

# CHAPTER - 1

## Introduction

### **Rural Self-Government, Gram Panchayat and Management: An Inter-disciplinary Study of Gram Panchayat Management**

#### **1.1: Management: the Science and Art of Doing Things Effectively**

Management is a critical variable and a vital sub-system of an organisation. It is a prime mover of organisational functioning, performance and effectiveness. The survival and success of an organization depend, to a large extent, on the competence and character of management and their ability to get the activities implemented in an effective manner.

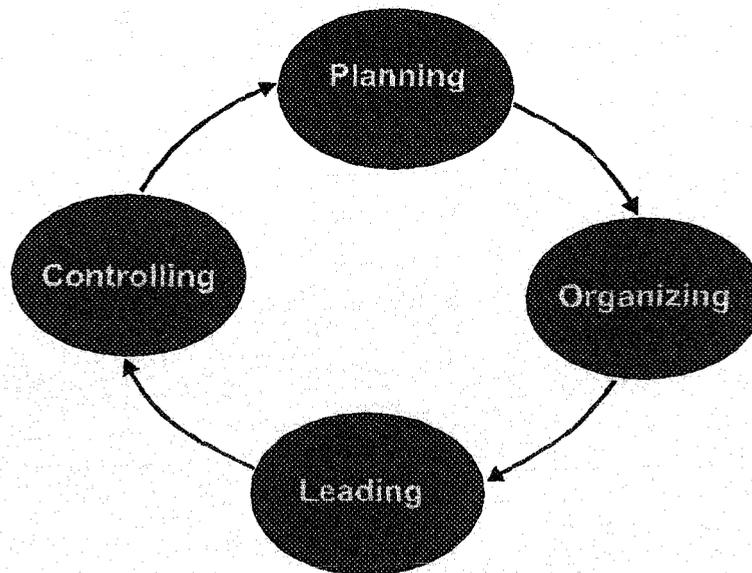
Koontz & Weihrich, (1998) observed that ever since people began forming groups to accomplish aim that they could not achieve as individuals, management started gradually to gain greater importance. Now as society has come to rely increasingly on group effort, and as organised groups have started to become large, task of management has become more challenging.

All human organisations need management, whether they are industrial establishments, government department, military systems, educational institution and cultural bodies.

According to Higgins James M, (1994) 'Management is a creative problem-solving process of planning, organising, leading and controlling an organisation's resources so that it may achieve its mission and objectives'

'Management is the use of people and other resources to accomplish objectives' Boone & Kurtz, (1992). It involves implementation of four basic functions such as planning, organising, leading and controlling.

### Management diagram from Jones and George



**FIG 1.1: PROCESS OF MANAGEMENT**

(Source: Higgins James M, 1994)

Jones Gareth R and George Jennifer M, (2009) define management in almost similar manner. According to them ‘Management is planning, organising, leading and controlling of human and other resources to achieve organisational goals efficiently and effectively’. Their idea about the functional stages of management has been shown in Fig: 1.1 above.

### **1.2: Different Approaches to Management**

Classical writers conceived organisations in terms of a formal structure designed to accomplish a purpose. Advocates of the Classical School believed that there must be a best way of doing things, which need to be determined through scientific analysis. Fredrick W Taylor, (1911), father of Scientific Management, pointed to the relationship between people and task responsibility and argued that efficiency can be increased through division of work and ‘increase of specialisation’. Later Max Weber, (1947) made the Classical Approach more consolidated by advocating principles of bureaucracy. According to him a formal system of organisation and administration need to be created for achieving efficiency in work performance. The structure of organisation advocated by him should be based on clearly defined formal authority related with specified tasks. For proper running of such

organisations and exercising control on the behaviour of workforce he stressed on the need for well defined system of rules, standard operating procedures, norms and guidelines.

As a part of Administrative Management Theory, Henri Fayol (1949) presented a normative and prescriptive model, which outlined the way managers should conduct their activity to reach the desired level of efficiency. He advocated fourteen principles of management, majority of which are dedicated to outlining the principles to be followed in designing a good organisation and leading the workforce.

Huczynski and Buchanan, (2010) observe that in classical approach major emphasis was placed on the planning of work, designing organisation structure focusing on its technical requirements and suggesting some principles to be followed for the sake of achieving efficiency in management. In short, while organising is concerned, the experts of Classical Approach advocated for functional division of work with hierarchical relationship of superior and subordinates placed under a narrow span of control. Classical Approach entails bureaucratic control to be operated through issuance of strict guidelines, rules and norms.

