

# Impact of the Gram Panchayat System on Rural Development in Haryana

Krishan Kumar<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Seema Rani<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research scholar, OPJS University Churu, Rajasthan

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Dept of Political Science from OPJS University Churu, Rajasthan

## ABSTRACT

Villages in India have always been self-sufficient and autonomous communities, exercising a sort of local sovereignty dating back to ancient times. Some post-independence administrations established well-run, financially stable local governments. A number of Indian states, most notably Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, and Karnataka, have accepted and begun implementing devolution of authority to the lower level. It has been argued that the "Implementation procedures," rather than planning and policy formation, are the main causes of ineffective service delivery. Many problems experienced at the grass-roots level may stem from citizens' ignorance of available resources. Since the average citizen is unprepared to counter the deceptive practices of their local government, they are easy prey. To put it another way, RTI is a game-changer because it gives people the tools, they need to exercise their democratic rights and demand the benefits to which they are entitled.

## I Introduction

The need for open and accountable governance is growing in every nation. Unless individuals are provided with the resources, they need to enjoy the rights granted to them by the state, open government will remain a utopian vision for the government and the people. After the passage of the Right to Information Act, 2005 (henceforth RTI), individuals were given the means to more often interact with their government. Citizens now have a fair playing field on which to question government entities thanks to RTI, and those agencies are obligated to respond quickly to requests for information from RTI users. The passing of RTI legislation is a significant event since this country has been actively practicing and experiencing "democracy" ever since it

got independence.

The Indian government supported decentralization as a means to improve the ineffectiveness of local budget allocations. The 73rd Amendment Act officially made the amendment permanent in the Constitution on April 24, 1993. The Right to Information Act (RTI) is generally considered as a defining point in the post-independence era of development in India's government's interactions with its citizenry. That's because widespread participation in decision making is often considered an indicator of a functional democracy. 3 Decentralization has been less than optimum due to the country's democratic system, which has resulted in an ever-expanding web of channels via which citizens may interact with the government and which is compartmentalized with a "mailbag" design.

Individually linking individuals via a democratic process, RTI has broken the back of the British empire and ushered in a new era of revolutionary change. We need to think about it in the context of its role as a means of problem-solving, given that it has enabled individuals to discuss the challenges they confront on a regular basis.

The First Report of India's Second Administrative Reforms Commission lays out the purpose of the Right to Information (RTI) system (henceforth ARC-II). There has been a long period of concealment, but thanks to the RTI Act, that time is coming to an end. It reveals the hidden, cryptic ways that government insiders think. While it is important to promote a culture of transparency while exercising public power, it is also necessary to respect the need for privacy and secrecy in specific situations. Furthermore, the RTI will be useful in the battle against corruption. A more watchful environment, encouraged by the effective implementation of the RTI Act, will help in the functioning of a more participatory democracy. 4 This discussion has shown three key functions for RTI. It ensures a shift from representative to participatory democracy, encourages public input into governance, and fights corruption. These three questions serve as the basis for the analysis presented in the following sections.

A higher chance for individuals to have their opinions considered in policymaking is necessary for them to properly exercise their rights. The public has a duty to demand the return of public funds that have been illegally syphoned off for private gain under the guise of social services. There have been several high- and low-profile incidents

of corruption in the past, which is adequate evidence for the broad acceptance of the practice in public life. 5 If citizens are to make the most of these possibilities, they must have access to information about their rights and the government's aims and programmes. Rights, participation, and knowledge all reinforce and bolster one another as interconnected ideas. 6 Government data collecting becomes a two-way street thanks to RTI since it empowers individuals to seek the release of information that has an effect on their daily lives. The RTI is a law that allows the public to request information from the government. Maintaining an active policy calls for regular reviews and updates to its foundation. The public may now see the government's "People-welfare" and "rural development" programmes.

## **II The Freedom of Information Act at the Ground Level**

The grassroots campaign in Rajasthan, India, that eventually received funding and backing from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), is considered the birthplace of the Right to Information (RTI) movement in India. It started in Dendinger, a little village in the Rajsam graph district of central Haryana, and quickly spread to Bhim, a provincial town on the outskirts of the larger towns of Ajmer, Pali, and Bilawal. 1 Central Ajmer has dryness and little annual rainfall, making the region unfriendly for farming and other forms of sustainable livelihood. Devdungri is a small town within the core district of Rajsam. In this setting, the Right to Information Act of 2005 (RTI Act) took root and eventually blossomed into a fundamental tenet of Indian democracy. Famine relief and other rural development programmes supported by the government are still very important to the survival of rural areas. So, the onus is on the panchayats, which have been charged with carrying out these duties by higher authorities.

