



Local Government Quarterly

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*A Journal of the
All India Institute of Local Self-Government*

- ★ Human Rights and Local Self-Governance: A Critical Study of Panchayati Raj Institutions in India
- ★ Citizen-Centric Initiatives for Making Urban Governance in Uttar Pradesh 'Viksit'
- ★ A systematic review of defining urban resilience in the context of cultural heritage with special emphasis on Amritsar
- ★ Implementation of the Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana: An Impact Assessment Study of Village Gudia Khera

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All India Institute of Local Self-Government

M. N. Roy Human Development Campus, Plot No.6, 'F' Block,
TPS Road No.12, Bandra (E), Mumbai – 400051.
Tel : +91 86576 22550 / 51 / 52 / 54
E-mail : dg@aailsg.org Website : www.aailsg.org

Ranjit S. Chavan
President

Dr. Jairaj Phatak, I.A.S. (Retd.)
Director General

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Editorial

Kisan Diwas

India's farmers toil relentlessly, often under the harsh sun or lashing monsoon rain, and enable feed the over 140 crore people of this country. Not surprisingly, they are called 'annadata' or 'giver of food'. Their effort also powers the rural economy and sustains livelihoods across the nation.

India observes National Farmers Day, also called 'Kisan Diwas' on 23rd December each year. This date also serves to commemorate the rich and enduring legacy of Chaudhary Charan Singh, a champion of farmers' welfare and well-being of the rural population. Born on 23rd December, Chaudhary Charan Singh was the fifth Prime Minister of India. On the occasion of 'Kisan Diwas' this year, Prime Minister Modi paid tribute. *“On the occasion of his birth anniversary, humble tribute to former Prime Minister Bharat Ratna Chaudhary Charan Singh Ji, the true well-wisher of the poor and farmers. His dedication and spirit of service to the nation will continue to inspire everyone”*, he said.

India's agricultural sector has made magical strides in the past several decades moving from food shortages, famines (1964, 1965, 1966), and import of food grains to not just self-sufficiency but to becoming a dominant player on the world agricultural stage. India has been looked up to as a provider of food to several nations during times of distress and difficulty. The 'Green Revolution' in India starting in the 60s made a very big contribution to India's self-sufficiency and leadership in the agri sector. Research, technology and innovation resulted in the development of high yielding varieties of crop and disease resistant strains alongside improved irrigation practices and better fertilisers to substantially improve output and resilience of the sector.

Inspite of the noteworthy performance of the farm sector, several challenges remain and some need concerted actions. Among the challenges confronting the sector, is its vulnerability to climatic conditions in general and unpredictable rainfall, in particular. Climate change impacts contain unpredictable, inadequate (or

excess) rainfall and temporal deviations from past set patterns. Considering that over 50 percent of Indian agriculture is rain-fed, this is a big challenge which affects crop output while putting farm incomes and livelihoods in danger. This has resulted in much of the farm distress in the last many years. Given that climate change impacts are likely to remain for more time, there is need to move away from dependence on water-intensive crops and towards more resilient crops like millets, coarse cereals and nutri-cereals. There is a sustained push from government to promote the cultivation and consumption of this nutrient-rich category of crops captioned 'Shree Anna' in order to improve nutrition security of the population while also protecting farmers' incomes by reducing their vulnerability. This is bearing fruit with many food product manufacturers introducing high-end products like millet cookies and biscuits under the 'nutritious' label which appeal to the urban population. Alongside, adoption of improved (less water-intensive) irrigation practices is reducing dependence on water.

In the context of crop diversification, it is heartening to note that India's horticulture production estimates for 2023-24 put the output at over 350 million tonnes, ahead of foodgrain production. India has thus become the world's second largest producer of fruits and vegetables while racing ahead to occupy the top position in several individual fruits and vegetables. This is an encouraging development since it diversifies the nutrition basket providing all-round nutrition for the population, while at the same time improving the output profile and income prospects of farmers. This has been possible due to sustained efforts by the national and state governments with respect to increasing area under crops, quality planting material, protected cultivation, and post-harvest management practices, training, and capacity building of farmers.

Other areas under the farm economy like poultry, livestock, and fisheries are receiving necessary inputs. In milk production, for example, India is the world's largest producer accounting for over 24.7 % of world production with production growing faster than world output growth. Per capita availability is at 471 grams in India during 2023-24 against the world average of 329 in 2023. India ranks 2nd in eggs production and 5th in meat production. These provide significant impetus to shoring up the nutrition quotient of the population. These have been made possible due to various initiatives including the nurturing and growth of the producer cooperatives in the farm sector.

The observance of Kisan Diwas enables draw attention to the crucial role of the farm sector in any economy and the remarkable performance of India's agri economy and the need for continued, sustained support for this sector.

Human Rights and Local Self-Governance: A Critical Study of Panchayati Raj Institutions in India

Putta V. V. Satyanarayana

Abstract

The system of local self-governance in India has been instrumental in fostering grassroots participation and ensuring dignity since its institutionalisation in the 1990s, particularly through the reservation system. While this system has facilitated greater inclusivity, enabling marginalised communities to engage in political processes, it has also led to complex socio-political dynamics that impact human rights in multifaceted ways. Local governance has strengthened decentralization and expanded democratic participation; however, traditional societal structures have encountered significant tensions, often resulting in conflicts.

Despite the advancements in local governance, human rights violations continue to persist, particularly during elections at the grassroots level. These elections, designed to promote democratic engagement, are often marked by violence, especially in rural

areas where political power determines access to resources and influence. At the village level, where authority is a critical determinant of socio-economic status, contentions over political power often escalate into violent confrontations, revealing deep-seated inequalities.

This study explores the transformative role of local self-governments, focusing on the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments and their impact on political inclusivity. First, the study traces the evolution of local governance and its significance. It then examines the socio-political characteristics of local self-governments, particularly issues of caste and economic inequality, and gender disparity. Following this, the study analyses the intersection of human rights and local governance, emphasizing the need for reforms. In conclusion, the paper argues that as rural areas become increasingly integrated into the broader social and political landscape through media,

technology, and mobility, the role of local self-governments will be crucial in addressing human rights challenges and fostering participatory, inclusive development.

Keywords: Panchayati Raj, Human Rights, Grassroots Democracy, Social Justice, Participatory Development

Introduction

Local self-governance has been an enduring cultural tradition in Indian civilization. Historically, India rarely experienced a highly centralized state; governance was predominantly carried out at the village level. Governance in ancient India was marked by two notable characteristics. Firstly, the 'state' exerted only a limited influence over social affairs, resulting in political changes—such as shifts in rulership—having little effect on the daily lives of the subjects. Secondly, social order was predominantly maintained through autonomous and native institutions, with the *Panchayat* system exemplifying a decentralized model of self-governance (Bhattacharyya, 2004). Over time, India developed numerous community-based administrative structures under the panchayat system. However, these institutions were often shaped by the caste hierarchy, social status, and ancestral lineage, limiting their inclusivity.

The formal institutionalization of *panchayats* in India finds its early

foundations in British colonial policy. A significant turning point was the 1882 resolution introduced by Lord Ripon, which established local boards composed of elected members—constituting the earliest systematic effort to modernize local self-governance structures. Subsequently, during periods when Indian nationalists pressed for expanded autonomy and democratic reforms at the national level, the colonial administration responded by devolving limited self-governing authority to the local tier—resulting in the establishment of panchayats in rural regions and municipalities in urban areas (Singh, 2010). Eventually, the concept of Panchayati Raj became integral to India's nationalist movement and was central to Mahatma Gandhi's vision of self-rule (*swaraj*). Gandhi idealized ancient Indian society as a model in which social cohesion took precedence over political authority, and communities thrived in autonomous, self-reliant villages. He maintained that India's progress, grounded in humanistic and non-violent principles, necessitated a decentralized framework. Consequently, he championed the extensive transfer of political and economic authority to local communities (Chakrabarty, 2006).

