy can be strong.

#### 4. Case study

One government can run smoothly, if powers are distributed between state government and union government, otherwise it would be absolute form of government. As we say that democracy is the most popular form of government, where people are real ruler, but actually it is seen that those who are strong in money power, rule the country. One panchayat election 2022 election has been studied in Baigani under Alabol gram panchayat, Balikud PS of Jagatsinghpur district, Odisha. In that panchayat, it was observed that those candidates previously had stood in election but failed and now they did not interest to come again in that party and interested to stand independently. Therefore, it is seen that if one candidate stands in election belonging to major party but failed in election, then the interest of candidates decreases. In Odisha, BJD has five time win and made government in state, therefore many candidates try to join in BJD. Here we can say that, government should bring some strict rule for monopoly of party's changes of candidates.

#### **Problems of Panchayati raj system in 2022 Gram panchayat election:**

Panchayat raj system is most probably training school democracy. It provides such type of training through which, rural people come forward to acquire knowledge. Therefore, creation of a good citizen, is the ultimate aim of panchayat raj system. It also provides sufficient knowledge to the people for solving their own problems such as Health, education, sanitation, re-creation etc. Here we can say that all round development of people both Urban and Rural is the basic objective of Panchayati raj system. Still, it is not free from drawback. The problems are mentioned below.

##### **1. Ignorance of the people**

India is a country of village. In India, Odisha is the most backward state. Approximately it is calculated that 50% of people live in village area. So that, they are unconscious, due to lack of education system. They do not know about the value of one vote and so that, people cast their vote unconsciously. Occasionally, it is seen that if any candidates provide money for vote, they smoothly accept and cast their vote to a wrong person. Therefore, illiteracy plays a major hindrance for the successful operation of panchayat raj system.

##### **2. Poverty**

Next to illiteracy, poverty is also a vital problem in panchayat raj system in Odisha. It is seen that most of the villagers, most of the villagers in Odisha does not get full meal of a day. Therefore. They do not come forward to take part in the development programme of the government. It also becomes very difficult on the part of candidates to motivate the voters and request them to cast vote during election time. In 2020, Gram panchayat election it was seen that if one candidate provides 200 rupees for one vote, the poor people automatically came to the vote booth center, because one days their income they could freely get from candidate. They do not bother about whether they have cast their vote to a right candidate. Therefore, the participation of voters in election system decreases time to time.

##### **3. Parochialism**

It is also a major defect for the successful working of Panchayat raj system in Odisha. We are more conservative in nature. Therefore, the influence of caste, regionalism, communalism is the major hindrance in the election system of Odisha. Generally, it is seen that, people cast their vote, being influenced by their caste, religion etc. It is observed that, in a community a candidate stands in election then people who belongs his community only cast vote. Therefore, there is a chance of divided of votes. This type of mentality still now in the mind of people.



#### **4. Evils of party politics**

Nasty parties' politics is also a major hindrance for the smooth function of panchayat raj system. In village area, people are divided and bring conflict among them because of the party politics. Political leader on the basis of caste, religion bring divided nature among the people. Therefore, in village area during election time, conflict started and continue still the end of election. It is an acute problem in village area.

#### **5. Lack of political awareness**

Illiteracy, rural poverty, parochialism and ignorance are the major defects factors for the successful working of panchayat raj system. It is seen that only during election time people come to know about the word election but after completing election, they do not know how to demand their sarpanch and solve problems.

#### **6. Lack of serious candidates**

In village area it is found that, a number of persons make nomination for disturbing serious candidates. It is seen that during election time non serious candidates make campaigning for some days to threat the serious candidates that their votes will get divided. Therefore, the serious candidate request to non-serious candidate by paying money, don't need to campaign anymore. It brought many confusions on the part of voters on the ballot paper because there is no mentioning of the candidate's name. So, obviously voters get confuse looking the long candidates list. Therefore, it brings many challenges on the part of Election Commission.

#### **7. Proxy voting**

It is a major drawback in the election system of India. Generally, we know that proxy voting means one person cast votes multiple time in the absence of number of votes. Some time it is seen that, one dead person who name is still in voter list and taking this opportunity the wrong people cast twice votes. It is a misuse of democracy system. One news released in Odisha that, one samiti sabhya candidates using the method of proxy voting, himself had given five votes.

#### **8. False Promises**

Making promises and fulfilling that promise is the very difficult in this world. It is seen that during election time the candidates make a huge number of promises that after winning election, it would be fulfilled by his/her. In present time, it is seen that after winning in election, the candidates forget his/her promises. Although, the voters cast vote hearing the false promises of candidates but after election some are fulfilled and others remind silent. This type of false promises happens during election time in India.

#### **9. Shortage of Funds to the Panchayati raj institution**

Funding is necessary to run one institution. As Gram Panchayat is the lower part of the government therefore it is allocated limited sources of income. This Panchayati raj institution always depends upon government grants in add. For that reason, people think that panchayat raj institution is not a self-governance rather government institution.

### **Measures to strengthen Panchayati raj system:**

#### **1. Spread of education or imparting necessary training**

Education is the backbone of system for smoothly function of an institution. It is also the first need for bringing change in the mind of the people. Through, education people can understand the value of vote and it also impart necessary training. Government should bring such type of training programme in rural area, through which people can evaluate the value of vote. If necessary, training should be given in

grassroot level to the people, then people can come forward and the panchayat raj system can smoothly function.

## 2. Economic development

It is observed that in rural area people are struggling hard to get a full meal of a day. Therefore, they do not come forward to cast vote during election time. It is first important to build the economic foundation of the rural people. If the rural people financially become strong then only, they can make the democratic institution strong. The success and failure of democratic institution, depends upon the development of rural people.

## 3. Good leadership

Leadership quality is the most important factor to run one administration smoothly. People always try to choose a right candidate by whom all the needs and problems can be solved. The success and failure of a panchayat also depends upon leadership quality.

## Conclusion:

Election system is the backbone to make a government strong. Democracy is a popular form of government. It believes in people participation and makes an aim, for participation irrespective of caste, colour, race, sex etc. Due to decentralization process the grassroot level of participation increase. No doubt, it is found that, there is a lack of education system, therefore, it is very difficult part to understand their importance or value of votes. M.K Gandhi, said that, as till the development and awareness among the grassroot level of election, one government come in the position of Pares. Therefore, the grassroot level of election system should be given more importance and make the people more awareness.

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