Parallel to Classical Approach emerged another approach called Management Science Approach, which is an advanced and developed version of Scientific Management emphasising greater use of scientific and quantitative tools to help managers make maximum use of organisational resources (Jones and George, 2009). Quantitative Techniques, Total Quality Management and Management Information System are the tools in the armour of this new approach.

Classical Approach is based on the assumption that personnel at work are rational and behave logically. The advocates of Behavioural Approach like Elton Mayo, (1933) and Mc Gregor (1960) observe that people at work are not as rational as postulated by Classical thinkers; rather they are social beings, hence they are led by their own psychological, social and behavioural dimensions. They draw attention to the point that there exists informal organisation within the structure of a formal organisation. Organisational behaviour and informal organisation play a very dominant role in influencing mode of operation and efficiency. In the light of

their study the advocates of Behavioural Approach emphasise that the management should receive behavioural training to manage subordinates in a way that elicit their cooperation and increase productivity (Jones and George, 2009)

Management Approaches that bring environment into consideration are Systems Approach and Contingency Approach. Daniel Katz and Robert Kahn (1966) advocate Systems Approach to Management. According to this approach an organisation is defined as a group of interrelated parts. If one part is left defective, the whole system will be finally rendered defective and inefficient.

The advocates of the Systems Approach to Management observe an organisation, as an open system, is drawing inputs from environment, converts them into products and send back them to environment, where they are bought by consumers (Jones and George, 2009). If raw material is bad, the output will entail a chance of being bad. Therefore, the attention of management should not be focused on a part of the organisation alone; rather management should be viewed as a task of coordinating the components and adapting them to environment. So, fighting competition in product market and competing for raw materials in input market are started to be treated as parts of management.

Another important Management Theory is development of Contingency Approach (Tom Burns and G M Stalker, 1961; Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967). The advocates of this approach argue that there is no best way to organise. The organisational structure and control system that the managers should choose is contingent upon the environment. If environmental factors are favourable, loosely defined control system can help a firm to achieve the goals. However, if the environmental factors are very harsh and unfavourable, the managers need design a well defined control system for monitoring quality standards to retain its market share.

This approach recommends that if the environment is found undergoing rapid change, managers need to organise their activities in way that allows them to cooperate with each other, act quickly and respond effectively. In such environment, instead of mechanistic structure management need organic structure, which advocates decentralised authority, horizontal communication flow and cross-departmental cooperation. Decentralisation and Panchayati Raj get theoretical support from this approach to management.

In the last decade of twentieth century, environment being more complex and dynamic, management executives began to engage in strategic thinking. This gave rise to a new approach called Strategic Approach. Corporate executives like to go ahead with strategies to manage their business in 21<sup>st</sup> century (Boone & Kurtz, 1992). The factors connected with strategic analysis are competition, market share, focus, core-competence, etc. Though many new approaches have emerged since second half of last century, even today approaches that managers adopt in various organisations vary widely. Many organisations are still applying principles of bureaucracy, while others are managing organisation strategically. It is really essential to see which approach the PRIs follow at the operational level.

### **1.3: Management of Panchayati Raj Institutions**

In India the Gram Panchayat Institutions are recognised as the appropriate institutional machinery for reconstruction of thousands of villages and achieving the goals of rural development. This institution is, in reality, an ideal institution of local governance at the grass-root level consisting of representatives elected from village constituencies located within the jurisdiction of the Gram Panchayat. The 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment has enacted some powerful provisions for strengthening this grass-root institution for its greater role in rural development and poverty alleviation. Given the Articles of constitutional empowerment compiled under 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment 1992, unless the management functions, viz., planning, organising, coordination and controlling are scientifically applied at the operational level, the implementation of numerous schemes will remain half-finished or unfinished.

For the efficient implementation of the *programmes of rural development* what is required is 'efficient management' of PRIs (Roy Dipen, 2012). In other words, 'for effective realization of developmental goals we demand that governance should be good. From past experience it is felt that policy-making or planning is not enough. Bringing together the disorganized resources of manpower, money, materials and technology into a functioning whole to accomplish the goals and objectives is the task to be pursued sincerely.

Banerjee S, (1981) explains management from the standpoint of economy and efficiency. According to him management can be explained as a straight line

joining the points 'where you are' and 'where you want to be'. The straight line connotes the clarity of direction in achieving the goal of the organisation, avoiding the kinks, aberrations and distortions in the process of journey from starting to destination. Therefore, management is a science and art applied in operations for enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation. Public Administration is essentially based on the foundation of management science and draws on the principles of management.