Although local self-government was included in the Indian Constitution after independence, it was placed under the State List, limiting its

constitutional authority. It was only in the early 1990s, nearly a century after its modern inception, that Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) were granted constitutional status through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts. This transformation was widely regarded as a significant step toward decentralization, grassroots democracy, participatory development, and social justice. Given these advancements, it becomes crucial to assess their broader implications. In particular, how has this phase of decentralization shaped the human rights landscape in India?

Human rights encompass a broad spectrum of rights and freedoms. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) categorizes them into civil and political rights (Articles 1–21) and economic, social, and cultural rights (Articles 22–28). In the Indian context, the human rights situation must be examined at three levels: (1) violations committed by the state itself, (2) socio-economic structures that inhibit rights and equality, and (3) the denial of livelihood and dignified living conditions for a large section of the population. The evolving role of local self-governments intersects with human rights concerns at all these levels.

This study aims to analyse the impact of decentralised governance on

human rights using available data, along with insights from human rights experts and activists. By examining these perspectives, it seeks to assess whether local self-governments in India have strengthened or weakened the protection of human rights.

The Significance of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts

India's struggle for independence, under Gandhi's leadership, placed significant emphasis on villages and their self-governing structures. However, when the Constitution of independent India was drafted, local self-governance was not accorded a central place in its main body, receiving only a mention in the Directive Principles of State Policy. As a result, state governments did not prioritize the development and empowerment of rural and urban local bodies. Over time, it became evident that sustainable governance and inclusive development could not be achieved without meaningful devolution of power to local communities.

Recognising this imperative, the Indian Parliament enacted two landmark constitutional amendments—the 73rd and 74th Amendments for Panchayats and Municipalities, respectively—on 22nd and 23rd December 1992. These amendments granted local bodies

constitutional recognition as “institutions of self-governance,” thereby institutionalising decentralised governance in India.

The 73rd and 74th Amendments inserted Part IX and Part IX-A into the Constitution, which form the legal foundation for rural and urban decentralization, respectively. Part IX encompasses Articles 243 to 243-O, while Part IX-A includes Articles 243P to 243ZG. Despite addressing different administrative domains, both amendments share several fundamental provisions. These include the direct election of representatives, reservation of seats for women, Scheduled Castes (SCs), and Scheduled Tribes (STs), the establishment of an Election Commission to oversee local body elections, and the creation of a Finance Commission to ensure the financial viability of these institutions.

Importantly, the provisions enshrined in these amendments serve as foundational principles that require further elaboration through state-level conformity legislation. This framework underscores the federal nature of India's polity, wherein the power to legislate on local governance remains the exclusive prerogative of state governments. Consequently, while the constitutional amendments establish broad guidelines, the Union government cannot unilaterally

legislate on matters concerning the powers and functions of local bodies. The successful implementation of decentralised governance, therefore, depends on the extent to which individual states enact and enforce laws that align with the constitutional mandate.

Salient Features of Local Self-Governments and their Implications for Human Rights

The constitutional recognition of local self-governments in India was aimed at granting them the necessary status and dignity to function as effective democratic institutions. To ensure their viability, key provisions were incorporated into the Constitution, focusing on regular elections, representation of marginalized sections—including SCs, STs and women—and the devolution of powers and financial resources. These measures are intended to strengthen local governance and promote inclusive development.

Among the essential attributes of local self-governments is the institutionalization of the *Gram Sabha* (village assembly), which serves as the cornerstone of participatory democracy at the grassroots level. The *Gram Sabha* consists of all adult members registered as voters in a village or a group of villages, providing a platform for direct engagement in decision-making.

Additionally, the reservation of at least one-third of seats and chairperson positions for women has been mandated to enhance female political participation and leadership in local governance structures.

To promote the political inclusion of marginalized communities, the Constitution mandates the reservation of seats and chairperson positions for SCs and STs in proportion to their population, with a minimum of one-third of these positions reserved for women. Furthermore, state legislatures are empowered to extend reservations to Other Backward Classes (OBCs), thereby broadening the scope of inclusive representation. These provisions seek to rectify historical injustices and facilitate greater participation of disadvantaged groups in local governance.

Beyond political representation, local self-governments are entrusted with specific responsibilities under the Eleventh and Twelfth Schedules of the Constitution, covering a wide range of subjects related to rural and urban governance. To support their functioning, the establishment of State Finance Commissions ensures the financial devolution necessary for effective governance, while State Election Commissions oversee the conduct of regular elections. The tenure of panchayats is constitutionally fixed at five years, though they may be

dissolved earlier as per state law. In such cases, fresh elections must be conducted within six months, ensuring continuity in local governance.

The institutionalization of the Panchayati Raj system has elevated expectations surrounding its function as a vehicle for political empowerment, participatory citizenship, and the enhancement of public service delivery. This evolution has garnered significant attention from human rights activists and scholars, particularly in relation to the extent to which local governance mechanisms confront and mitigate deeply embedded social inequalities. The broader human rights discourse in the context of local self-governments is shaped by the deeply stratified nature of Indian society, which is characterized by caste-based hierarchies, economic disparities, and gender biases.

The caste system remains a fundamental determinant of social and political dynamics, perpetuating exclusion and limiting access to political power and resources. Consequently, the most vulnerable groups—SCs, STs, women, and economically disadvantaged sections—continue to experience systemic discrimination and marginalization. This raises critical questions about whether democratically elected local bodies serve as instruments for safeguarding human rights or, conversely, reinforce existing structural inequalities.

Hence, this study critically examines the role of local self-governments in addressing human rights concerns by analysing the intersection of caste, economic disparities, and gender inequality in shaping governance outcomes. It explores the extent to which decentralization has contributed to the protection and promotion of human rights or, paradoxically, exacerbated violations. This study concludes with an assessment of the prevailing human rights landscape in the context of decentralization, offering insights into the challenges and prospects of achieving an equitable and inclusive local governance framework.

Caste and the Persistence of Hierarchical Inequality in Local Governance

The caste system remains a deeply entrenched social structure in India, shaping individual lives and societal interactions in profound ways. It is widely recognized as “rooted in the religious order and may be thought of as a hierarchy of hereditary, endogamous, occupational groups with positions fixed and mobility barred by ritual distance between each caste” (Mitchell, 1979). This rigid stratification has historically created insurmountable barriers between groups, where an individual's social position is predetermined by birth. Scholars and activists in the field of human rights contend that caste-based

discrimination represents a grave infringement of human rights in India, one that continues to persist in contemporary times (Human Rights Watch, 1999).

One of the most oppressive aspects of the caste system is its role in denying basic education to marginalised castes and women, thereby perpetuating systemic inequalities. This historically ingrained exclusion continued to shape rural life, where lower-caste communities are often compelled to reside in segregated areas, typically on the outskirts of villages. Social and economic power remains concentrated in the hands of dominant caste groups, who have traditionally controlled village affairs and the rural economy.

The introduction of decentralized democratic institutions, particularly the Panchayati Raj system, has posed a challenge to deep-rooted caste-based power structures in India. While these reforms were designed to enhance grassroots democracy and provide political representation to marginalized communities, they have frequently encountered resistance from dominant caste groups. These groups perceive local governance reforms as mechanisms that enable lower-caste individuals to assert their rights, thereby disrupting traditional hierarchies (Jaffrelot, 2003).

The resistance manifests in various forms, ranging from bureaucratic hurdles and electoral manipulations to

direct acts of coercion and violence against elected representatives from marginalized backgrounds. This was evident in Tamil Nadu, where dominant caste groups obstructed Dalit individuals from assuming panchayat leadership roles in villages like Pappapatti, Keeripatti, and Nattarmangalam, delaying elections for over a decade post-1996 (Devakumar, 2006). Even after Dalit candidates won elections in 2006, their tenure was marked by systemic obstruction, preventing them from exercising their administrative authority. Similarly, in Maharashtra, Dalit women sarpanches have been subjected to orchestrated harassment aimed at displacing them and reinstating candidates aligned with

dominant caste interests (Gaikwad, 2016).