Due to a lack of jobs and economic opportunities, many inhabitants of central Rajasthan rely on government-funded construction projects as their only source of income. The largest majority of these workers came from the nearby hamlet of Sohargarh. Wage workers' animosity and discontent may be traced in part to the common practice of underpayment of salary. The Irrigation Department's administrative offices are located in Dandi Rapat. The nearby Sohargarh area is home to a sizable section of Dandi Rapat's staff. It was found by Chunni Bai and Bhawar

Singh that their colleagues were being paid less than they were due, so they filed a petition for a pay increase. In this way, the public's anger at the government in this nation can be traced back to the grassroots, long before the formation of Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sanga (MKSS). The right to information (RTI) movement began in the tiny village of Sohargarh, located in the Deogarh Tehsil of the Rajasm and District. Residents there banded together to fight back against their feudal landlord.

The Dendinger gang was blamed for underpaying its soldiers during the Sohargarh battle. When appeals were made to the State Famine Commissioner and the Executive Engineer in charge of the project in 1989, they raised concerns about the junior Engineer's pay of Rs. 6 to Rs. 7 per day. This was far lower than the Rs. Salary reductions to Rs.9 from Rs.11 occurred again after just a few days when corruption resurfaced. Four social activists, Aruna Roy, Nikhil Dey, Shekar Singh, and Anchi, who had come to the United States in 1987 to pursue similar goals, were crucial in converting the struggle for equal compensation into a campaign for legislation. Aruna Roy, the oldest and most significant member of the organization and the MKSS movement, opted to quit the respected Indian Administrative Services (IAS) in 1975 to take the lead in social work, and she is now recognized all over the globe for her dogged dedication. As a young scholar who left his studies in the United States to do good in the world, Nikhil Dey aspires to be a force for good. Shekhar Singh, a resident of Rajasthan, played a critical role in the concept's development by facilitating communication with and educating people about the underlying programming. Without his efforts, it would be very impossible for MKSS activists to share their ideas and opinions with the organization's grassroots members.

Long after these activists had gained some notoriety and significant legitimacy in the eyes of locals, on May Day, 1990 they established a legally recognized organization called Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sanga than (MKSS), or Worker's and Peasant's Empowerment Organization.

### **III Panchayati Raj Institutions in Haryana**

To understand our focus on devolution's role in development, it helps to understand the historical backdrop of devolution. Given that the formal leadership at the village level can be expected to reflect the prevailing power relationships, it is debatable

whether local level leadership can engineer a development process which will involve all sections of society, including the poor and the weak, and which will also favor them in the outcome. With this in mind, it is crucial to create environments where these communities may play an important part. It is important to question whether and how the needs of participatory development and development for the poor mesh with emerging socio-economic and political realities of the rural countryside, especially in a state like Haryana, which has seen as few as four panchayat elections since independence. The limited devolution must be analyzed for its effects on electricity distribution and the panchayat's ability to implement development projects. While urban and rural India are frequently seen as distinct entities, the vast majority of India's population resides in rural regions, making rural local government institutions very important. Because these areas were not included in the state or federal government's developmental efforts, they have lagged behind for quite some time. As a result of one-party rule in the years after India's independence, only a fraction of the people was able to enjoy the advantages of democracy, while the nation as a whole remained under the control of bigger, more powerful groups. The ripple impact of these transactions was felt most strongly at the local level, and vestiges of these practices persist in a few states to this day. The work of Kavi raj has been usefully referenced by John Harris in this work. Kavi raj argues that the political elite of the new Indian state in the 1950s and 1960s failed to establish a "common political language" for the masses. In 1991, he argued this point. During the first 25 years of India's independence, the Congress party reigned supreme in Indian politics. The party's clientelist structure extended from the lowest echelons of urban and rural society to the highest positions of power. Those in positions of authority at the regional and municipal levels throughout the country, often the largest landowners and the largest peasant proprietors, assumed pivotal roles as intermediaries between the masses of the people and the government. The local power holders finally thwarted the reforming aims of the Nehruvian elite.

According to the 73rd amendment, in the state of Haryana, the Pradhan presides over the Gram Panchayat and transfers his or her power and authority to the up-Pradhan, who is chosen by the Panchayat Council rather than the voters. Villages frequently come together to form a panchayat. Several villages may make up a single panchayat

in Haryana because of the high population density there. For the purpose of choosing members, these gramme panchayats have been divided into electoral wards or constituencies.

#### **IV Compensation for work performed under MGNREGA**

Higher salaries help the economy grow and spread purchasing power to the countryside (Ghosh, 2010, Engler and Ravi, 2011). By providing immediate financial support in the form of salary, MGNREGA is able to accomplish its primary objective of alleviating food insecurity. It was recommended that wages be disbursed weekly on a predetermined day in each Gram Panchayat, and never more than two weeks after the day on which work was finished. Over 20% of respondents indicated they were paid every two weeks, while 75% stated they were paid every week (see Table 4.8). Only 5% of the study group encounters payment delays since payments were paid monthly or only after the assignment was accomplished.