Given the mandates of constitutional empowerment and devolution of finances, unless there is proper mechanism for management of the operational activities of these institutions, the developmental goals cannot be fully attained.

Given the resources, if management is good, governance has fair chance to be good and *vice versa*. From this perspective the pertinent question is - do the Gram Panchayat Institutions apply the principles of management in getting things done? How far the management principles are appropriate in managing the programmes and projects assigned to them? In this context it is essential to examine the management of Gram Panchayats and review the utility of the principles of management as advocated by the experts in the field of management. To fulfil these objectives 'making a study on Management of these Gram Panchayat Institutions' is considered to be an important area of research.

In this context it is essential to examine the management of Gram Panchayats and examine the possibility of applying the proven principles of management as advocated by the experts in the field of management.

#### **1.4: Decentralisation, Panchayati Raj and Rural Development**

'India lives in village'. Gandhiji, (1946) befittingly said this to describe, in the simplest manner, the socio-economic character of whole India. In the country, in fact, the majority of the population live in countless villages scattered around the whole subcontinent. Keeping in mind the village oriented nature of the economy, policy makers came to understand that without developing the villages, development of the country could not be made possible.

Given the inter-relationship between rural development and Indian economic growth, the policy makers realised the need for a democratic institution at the

grass-root level that could help in realisation of the objectives of rural development in an effective manner. So, with the dawn of freedom thought began to be given to rejuvenate the Panchayati Raj Institutions *as an indigenous model of grass-root democracy* that was culturally and organically involved with fabrics of village life in India since long past (Mehta Ashok, 1978). It appeared clear that development and democracy were taken to be the twin objectives of Panchayati Raj (Narain Iqbal, 1970).

Gandhiji (1946) viewed that each village should be a complete republic and the Panchayat should be the *autonomous self-government* entrusted with the task of governing each village as a complete republic independent of any external interference. The idea what Gandhiji advocated falls on the line of democratic decentralisation. The idea of decentralisation is closely identified with the creation of democratic units endowed with effective and efficient administrative structures at the grass-root levels (Friedman, 1983; Smith, 1985; Haque, 1997).

Democratic decentralization has been repeatedly seen as a mechanism to ensure grass-root level participation in the nation's development process (Nazrul Islam, 2007). It is also a way of increasing the effectiveness of development programmes by making the programmes more relevant and responsive to local needs and conditions, allowing greater flexibility in their implementation and providing ideal means of coordinating the various agencies involved at the regional or local level (Rondinelli, D and Cheema, G.S 1984; Conyers, 1983; Smith, 1985). Decentralisation can provide better services to local preferences, strengthening local accountability and supporting local economic development (Baker, 1997).

The basic idea behind democratic decentralisation is to involve people in their own development and 'train local leadership to assume higher responsibilities and serve people with efficiency'. The system ensures people's participation in planning and implementation; consequently governance becomes more participatory and more accountable and more effective and efficient (Conyers, 1983; Friedman, 1983; Manor, 1995; Haque, 1997).

Pointing to the benefits of decentralization Gary Stoker (1988) argues that a decentralised government has the capacity to win public loyalty. It facilitates matching of local resource and local needs.

The Panchayati Raj Institutions that are found engaged in transforming Indian villages into economically and socially developed units are operational structure of the so-called democratic decentralisation advocated in the theory of public administration. To this effect the Article 40 (Directive Principles of State Policy) of the Constitution of India enshrined upon the States to take steps to organize Village Panchayats and endow them such necessary power as may enable them to function as units of self-government. Balwant Rai Mehta, (1957) observes that 'community development can be real only when community understands its problems, realizes its responsibilities and maintains constant vigilance on local administration'. Finally, he recommends for formation of Panchayati Raj Institutions as a locally elective body in villages and devolution of power and finances to them.

### **1.5: The 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment 1992 and Panchayati Raj System**

In India the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment 1992 has enacted some powerful provisions for strengthening this grass-root democratic institution for its greater role in rural development and poverty alleviation. It has emerged as a big step towards filling the gaps in the process of empowerment of Gram Panchayats. The provisions to be followed in every State for organizing the Panchayati Raj System have been stipulated in the said amendment as enumerated below:

- i) The states shall make provision for representation of women and weaker sections in Panchayat bodies.
- ii) The states shall delegate functions to the PRIs according to Eleventh Schedule to the Constitution, which contains lists of the functions earmarked for PRIs.
- iii) The states shall constitute State Finance Commission for recommendation of finances to be made available to PRIs and taxes to be levied by them.
- iv) The states shall hold regular election to Panchayat bodies. The State Election Commission shall be responsible for holding of election to the Panchayat bodies.