Since the inception of the Panchayati Raj system, instances of caste-based violence have surged, reflecting the hostility of dominant groups toward the political empowerment of marginalized castes. In Karnataka, resistance to governance reforms has extended to debates over caste-based census initiatives, with dominant communities opposing measures that could result in policy shifts benefiting lower-caste groups (Business Standard, 2023). These patterns of resistance underscore the ongoing struggle between entrenched caste interests and efforts to democratize local governance.

Table 1: Atrocities against Scheduled Castes (SCs)

Sl. No.	Year	Crime Incidence	Crime Rate (Cases Per Lakh of SC Population)	Percentage Variation (With Reference to Previous Year)
1	2013	39,408	19.6	17.1
2	2014	40,401	20.1	2.3
3	2015	38,670	19.2	-4.3
4	2016	40,801	20.3	5.5
5	2017	43,203	21.5	5.9
6	2018	42,793	21.3	-0.9
7	2019	45,961	22.8	7.4
8	2020	50,291	25.0	9.4
9	2021	50,900	25.3	1.2
10	2022	57,582	28.6	13.1

Source: Annual Reports of Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India from 2014-15 to 2023-24

Table 1 highlights the persistence of caste-based violence despite the institutionalization of local self-governments in India. Reported cases surged from 39,408 in 2013 to 57,582 in 2022, a 46.2% increase, with the crime rate per lakh SC population rising from 19.6 to 28.6. The sharp rise post-2019, with cases consistently exceeding 45,000 annually, underscores the entrenched nature of caste hierarchies. While awareness and reporting have improved, weak legal enforcement and social intimidation continue to undermine marginalized representatives. Without stronger institutional safeguards and enforcement of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, decentralization risks reinforcing, rather than dismantling, historical inequalities.

Despite constitutional provisions ensuring reservations and protections for marginalized communities, dominant caste groups continue to deploy various means—both structural and direct—to maintain their influence over rural governance (Shah, Mander, Thorat, Deshpande, & Baviskar, 2006). The persistent barriers faced by Dalit and lower-caste representatives illustrate the limitations of formal democratic institutions in transforming deeply ingrained social hierarchies. Addressing these challenges requires not only legal and policy interventions but also broader socio-cultural shifts to

dismantle caste-based exclusions in local governance.

Elections within India's local governance structures, particularly under the Panchayati Raj system, are frequently undermined by violence, intimidation, and systemic exclusion, particularly for representatives from marginalized communities. A recent and illustrative example occurred in Tamil Nadu in 2020, when a Dalit woman elected as the president of the Panchayat, faced severe caste-based discrimination. Reports revealed that, during her tenure, she was forced to sit on the floor in Panchayat meetings, a clear reflection of the caste hierarchies that persist even in democratic settings. This humiliation was compounded by the denial of her right to hoist the national flag during official ceremonies, despite holding an official position. Such discriminatory practices underscore the deeply entrenched caste biases within local governance structures, which continue to perpetuate inequality and obstruct meaningful political participation. The discrimination faced by Dalit panchayat president highlights how caste-based exclusion remains a significant barrier to achieving substantive political equality at the grassroots level (Dominique, 2020).

Instances of violence and intimidation against elected representatives from lower castes

continue to be a significant challenge within India's local governance structures. Although specific incidents may not always be widely reported, Uttar Pradesh has consistently recorded a high number of caste-based atrocities.

The state has the highest number of reported crimes against Dalits, with 15,368 cases of caste-based violence recorded in 2022 alone, according to the NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau, 2023).

Table 2: Atrocities against Scheduled Tribes (STs)

Sl. No.	Year	Crime Incidence	Crime Rate (Cases Per Lakh of ST Population)	Percentage Variation (With Reference to Previous Year)
1	2013	6,793	6.5	14.7
2	2014	6,826	6.5	0.5
3	2015	6,276	6.0	-8.1
4	2016	6,568	6.3	4.7
5	2017	7,125	6.8	8.5
6	2018	6,528	6.3	-8.4
7	2019	7,570	7.3	16.0
8	2020	8,272	7.9	9.3
9	2021	8,802	8.4	6.4
10	2022	10,064	9.6	14.3

Source: Annual Reports of Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India from 2014-15 to 2023-24

The data presented in Table 2 highlights a concerning upward trend in caste-based violence against STs over the past decade, with reported cases rising from 6,793 in 2013 to 10,064 in 2022. This increase is reflected in the crime rate as well, which climbed from 6.5 to 9.6 per lakh ST population, suggesting that the escalation is not merely due to demographic changes but rather an intensification of violence. While

temporary declines in 2015 and 2018 hint at possible improvements in law enforcement or reporting mechanisms, the sharp spikes in 2019, 2020, and 2022 point to growing vulnerabilities faced by ST communities. The post-2019 surge in crime incidence raises critical questions about the effectiveness of legal deterrents, the implementation of the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, and the role of socio-political shifts in

exacerbating caste tensions. These findings emphasize the urgent need for robust policy interventions, enhanced enforcement mechanisms, and community-driven accountability measures to safeguard marginalized groups from systemic violence and discrimination.

Such violence, including threats and physical assaults, is often directed at lower-caste leaders in an attempt to undermine their political agency and deter others from assuming leadership roles in local governance. These incidents underscore the systemic and societal barriers that marginalized individuals face when attempting to assert their democratic rights. Despite constitutional protections, the persistence of caste-based violence and exclusion continues to obstruct the realization of true political equality, highlighting the formidable challenges in achieving an inclusive political system in India's grassroots democracy.

The data presented in Tables 1 and 2 underscores the persistent and deeply entrenched nature of caste-based violence in rural India, highlighting its direct impact on local governance and political participation. The figures reveal a troubling trend wherein SCs and STs continue to face systemic discrimination and targeted violence. Despite legislative measures such as the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, the incidence of caste-based

violence remains alarmingly high, suggesting gaps in enforcement and accountability. The tables further illustrate how electoral cycles and local power struggles exacerbate such violence, as lower-caste representatives frequently become targets of intimidation and coercion. This reality underscores the paradox of decentralization—while local governance structures are designed to promote inclusion and participation, they often become arenas for reinforcing socio-political dominance. Addressing this challenge requires a multifaceted approach, including stringent legal enforcement, community-driven monitoring mechanisms, and political will to dismantle entrenched caste hierarchies within local self-government institutions.

Economic Factors and the Paradox of Decentralized Development

Despite India's constitutional commitment to solidarity, social justice, and equity, poverty remains a pervasive issue. Recent data indicates that approximately 4.86% of the rural population and 4.09% of the urban population lived below the poverty line in the fiscal year 2024, as per a report by the State Bank of India (SBI). This suggests a significant improvement from previous years; however, it also implies that a substantial portion of the population continues to experience poverty (DD News, 2025).

Furthermore, the 2024 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index report reveals that India accounts for a significant share of the global impoverished population, with 23.4 crore people living in acute poverty (UNDP, 2024). This form of poverty extends beyond mere economic deprivation, encompassing deficits in health, education, and standard of living, thereby representing a fundamental denial of human dignity. While the government has implemented various poverty alleviation schemes, their impact appears limited, as evidenced by persistent poverty rates and the enduring challenges highlighted in these reports.

Local self-governments have the capacity to narrow the growing disparity between constitutional mandates and economic conditions. The Eleventh and Twelfth Schedules of the Indian Constitution, which outline the subjects under the control of PRIs and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), respectively, predominantly focus on economic development. These include crucial sectors such as agriculture, minor irrigation, social forestry, small-scale industries, rural housing, fodder, electrification, and poverty alleviation programs. By virtue of their proximity to the people, local governments are best positioned to facilitate inclusive economic growth and ensure that developmental initiatives reach the most marginalized sections of society.