**Table (4.8) Incidence for salary Payment**

<b>Frequency for wage payment</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Weekly	420	70
<b>Fortnightly</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Monthly</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>On completion of Work</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100</b>

The relevant agency for the MGNREGA programmer is tasked with opening bank or post office accounts for all participants. The plan's payment system is satisfactory, as shown in Table (4.9), since it meets all of the requirements set out by the MGNREGA.

In the United States, 97% of all receivers get their money via banking channels, with the remaining 3% receiving theirs through the mail.

**Table (4.9) Average of Salary Expenses**

Medium of Payments	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Banks	582	97
Post Office	18	3
Cash	0	0
<b>Total</b>	600	100

## V Field Research

Several issues need special attention while analyzing the success of RTI at the regional level. In comparison to other developed countries, India's RTI has barely been in place for a decade. This timetable is ridiculously short if the goal is to bring about a profound shift in the way things are done in Indian politics. But people need to be conditioned to like these pursuits, and that may take years or even decades. Disagreement exists among studies that examine how well RTI is used in actual settings. RTI has the potential to improve education, but more research is required at all levels of government to address the problems it creates.

The analytical approach of this study is broken down into two parts. Data is initially shown visually in the form of tables and figures, followed by a quick evaluation of the findings. After compiling all of the information, we were ready to announce the findings of the research. Data from both Panchayat Secretaries (PSs) and RTI applicants/appellants are shown separately in the chart. In order to examine how RTI works at the GP level, we have divided the responses of RTI applicants/appellants into two groups: those that address the request in terms of MGNREGA and those who address the request in terms of RTE. The first is in the recently seized city of

Bulandshahr, and the second is in the city of Hapur. The study of the projected data is provided in the form of a diagrammatic depiction, after a brief geographical, socioeconomic, and demographic introduction to the districts, Blocks, and GPs (at the beginning of both districts). The study of the data presented in the latter section of the chapter is the source of the chapter's findings, which necessitates some repetition.

10% of the GPs in each block were randomly chosen to serve as the geographic sample. PIOs and RTI applicants/appellants have both provided information for this study. In light of the difficulties in reaching the RTI applicants/appellants, most studies have relied on RTI applications or the record of RTI applications located in the different departments dealing with MGNREGA and RTE. There is no need for a random sample in Gram Panchayats because of the small number of the potential population.

To make up for a lack of information, we have estimated that the number of RTI applications submitted to GP is about equal to the overall number of RTI applications made throughout the selected sectors. We did not consider any RTI proposals from sectors other than education and employment.

## **VI Conclusion**

Haryana has been striving to rebuild the system from the ground up. The evolution of RTI's commitment to the public good. The Haryana Public Authorities have been completely redesigned owing to the work of the Right to Information system. The UPSIC has said that it wants its initiative to make RTI more available to the public. The new RTI laws 2015 and the associated website have the potential to change the way RTI is really applied in Uttar Pradesh, but only if they are carefully followed. The intersection between Panchayat Raj Institutions and the Right to Information (RTI) has unleashed novel opportunities for more effective governance and more fair allocation of resources.

Feedback from RTI users at the grassroots level in Haryana has been varied, including applicants, appellants, PIOs, and members of the Civil Society. There has been a rise



in activism in reaction to issues such as lengthy procedures, real risks to people's lives, and insurmountable bureaucratic roadblocks, and at the same time, there has been an increased awareness of the potential benefits that RTI may provide in some cases. Therefore, there is a strong grassroots movement in the state actively promoting RTI. As of today, October 12, 2015, ten years have passed since RTI was first put into place back on October 12, 2005. (Approved on June 15) The act was widely hailed as a groundbreaking first for the country's governing class. While the UPA government was not entirely free of scandals and swindles, it did approve a legislation that has helped millions of people and encouraged a sense of civic engagement. Without a doubt, RTI has allowed the ordinary man to contact the public authority directly, restricting the practice of service delivery via the "authority's man," and presenting a challenge to the traditional practice of giving the "middleman" duty for doling out benefits. According to the findings, RTI is useful for avoiding the misappropriation of public money at the municipal level. While it may take some time to have RTI fully operational, it will take nearly as long to change the mindsets of employees and the public. In order to combat the widespread corruption plaguing the country, it will need a concerted effort on the part of ordinary individuals and non-profit groups. Sometimes local mafias in India have a hand in political and bureaucratic networking, and this may be the source of differences at the grassroots level. The government should not stop at informing citizens of their rights and responsibilities; instead, it should give ongoing trainings to boost employees' abilities to respond to requests for public information (RTIs) and promote greater public awareness. Support from established NGOs working on a similar front may be invaluable, particularly at the grass-roots level.

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