The provisions of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment are mandated for empowerment of people at the grass-root and ensure that not only '*rural elites*' but weaker section of the

society particularly women, scheduled caste and scheduled tribes are represented on the Panchayat bodies. It aims at the objective of ensuring fruits of development percolate down to the target beneficiaries at the grass-root.

Given the mandates of constitutional empowerment and devolution of finances, unless there is a proper system of management in the institutions, objective of delivering the fruits of developments to the people at the grass-root cannot be fully reaped. In this context it is essential to see the role '*science and art of management*' can play in achieving the goals effectively and ensuring proper delivery of services by the PRIs.

### **1.6: Panchayati Raj System in West Bengal**

A three-tier structure of Panchayati Raj system is working in West Bengal. The institutions at different tiers are as enumerated below:

Gram Panchayat	at Village level
Panchayat Samiti	at Block level
Zilla Parisad	at District level

Recently Gram Sansad, a new tier constituted at the booth level of each Panchayat Constituency, has been added to the prevalent three-tier structure to enhance efficiency of the Gram Panchayats. This is an experimental new tier to the existing three-tier structure. Now under a Gram Panchayat there is around ten to fifteen Gram Sansads. Each Gram Sansad has the power of telling what developmental work should be undertaken in its area at booth level. Thus, it acts as tool to incorporate voice of local people in local plans and district plans. It is necessary to note that even after addition of this new fourth tier to the system, the structure of West Bengal Panchayati Raj System is still referred to as three-tier structure in contemporary literature. It is desirable that the structure of West Bengal Panchayati Raj System henceforth may better be described as four-tier structure.

### **1.7: Review of Literature**

Literature in the areas of PRIs, decentralised governance and rural development is abundant. Focus of the majority of works is on socio-economic contribution that these institutions make in development of villages, women empowerment, poverty eradication, financial devolution, political awakening, leadership, etc. Presenting full literature available on Panchayati Raj in this chapter is almost impossible.

However, some of the important works have been reviewed in the following paragraphs.

Mukhopadhyaya A.K, (1980) makes a study on various aspects of Panchayat Administration in West Bengal. Notably he reviews the different stages Panchayati Raj movement and thereby presents a comprehensive record of chronological history of Panchayati Raj in West Bengal. His work can be regarded as a milestone in the history of Panchayati Raj in West Bengal. Muthayya B.C, (1972) explores that where the villagers have the confidence that mobilized fund would be used on the schemes meant for their own development, they respond positively and pay taxes levied on them willingly.

Bava Noorjahan, (1996) examines the task before the State Finance Commission and recommends further measures for greater financial autonomy of the PRIs. Oommen and Dutta, (1995) in their book entitled 'Panchayats and their Finance' review the existing structure of Panchayat Finance in a historical context and present a discussion on some 'basic principles of inter-governmental transfers' with special reference to local bodies in India. They also review the task of the State Finance Commission at the federal level. Oommen M. A, (1998) makes a comparative study on the finances of the Local Government of the developed countries vis-à-vis developing countries. Chitlangi, BM and Amarendra Kumar Tiwari, (1998) observe that compared to grants received from central and state governments, revenue mobilization by Panchayati Raj Institutions appears abnormally low. Rao, Govinda. M and Rao, Vasanth U. A, (2008) record almost similar findings.

In the backdrop of 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment a series of studies has been made by researchers like Mishra S. N and Singh S. S, (1993) and Singh Hoshiar, (1994). They analyse the clauses of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment and express hope that the new constitutional amendment is expected to be helpful to the Panchayats in showing better performance in future.

In the backdrop of the prescribed reservation of seats for women announced in the provisions of 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment 1992 many scholars make study to examine if the provision is really coming effective in the empowerment of women. Many scholars (Bhargava B S and Subha K, 1994; Datta Prabhat, 1997; Mohanty

B, 1997) study role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in women empowerment. They draw attention to the need for proper training of women members and make recommendations for further empowerment of women a success. Mathew George, (1994) makes a review of historical background of the Panchayati Raj in India and argues that mere statutory changes are insufficient to have healthy local bodies; there must be strong people's movement to make the constitutional changes a reality.