However, the reality often deviates significantly from this ideal, as local bodies are frequently subjected to the capture of resources by economically and politically powerful groups. This phenomenon, known as 'elite capture', occurs when local elites appropriate public resources for personal gain, undermining the equitable distribution of developmental benefits. Studies have shown that in states like Karnataka, local development schemes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and housing initiatives are prone to elite capture, with powerful groups diverting resources that were intended for marginalized communities (Rajasekhar, Babu, & Manjula, 2018).

The data in Table 3 illustrates the progressive increase in financial grants allocated to local self-governments by successive Central Finance Commissions, reflecting a growing fiscal commitment to decentralized governance. This financial support aligns with the constitutional mandate outlined in the Eleventh and Twelfth Schedules, which emphasize the role of PRIs and ULBs in driving economic development across crucial sectors such as agriculture, rural housing, electrification, and poverty alleviation. However, despite this increasing financial outlay, the effectiveness of these grants in fostering inclusive economic growth is often undermined by the phenomenon of elite capture,

Table: 3 Central Finance Commission Recommended Grants to PRIs

Sl. No	Central Finance Commission	Period	Quantum of Grants (Rs. crore)
1	10	1995-2000	4,381
2	11	2000-2005	8,000
3	12	2005-2010	20,000
4	13	2010-2015	64,408
5	14	2015-2020	2,00,292
6	15	2021-2026	2,36,805

Source: Finances of Panchayati Raj Institutions, Reserve Bank of India, January 2024.

wherein economically and politically dominant groups appropriate public resources for personal gain. This underscores the reality that financial decentralization alone does not guarantee equitable development; rather, it necessitates robust institutional safeguards, transparency mechanisms, and participatory governance to prevent the misallocation of resources. Therefore, while the increasing quantum of grants signifies the intent to empower local self-governments, their actual efficacy in translating constitutional directives into economically viable outcomes remains contingent upon the democratic integrity and accountability of local governance structures.

Despite the presence of mechanisms designed to promote

transparency and accountability, such as social audits and institutional checks and balances, corruption within decentralised governance structures remains a persistent challenge. The pervasive nature of corruption at the grassroots level disproportionately affects economically disadvantaged populations, further entrenching their marginalization and limiting their access to essential public services. Empirical research indicates that local elites often systematically exclude marginalized groups from developmental benefits, exacerbating socio-economic inequalities. In certain South Indian villages, SC and ST households in reserved Gram Panchayats are 7% more likely to access government schemes compared to those in non-reserved Panchayats, highlighting how local governance

structures can influence the distribution of resources (Surie, 2010). These dynamics demonstrate the need for strengthened institutional frameworks and vigilant oversight to ensure that local governance fulfils its intended role in promoting equitable development and safeguarding the rights of all citizens.

Gender Disparity in Local Self-Governance

Women, as a historically marginalized group in India, have faced systemic exclusion from formal political institutions. Although the Indian Constitution enshrines the principles of equality and justice, it initially lacked specific provisions to ensure representation of women in both Parliament and State Legislatures through reserved seats. This exclusion persisted for several decades, with political participation remaining largely inaccessible for most women. However, the enactment of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts in 1992 marked a transformative shift. These amendments mandated that one-third of the total seats in both panchayats and municipalities be reserved for women, representing a groundbreaking effort to include women in local governance.

The implementation of these amendments effectively challenged several prevailing myths about

women's political participation. Contrary to the assumption that women were passive or disinterested in governance, evidence demonstrates their active involvement in local governance structures. Contrary to earlier beliefs that reservations would predominantly benefit women from privileged backgrounds, data indicates that women from diverse socio-economic and caste backgrounds have seized the opportunity to engage in politics. Women from marginalized groups, including SC and ST, have found political space through affirmative action, contributing to a more inclusive political framework (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004).

However, while the legal framework was a significant step forward, gender equality in local governance has not been fully realized. Despite the constitutional provision, patriarchal norms remain deeply entrenched within Indian society, significantly undermining the empowerment of elected women representatives. These women frequently face violence, harassment, and other forms of gender-based discrimination. One notable issue that has emerged in the wake of these reservations is the phenomenon of “sarpanch patis”—the practice where male relatives, particularly husbands, take control over the functioning of panchayats, reducing women to mere figureheads. A study conducted in the

state of Rajasthan highlighted that many elected women in panchayats serve as proxy for their male relatives,

with male relatives often managing the panchayat's affairs behind the scenes (Chand, 2018).

Table 4: Incidents of Crime Against Women

Sl. No.	Year	Crime Incidence	Crime Rate (Cases Per Lakh of Female Population)	Percentage Variation (With Reference to Previous Year)
1	2013	3,09,546	52.2	--
2	2014	3,39,457	56.6	9.2
3	2015	3,29,243	54.2	-3.0
4	2016	3,38,954	55.2	2.9
5	2017	3,59,849	57.9	6.2
6	2018	3,78,277	58.8	5.1
7	2019	4,05,326	62.3	7.2
8	2020	3,71,503	56.5	-8.3
9	2021	4,28,278	64.5	15.3
10	2022	4,45,256	66.4	4.0

Source: Annual Reports of Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India from 2014-15 to 2023-24

The trends in crime against women, as highlighted in Table 4, hold significant implications for local governance, particularly in the context of Panchayat elections. Given that Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are responsible for grassroots governance and local law enforcement coordination, fluctuations in crime rates can reflect the effectiveness of decentralized governance in addressing women's safety. The increase in crime incidence, particularly after 2013 (3,09,546

cases) to 2014 (3,39,457 cases, a 9.2% rise), coincides with greater political participation of women in local governance due to 33% reservations for women in Panchayats, which in some states has been extended to 50%. While this has empowered women to take leadership roles, it has also led to increased resistance from entrenched patriarchal structures, sometimes manifesting in violence, intimidation, and social backlash against women candidates and elected representatives. Additionally, the variation in crime

rates—from 56.6 cases per lakh women in 2014 to 54.2 in 2015, and then rising again to 55.2 in 2016—suggests that local bodies may lack institutional capacity, adequate resources, or political will to address gender-based violence effectively.

While these challenges persist, there have been significant positive outcomes as well. Recent data from the Ministry of Panchayati Raj shows that over 45.6% of elected representatives in India's panchayats are women, surpassing the constitutionally mandated one-third reservation (Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, 2022). Studies indicate that many women elected through the reservation system have successfully advocated for local development, including improvements in education, health, and infrastructure, reflecting the potential of women's leadership in governance (Iyer, Mani, Mishra, & Topalova, 2012).

Moreover, some states have gone beyond the constitutional mandate and increased the reservation for women in local bodies to 50%, further strengthening the role of women in governance. Bihar and Rajasthan have led these efforts, which are indicative of the growing political empowerment of women at the grassroots level (The Indian Express, 2023). These state-level reforms provide a promising model for enhancing women's participation in political processes.

To ensure the meaningful representation of women in local governance, it is crucial to address the ongoing issues of gender-based violence, discrimination, and the dominance of patriarchal structures. Legal reforms must focus on safeguarding the rights of elected women representatives and ensuring their independence in decision-making. Additionally, capacity-building programs that enhance leadership skills and political knowledge are essential for the effective participation of women in governance. The passing of the Women's Reservation Bill, which aims to extend reservations for women in Parliament and State Legislatures, could also be a significant step toward achieving gender parity at all levels of governance. Without a comprehensive approach that tackles both structural and cultural barriers, the promise of gender-inclusive governance will remain an incomplete reality.

Local Self-Governments and Human Rights in India: Transformations and Challenges

The process of decentralisation in India, which gained significant momentum in the 1990s, has significantly influenced the state of human rights in the country. Prior to this, the rights of marginalized groups, including SC, ST and Women, were systematically violated due to the

absence of a democratic framework at the community level, preventing their effective participation in governance. With the advent of decentralisation, however, local democratic processes have brought citizens closer to decision-making bodies, both in urban and rural areas. Today, citizens have the opportunity to engage in local elections every five years and proclaim their democratic right to vote. The election process itself serves as a significant avenue for political education in India. Local self-government institutions, particularly PRIs, have evolved into key actors in ensuring dignity and respect for citizens, particularly at the village level. In this context, the principles of social justice—encompassing liberty and gender equality—are most effectively advanced at the local level, where direct citizen participation is most practicable.

At a formal level, every state in India has adhered to the constitutional dictate of ensuring the participation of historically excluded groups—SCs, STs, and women—through a system of reservations in PRIs. This formal inclusion has allowed marginalized groups to attain representation within these institutions. Furthermore, poverty alleviation and development programs have been decentralized, placing more responsibility in the hands of the Panchayats to address local issues. Women, particularly, have gained

visibility through the reservation of one-third of seats in Panchayats, while SCs and STs are represented in proportion to their population share.

However, it is crucial to recognize that formal representation does not automatically translate into meaningful participation. While the decentralisation process has led to a reduction in some of the blatant forms of exclusion, the mere presence of reserved seats does not guarantee active involvement in decision-making processes. It is true that since the introduction of the Panchayats in 1993, India has witnessed significant shifts, especially in terms of political inclusion, yet deeper issues persist. Social transformation through democratic processes, however, has not always been peaceful. The decentralisation of power has exacerbated human rights violations in many regions. This paradox is a result of entrenched power structures that resist decentralisation and continue to subvert constitutional mandates either overtly or covertly.

The resistance to decentralisation stems from a deep-seated opposition from those who have long benefited from hierarchical power structures, and who are now attempting to thwart the reforms introduced by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. In a traditional society like India, structural change inherently involves conflict.

The conflict of interests becomes particularly acute when power shifts from elite groups to marginalized communities, often manifesting in violence and intimidation. Such violence is especially pronounced during local elections, where local political power is a crucial determinant of socio-economic status. While such violence is also seen in state and national elections, it is more pervasive at the local level due to higher voter turnout and the localized nature of political control.

The role of caste in local politics remains another significant issue. Despite constitutional provisions and the establishment of commissions for SCs and STs, caste-based violence continues to plague Indian society, particularly in rural areas. The SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989 was enacted to curb such violence, yet its implementation has been inadequate, and perpetrators often go unpunished. The lack of effective enforcement, coupled with the fear of retribution, dissuades victims from reporting caste-based atrocities. Public representatives, particularly from the SC and ST communities, have frequently decried the state's indifference to caste violence, highlighting how lower-caste individuals continue to suffer extreme abuse, such as public humiliation and physical violence, often without legal recourse.

Despite these challenges, the Panchayats have created spaces where issues of caste and other forms of discrimination can no longer remain hidden. The *Grama Sabha* and *Gram Panchayat* provide democratic forums where local issues can be debated and addressed, offering a unique opportunity for public discourse on matters that were once swept under the rug. This visibility, while often contentious and political, has proven instrumental in giving marginalized voices a platform for advocacy. The role of political parties in this regard has been significant. The earlier reliance on consensus-based decision-making, which often meant compliance with the elite's will, has given way to more confrontational political dynamics, where parties are increasingly aligning themselves along lines of caste and class to either protect or challenge the status quo. In this context, political parties play a crucial role in disrupting the traditional autocracy of caste and family-based politics.

The mass media, social media, information and communications technology, and increasing spatial mobility have also contributed to breaking the isolation of rural areas. Events occurring in even the most remote village Panchayats are now immediately brought to national attention, facilitating greater scrutiny of local political processes. While the

new panchayat system is not without its flaws, it has begun to integrate rural areas into broader social and political networks. A significant development in recent years has been the intervention of the judiciary, particularly through Public Interest Litigations (PILs), in upholding the human rights of marginalized groups at the local level. While the Indian judiciary is often criticized for its slow pace, PILs have served as an effective mechanism for enforcing constitutional and legal protections, bringing greater attention to local governance issues.

Conclusion

The study underscores that while decentralisation through local self-governments in India holds the potential to foster democratic participation and human rights protection, systemic barriers continue to obstruct its realization. Caste-based violence remains a formidable challenge, as marginalized representatives frequently encounter intimidation and physical threats that hinder their political agency. This targeted exclusion not only undermines democratic representation but also perpetuates entrenched social hierarchies within PRIs. Furthermore, corruption at the grassroots level exacerbates socio-economic disparities, with local elites often monopolizing governance mechanisms and misallocating resources to serve

their interests rather than the needs of marginalized communities.

Despite these challenges, decentralisation has played a crucial role in disrupting traditional power structures by providing a platform for marginalized voices. The *Grama Sabha* and *Gram Panchayat* serve as critical forums for deliberation, ensuring that previously ignored social injustices are now subjects of public discourse. The rise of political party influence at the local level has also contributed to dismantling traditional caste and family-based dominance, though this shift brings new complexities related to party-based factionalism.

To ensure that local self-governments fulfil their mandate of fostering inclusive governance, institutional reforms must be complemented by structural and cultural transformations. Addressing gender-based discrimination is critical, as women continue to face patriarchal constraints that limit their participation in decision-making processes. While policies such as the Women's Reservation Bill signify progress, their success depends on robust implementation, leadership training, and the removal of structural barriers that hinder women's effective engagement in governance.

Similarly, combating corruption requires strengthening transparency

measures, enforcing strict oversight mechanisms, and promoting community-driven accountability initiatives. The judiciary, particularly through PILs, has played an important role in upholding constitutional protections at the local level. However, a more proactive approach in enforcing anti-corruption laws and caste-based atrocity prevention measures is necessary to ensure effective governance.

The ongoing process of strengthening local democracy in India demands sustained political will, civic engagement, and institutional commitment. While decentralization is often perceived as a panacea for democratic deepening, its success depends on dismantling the socio-political hierarchies that continue to impede genuine participatory governance. By fostering inclusive decision-making, strengthening legal safeguards, and promoting accountability mechanisms, local self-governments can be transformed into genuine instruments of human rights protection and social justice.

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The Chief Editor
Local Government Quarterly
All India Institute of Local Self-Government,
M.N.Roy Human Development Campus, Plot No. 6, 'F' Block,
TPS Road No 12, Bandra (East), Mumbai – 400051, India.
Tel: +91 86576 22550 / 51 / 52 / 54

Citizen-centric Initiatives for Making Urban Governance in Uttar Pradesh 'Viksit'

U.B. Singh

Abstract

An exercise to envision Viksit Bharat (Developed India) @2047 is being undertaken by the country under the rubric of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav. This mandates the urban local government to adopt citizen-centric approach of governance for making the urban areas developed. Urban Local Government is situated at the 'cutting edge of administration', enjoying direct interface with people. Hence, it provides for creation of a citizen-centric governance structure. Urban governance in order to be citizen-centric should be participative, transparent, efficient and responsive and accountable to the citizens.

This paper concentrates on major initiatives taken by the state government of Uttar Pradesh for making urban governance in this most populous state as a model for citizen-centric governance. The initiatives may lead the state towards becoming viksit by 2047.

Key Words: Good governance, Inclusive governance, Participatory, Transparent

Introduction

The modern system of the urban local self-government in India came into existence in the ending decades of the seventeenth century. This new system introduced by the British East India Company replaced our age-old indigenous system of local government. After a lapse of about three centuries, the historic 74th Amendment to the Indian Constitution (74thCAA) gave a constitutional status to these urban local government institutions, besides focusing on bringing decentralised governance in urban areas. However, the decentralisation of governance as envisaged in the Constitution is not duly reflected in the functioning of municipalities in the state of Uttar Pradesh having largest network of municipalities even after three decades of the promulgation of this land mark

Amendment to the Constitution. The state government of Uttar Pradesh has been attempting to ensure participation of ordinary citizens in municipal governance, besides conducting regular municipal elections. There are issues of establishing inter-city decentralisation (constitution of ward committees and area sabhas), providing functional financial and administrative autonomy, creation of new viable resources of finance, preparing integrated development plans (constitution of District Planning Committee and Metropolitan Planning Committee) though all these provisions have been inserted in both the municipal laws since long.