Aziz, Abdul, (1998) observes that the Panchayat planners do not have adequate autonomy in respect of planning. Mathur S N, (1997) advocates formation of 'Nyaya Panchayats', a system of local judiciary.

Large numbers of studies have also been made on the role of Panchayats in empowerment of backward classes like SC/ST. Menon, Bakshi and Sinha, (2003) make a study in tribal intensified Panchayati Raj and observe that Panchayats are working to make change in the living conditions of tribal population. Roy Dipen, (2005) makes a study on 'accounting practices of three-tier Panchayati Raj Institutions in West Bengal' and recommends a Normative Approach to Accounting of Panchayati Raj Institutions for making accounts meaningful and transparent.

Chowdhury D Paul (1994) and Rajasekhar D (1999) study the functioning of NGOs and take it to light that wherever NGOs work alongside the Panchayats in the villages, performance of the Panchayats appears better. So, they opine that NGO may act as intermediary facilitating the linkages between their target groups and the Gram Panchayats.

Chakrabarti Bhaskar et al, (2011) make study on Gram Panchayats' coordination with line departments in rural West Bengal. The organisation structure that they present has little policy relevance with operational mechanism of the PRIs. The study indeed covers robust survey of literature, but ends with no remedy or recommendation applicable in management of the grass-root institution.

Mandal A, (2011) and Buch Nirmala, (2012) make detailed analysis of the contours of Gram Sabha. According to them, as an immediate effect of 73rd Amendment to Constitution, the power of governing PRIs has been shifted to Gram Sabha. It has brought about a big a transmutation, initiated a significant

breakthrough in the conventional representative form of governance. Through this enactment power has been handed over to people, instead of confining them to the hands of elected representatives. It has established an era of *people's raj* in place of orthodox *raj of the elected representatives*.

Mathew George, (2012) advocates the policy of involving political parties in the election of Panchayati Raj Institutions and presents the arguments that the idea of keeping local governance an apolitical institution is an abstract idea. According to him local governance is linked with governance at state as well as union level. While Central and State Governments are based on political ideology, local government like Panchayats cannot stay detached from politics.

However, no study on institution level **management of Gram Panchayat** has been done by any scholar. It leaves a scope for making an academic study on the issue with a managerial outlook and exploring the different factors connected with organising and governance of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

### **1.8: Objective of the Study**

In the context of issues mentioned above, this research seeks to make an in-depth study into major aspects of management functions, viz., planning, organising and controlling of Gram Panchayats in West Bengal. The research questions are –

- a. How do the Gram Panchayats prepare their plans?
- b. What are the features of the organization structure of a Gram Panchayat? At the operational level, do these institutions have a unique organising mechanism? Is the mechanism of organising activities of Panchayats is in conformity with the standard principles of organising as enumerated in the literature of management theory?
- c. What are the different forms of controlling techniques applied on the operations of Gram Panchayats? Are the controlling techniques in conformity with the objectives of the organisation?

The objectives of the study involves i) finding answer to the questions mentioned above and ii) examining if the practice is consistent with the conventional management practice and policy goals of the organisation

### **1.9: Methodology of the Study**

Case Study is the basic methodology of the work. However, the canvas is made widespread to transform it into an inter-disciplinary study based on literature survey and field investigation. Under literature survey theoretical issues of different areas like Panchayati Raj, Management Theory, Rural Development, Accounting Theory, etc have been considerably studied. Aim of the study has been to build a theoretical framework, in the light of which findings from field investigation could be analyzed and evaluated.

Fieldwork has been used for the study of Management Practice of the Gram Panchyats. For this purpose the Gram Panchayats under the jurisdiction of the Phansidewa Block have been surveyed. Pradhans of the Gram Panchayats have been interviewed for understanding their ways of managing the activities of the Gram Panchayats. The focus of the study is on examining methods of planning, organizing and controlling followed by the Gram Panchayats. For this purpose 'The West Bengal Panchayat Act 1973' and 'The Gram Panchayat Administration Rules' have been duly consulted. Necessary data have been collected from annual accounts, budgets and action plans to obtain an empirical picture about planning and budgeting of the Gram Panchayats. Finally, an effort has been made on linking local factors as obtained from the profile of the block with success and lapses of the Gram Panchyats.

### **1.10: Limitations of the Study**

The findings of the study are based on a case study, which covers a limited period of five years from 2008 to 2013. Many changes might have taken place by this time; those changes remain outside the scope of this study. The study is based on a limited sample of Gram Panchayats; so, the results obtained from the study cannot be generalised.

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