The role of urban local bodies is confined to catering to some basic needs of urban population. However, they are found incapacitated in providing qualitative, reliable and efficient services to the people. These units of urban governance have been facing manifold problems since their coming into existence. In fact, municipal bodies in general lack competence, resources, autonomy and will to manage cities (Digaetano & Storm, 2003). The financial dependence of urban local bodies on government seriously undermines their role in implementation of urban policies. Another reason for poor urban governance is lack of public participation in urban local government. Lack of able leadership

and its poor image, bureaucratic attitude to people, absence of continuous contact of the councillors with the public, rampant corruption, inefficiency of municipal administration are the major reasons attributable to poor public participation in urban local government (Kaur, 2007). Unfortunately, these institutions of local self-government are being converted and treated as local administrative units of the state government.

Urban governance in its new avatar (post-74thCAA) is supposed to articulate the participation of civil society, address the issues of transparency and ethics and democratic decentralisation of decision-making process (Jain, 2014). However, non-implementation of the provisions of the 74th CAA, in spirit, has resulted in poor urban governance. The lack of decentralisation of power to people and participation of civil society may be considered as the main reasons for poor urban governance. The government machinery at the state, district and local level coupled with local leadership has not been very active in promoting the participation of the citizen in local administration. Increasing citizen's participation in governance process makes urban local institutions more responsive to citizen needs and aspirations.

People-Centric Governance

The concept of citizen-centric administration or good governance or inclusive governance is not new for India. In *Vedas, Puranas, Ramayana, Mahabharat* and many other olden literatures, some attributes of good governance are abundantly available. In modern era, Mahatma Gandhi had propounded the concept of '*Su-raj*' meaning 'good governance'. In Independent India, our Constitution enshrines the Fundamental Rights as well as Fundamental Duties which are critical for democracy, and the Directive Principles of State Policy which embody the concept of a Welfare State and are a unique feature of our Constitution. The successive Five-Year Plans emphasised on practicing good governance, thus endeavouring to provide for a citizen-centric administration (SARC, 2009).

A citizen-centric approach enables urban local government to improve service delivery levels, improve citizen satisfaction and improve quality of life (Mehra: 2004). People-centric governance delivers cost-effective services (Handbook, 2007).

Citizen-Centric Initiatives in Uttar Pradesh

The state government of Uttar Pradesh has taken a number of citizen-centric initiatives which focus on

eliminating corruption, bringing transparency and efficiency in delivery of civic services. These initiatives are paying dividends. Some of the main such initiatives are discussed hereunder.

(i) Prevention of Corruption

- (a) The first Administrative Reforms Commission had recommended the setting up of the 'Lok Pal' at the Union Government and '*Lokayukta*' at the state level. In compliance, the state government of Uttar Pradesh also enacted the Uttar Pradesh *Lokayukta* and *Up-Lokayuktas Act, 1975*. Accordingly, the Governor of the state appoints one '*Lokayukta*'; and one or more *Up-Lokayukta(s)*. The institution of *Lokayukta* is empowered to investigate allegations or grievances arising out of the conduct of public servants including political executives, legislators, officers of the state government, local bodies, public enterprises and other instrumentalities of state government. In reality, it is an anti-corruption ombudsman in the state.

However, the *Lokayuta* in the state lacks any teeth. He has no authority to take any action. After making investigation he sends his report to the executive authority. The competent authority within the

stipulated time communicates his action taken report to the *Lokayukta*. If the *Lokayukta* is satisfied with the actions taken he closes the case. In case of his being not satisfied, he prepares a special report and submits to the Governor. The Governor sends the report along with a memorandum to the State Legislature (<http://lokayukta.up.nic.in>). In this way, the whole exercise is time taking and ultimately goes futile.

In absence of any authority to take action, the institution of *Lokayukta* remains an investigating agency. It is therefore necessary that the government should amend the law for making *Lokayukta* more powerful and effective.

(b) Further, in exercise of the powers under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947, as amended by the Anti-Corruption Laws (Amendment) Act, 1964, the state government has enacted the Uttar Pradesh Vigilance Establishment Act, 1965 for investigating the offences notified by the government. This is an active anti-corruption organ of the government to investigate the offences and punish the offenders. The Establishment is headed by an officer of the rank of Director General of Police. Its main functions include keep the government informed of all the

cases of corruption, bribery, misconduct, misbehaviour and other malpractices involving public servants that come to its notice (<http://uppolice.gov.in>>police-units).

(c) Furthermore, the present state government has followed the policy of 'zero tolerance' towards corruption. Any citizen can register a complaint against any department or officer through a designated portal. Thereafter such corrupt department or officer is investigated. In case of having found guilty, strict action is taken against that department or officer concerned.

(ii) Efficiency in Public Services

(a) Urban local institutions are responsible for providing basic services needed for a dignified human life. For maintaining the accountability, each municipality should spell out the details of services it has to perform and then specify the standards/norms for every service. This helps in holding the municipality to account if the service standards are not met as per the norms prescribed by it. Keeping this in mind, the Government of India commenced, in 1996, the exercise to formulate Citizens' Charters. In pursuance, the state government of Uttar Pradesh

followed suit. A comprehensive Municipal Citizen Charter is being prepared by every municipality in the state under which the information regarding time-bound proceedings related to street lighting, sanitation, road maintenance, waste collection, recovery of taxes and fees, etc. are to be provided to the citizens.

(b) The delivery of civic services to the citizens is one of the main goals of the urban local government. The means of achieving this goal are bringing improvement of the mechanism for assessing the quality of basic civic services. For assessing the level and quality of civic services provided by the municipalities, the state government, in compliance of the recommendations of the Thirteenth Central Finance Commission, has directed all municipalities to benchmark the four main services, i.e. solid waste management, water supply, sewerage, and storm-water drainage. This annual exercise was commenced in 2012-13 and is still continuing. The state government compiles those reports and puts in public domain. However, any learning out of this exercise is missing as it has become just a ritual. The main purpose of assessing level of municipal services in comparison to investments made by the

government and municipality on these services and also with the satisfaction of consumers of those services is completely ignored.

(c) The quality, availability, and reliability of services largely depend on how constructive feedback system is created between municipalities, the service providers and the citizens, the consumers of those services. Unfortunately, there exists no effective mechanism to follow-up and assess the quality, availability and reliability of basic services provided by the urban local units in the state. For getting rid of complex cobweb of hindering age-old bureaucratic systems/processes, the state government has initiated reviewing and preparing remedial guidelines/standard and bringing in place new operative procedures (SoP).

(d) Another important initiative is the revolution in Information and Communications Technology (ICT), whose application improves service delivery and reduces manual interventions in the provision and delivery of municipal services. It provides easy access to consumers, besides improving efficiency, transparency and ensuring accountability. It also helps in increasing the reach of government (SARC: 2009). The

state government has been helping develop the urban local government institutions with the necessary infrastructure enabling modern computing for efficient delivery of services to the people.

(iii) E-Nagar Sewa Citizen Services

This application has been conceived and launched in order to give assured civic services to citizens of the state. This initiative intends to introduce automation and implementation of integrated framework for e-Governance. It leverages ICT with an aim to streamline, improve, and strengthen functioning of municipal governments and service delivery to citizens. To begin with, nine modules namely, property tax deposit, online property mutation, online trade license, online water/ sewerage connection, online signage/ advertisement, online food NOC, online piped water unavailability NOC, online fire hydrant, DCCC (Dedicated Command Centre)/ online public grievances, online property assessment are presently available under this portal to citizen (<http://e-nagarsewaup.gov.in>).

(iv) Bringing Transparency

(a) Access to information is an effective tool to strengthen democracy and ushering in people-centric governance. It is a basic necessity of good or inclusive governance. Recognising the

importance of right to information as a move for empowering people and bringing transparency in administration, the Government of India legislated, in 2005, the Right to Information Act, 2005. This act was made to protect right to freedom and thought (<http://en.wikipedia.org>).

The state government has adapted this central law. In pursuance, the State Information Commission was established in September 2005 with a Chief Information Commissioner and a number of Information Commissioners. The government has also framed Uttar Pradesh Right to Information Rules (2015) bringing out necessary procedures. The citizens in the state thus feel empowered and have been enjoying their right to call for information as they wish.

(b) In addition to providing information on demand, the government has directed the municipalities to disclose the important information. In pursuance of the Public Disclosure Bill (2006) of the Government of India, Uttar Pradesh government has amended both the municipal laws and inserted the provision for disclosure of information therein. Accordingly, municipalities have been directed to maintain and publish its record to disclose the information at quarterly

intervals. The government has also framed the Uttar Pradesh Municipalities (Public Disclosure of Information) Rules, 2010. In compliance, proceedings of the municipal meetings, directory of officials, particulars of officers who grant permits and licenses, audited financial statements, service levels, particulars of plans/city development plans/detailed project reports, details of subsidy, loans, programmes, particulars of major public works, details of income generated through taxes, grants, etc. are to be disclosed by municipalities in public domain. The manner of disclosure includes newspapers, internet, municipal notice board, bulletin, notification in Gazette, etc. (urbandevelopment.up.nic.in).

- (c) In addition, the state government has made it mandatory for municipalities to procure office stationery, office furniture and equipments, printing etc. to be made through GeM (Government e-Marketplace) portal. It aims to enhance transparency, efficiency and speed in municipal procurement.
- (d) Further, Uttar Pradesh has now introduced an e-tender process which is well structured to ensure that the work to be performed for the municipalities is done reasonably and efficiently. On

these grounds, all municipal institutions have a specific well-defined tendering process, which involves careful opening, evaluation and selection of the vendors in a fair and transparent manner (<http://etender.up.nic.in>).

(v) Citizens' Feedback

With a view to providing an opportunity for citizens across the country to give feedback on key selected basic services, e.g. sanitation, water supply, the Government of India has launched a programme namely Report Card on services by citizen for Citizen Feedback. Citizen Report Cards (CRC) are participatory surveys that solicit user feedback on the quality and performance of public services in order to raise citizen awareness. It is an instrument to promote transparency, responsiveness and public accountability (Pekkonen, n.d.).

In compliance, at the behest of the Government of India, four municipalities (Moradabad Municipal Corporation, Mirzapur and Basti Municipal Councils and Malihabad (Lucknow) *Nagar Panchayat*), to begin with, undertook a pilot project on report card system as a component under the Capacity Development Programme sponsored by UNDP, in 2002. Two rounds of procuring the feedback through report cards were carried out (by RCUES, Lucknow)

sans public discussions. It was a revolutionary initiative but was scrapped once the external financial support was withdrawn after completion of the project period.

It was a good initiative. The state government should re-start the process of getting public feedback through report card. It is an effective tool for ensuring municipal accountability, which is one of the attributes of good governance.

(vi) Grievance Redressal

(a) A computerised public grievances redressal and monitoring system namely Jansunwai-Samadhan (Public Hearing-Redressal) has been developed by the state government. The Samadhan application has been developed to achieve the goal of mobile governance. All the grievances received are entered in the system and processed, which facilitates the citizen to lodge and monitor the progress of every grievance on internet. A citizen can freely and conveniently file and track grievance through this app (<http://jansunwai.up.nic.in>).

(b) Further, the state government has enacted the Uttar Pradesh Janhit Guarantee Act (2011) to provide the delivery of select services to the people within a stipulated time limit. The essential seventeen civic

services have been brought under the purview of the law. The state government has fixed the time-schedule for redressing the grievance and designated the official responsible for redressal pertaining to identified services. In case of failure in redressal in the stipulated time, the provision exists to appeal against before the designated appellate authority (<http://upcmo.up.nic.in>>janhit).

(c) Furthermore, citizens can reach out to the CM (Chief Minister) helpline by dialing toll-free number-1076 and register their references through Helpline Call Centre Executives (CCE) on Integrated Grievance Redressal System (IGRS) in the form of complaint or demands or suggestions. This initiative at the highest level has become very popular and effective as well (<http://jansunwai.up.nic.in>).

(vii) People's Participation

(a) The historic 74th Amendment to the Constitution mandates the decentralisation of municipal administration for bringing administration nearer to people. For the purpose, a mandatory provision to constitute 'ward committee' in cities having population of three lakhs or more has been made. In compliance, the state government has amended both the municipal laws enabling

constitution of 'ward committee' in each ward, and in pursuance, rules have also been framed. However, the institution of Ward Committees mandated by the Constitution is not yet created in the targeted towns.

The constitution of Ward Committees is the mandatory provision of the supreme law of the land facilitating citizen participation in local administration. It is therefore pertinent for the state government to comply with this mandatory provision of the Constitution without any further delay.

- (b) Further, the Government of India, in 2006, formulated the Aadarsh Nagar Raj Bill, and advised the state governments to further deepen the democracy and ensure people's active participation in municipal administration by constituting Area Sabhas at booth level in every ward. However, the government seems unconcerned on the creation of this institution.

The state government should actively consider to amend municipal laws for facilitating the constitution of Area Sabhas (by whatever name) in the wards for associating the people with local administration, thus deepening and strengthening the democracy, besides ensuring people's active participation in civic decision making.

(viii) Single Window System for Delivery of Services

The 'single window system' is one of the ways for assured efficient and effective service delivery to citizens. The driving force behind this approach is the belief that citizens need not run around different desks/offices for getting various services. All the municipal institutions have been directed to create single window system.

At many places 'e-suvidha kendra' have been set up which have been providing numerous services to the people. Such kendras with widened scope need to be opened in all the towns for providing efficient service to people.

(ix) State Urban Digital Mission

In consonance to the National Urban Digital Mission, this shared digital platform in the state has been created to facilitate the provision, delivery and monitoring of select modules of key municipal services. The services include water and sewerage, birth and death registration, citizen's grievance redressal, on-line building permit, NOC, property tax, trade tax, municipal accounting and user fees. The use of this e-governance tool aims to bring transparency and increase ease-in-doing-business in the state, besides strengthening the economy (urbandevelopment.up.nic.in). This

online municipal service system has been developed under the reform agenda of AMRUT-2. This mission is implemented in the first phase in 17 Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils and Nagar Panchayats of district headquarters (<http://www.thestatesman.com>).

(x) Safe City Project

The state government has launched the Safe City Project lately. The project comes with conditions such as installation of CCTV cameras to identify crime hotspots, saturating such hot-spots with increased CCTV surveillance etc. linked to a command and control system, setting up women police out-posts for facilitating easy movement, monitoring of coaching institutes to identify potential trouble-makers and most inexplicably, prohibition of late-evening classes for women and girls. The government has instructed, to begin with, all the 17 municipal corporations and also to schools in select districts to install C C T V c a m e r a s (<http://indianexpress.com>>columns).

Conclusion

The foregone study reveals that the state government is fully committed to bring transparency in municipal governance and ensure inclusiveness in the provision and delivery of basic civic services to the people. By mandating preparation of municipal

citizen charters and guaranteeing civic services under the ambit of laws are the instruments of inculcating responsiveness and accountability in urban governance. The regular holding of municipal elections and ensuring participation by every segment of society is a clear indicator of associating people at large in local decision making and administration. The approach adopted by the state government for inclusive development of this most populous state is fully compatible to the Bharatiya Development Model, destined to achieve “sustained, fast, inclusive growth, where 'inclusive' means all round development of the society and empowerment of every citizen, to develop own capabilities and competence through application of mind and effort” (Virmani, 2023). For the purpose, the present state dispensation has undertaken numerous policy, institutional and welfare reforms in recent years.

To sum up, the state government has launched a good number of citizens associated governance initiatives, and the move continues purposefully. The present state dispensation seems committed to provide more and more space to urban inhabitants in local administration, albeit at policy level. The government has been taking steps for bringing transparency in the working of urban local government institutions, and also ensuring efficiency in service delivery. It is in tune with the

observations/ recommendations made by the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2009). It is, therefore, expected that this most populous state has been proceeding on the right path leading to accomplish citizen-centric urban governance and thus becoming a developed (viksit) state in coming decades.

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A systematic review of defining urban resilience in the context of cultural heritage with special emphasis on Amritsar

Sakshi Sahni, Rawal Singh Aulakh

Abstract:

Urban resilience has gained utmost importance due to various kinds of acts happening today in the world be it disaster - natural or manmade, globalization etc. The article has examined various definitions in order to add to the academic knowledge through systematic research review and the various authors to which the word urban resilience belongs. This paper is a literature review of the term resilience and its meaning in various disciplines. A small case of Amritsar in terms of cultural and physical resilience has been covered with special emphasis on resilience in heritage.

Key words: Resilience, disaster, risk, urbanization, stability

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to understand the concept of resilience in various fields, resilience in urban planning and see if there is a

relationship between *urban resilience and cultural heritage*. The cultural and heritage resilience is still at its nascent stage while as in ecological science, a number of researchers have conducted review of resilience in the past and tried to answer various research questions like Adger (2000) looked into establishing link between sociological and ecological resilience; Folke, Carpenter et al (2010) discussed the history of concept of resilience, adaptability and transformability while Alexander (2013) studied the historical evolution of the term with its adoption in (DRR) Disaster Risk and Reduction and development. Weichselgartner and Kelman(2015) looked into theory, concepts, characteristics, resilience in practice and critical challenges of resilience Wisner and Kelman (2015) focused on community resilience to disaster with focus on understanding community, community resilience in context of natural and technological hazards, community resilience, violent

social crisis as well as non-violent social crisis as a prerequisite of resilience, specified and general resilience and multiscale resilience as well as transformability. A lot of research on resilience has been done in Disaster Management Reduction field like Alexander (2013) in his paper traces the resilience “history” and traces its etymology stating that the Latin term *resilire*, *resilire* which is a Latin word for Bounce and existed in Classical times used occasionally or rarely by accomplished literary scholars and intellectuals. Alexander (2013) also discards the claims of recent development of “resilience” in the development of ecology. While there are a number of scholars who say its origin is believed to be in ecology (Frantzeskaki 2016 cites Folke 2002, Gunderson and Holling 2002). Various definitions have evolved from various scientific disciplines about the concept of “resilience” recently in the past which has become very prominent in both academia as well as among the policy makers (Meerow et al. 2016 cites Brown 2013 et al) including in the field of urban planning as well thereby involving the city (Frantzeskaki , 2016). Even though the framework and structure of the expression may change as well as alter, across all fields the idea of resilience is interrelated to both the individual and organizational responses to turbulence and discontinuities. (Bhamraetal 2011 p 5376).

Need of resilience

In recent years, the trends that are dominating the system, society as a whole and changing it as well like urbanization, globalization, and the extent of potential technologies which are extremely dangerous like nuclear weapons, new forms of terrorism (Boin, et al 2010, p1), as well as climate change are posing new and unbelievable threats to modern societies. Modern and current approaches to prevention in anticipation and preparation for any disaster are just a little step to perceive and tolerate the intrinsic shortcomings (Boin, et al 2010, p1). If we cannot predict the pressing threats we face, prevention and preparation become complex as well as difficult (Boin, et al 2010, p1).

“terrorist attacks, water shortages, critical infrastructure failures, looming energy crisis a continuing flow of illegal immigrants, the effects of climate change, the threat of a pandemic: societies face an array of potentially devastating threats. These are not “routine emergencies” such as fires, traffic accidents, and hostage takings. These are so-called low-chance, high-impact events: urgent threats to societal core values and life-sustaining systems that typically require governmental intervention under conditions of deep uncertainty” (Boin 2010, p 2 cites Rosenthal, Boin, and Comfort 2001a; Boin et al. 2005).

In the above-mentioned context, it has become the dire need to have resilience in various spheres of urban life whether social, economic, infrastructure in order to regain the strength of the above-mentioned circumstances and situation.

Systematic Literature Review

To carry out a systematic literature review, the research objective was kept in mind and different keywords were searched such as “resilience”, “urban resilience”, and “resilience in culture and heritage”. The articles were selected and revisited after searching the databases. The three search engines used were Web of science, Scopus, Google Scholar. The total number of articles found was 206 articles and this was shortlisted to 56 articles which were referred in the time period of six months and were included for the meta-analysis.

Step 1 Research Objectives – Systematic Literature Review

Step 2 Searched Keywords – Resilience, Urban resilience, Resilience + Culture Heritage

Step 3 Selection Criteria – English Language, Resilience–Disciplines

Step 4 Search Engines – Web of science, Scopus, Google scholar

Step 5 Results – Total number of articles: 206 scrutinized: 56

Time period – Year – 2000-2020

Step 6 Type of Analysis – case analysis

Defining resilience

Folke, Carpenter et al (2010) cites Walker 2004 defining resilience as “*the capacity of the system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing a change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity and feedbacks*” (Walker, 2004:4).

According to (Munene, n.d, p11) resilience is extensively discussed, argued as well as interpreted. The term resilience owes its origin to the Latin word “*resiliere*”, which literally means to “*bounce back*” (Muene, n.d; Amico, 2014). It also denotes to a system's recovery and return to pre-disturbance state (Muene, n.d). This can be traced to its Latin root, *resiliere*, literally meaning “to jump back” (Muene, n.d, p12 cites Paton and Johnston, 2006). The intent and meaning of this clarification, which is currently extensively in use together from a physical as well as sociological standpoint, broadens the unique derivation upon the common perception of “*to spring back after receiving a hit*” (Amico 2014).

Another viewpoint defines resilience as the capacity and ability of an element to come back to a stable position after an interruption

(Bhamraetal 2011: p 5376). Resilience is basically a time-based sequential concept, involving observations of how a system answers to fluctuating situations over time (Rotarangi, S.J, and J. Stephenson 2014). According to UNESCO “resilience is the capability of systems and people to manage with substantial difficulty or risk” (UNESCO).

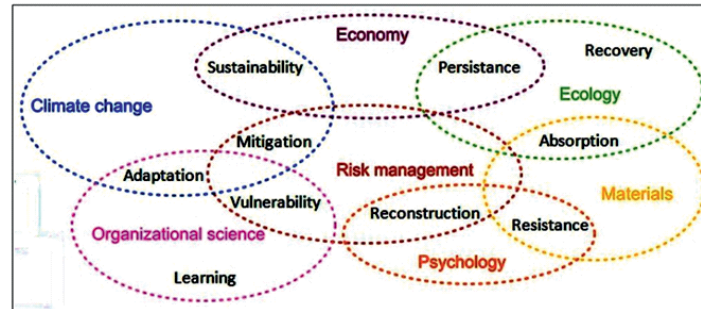
“Resilience determines the perseverance of relationships within a system and is a measure of the ability of these systems to absorb changes of state variables, driving variables, and parameters, and still persist. In this definition resilience is the property of the system and persistence or probability of extinction is the result” (Holling, 1973, p17). Resilience is the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks (Walker, B., C. S. Holling, S. R. Carpenter, and A. Kinzig 2004). In the field of emergency management, resilience is a concept employed by scholars to understand the degree to which an individual, organization, and the community bounce back and return to normalcy after disasters (Jung 2016). At the community level, the term “resilience” has been broadly defined as “the capability of a community to face a threat, survive and bounce back or, perhaps more

accurately, bounce forward into a normalcy newly defined by the disaster related to losses and changes” (Jung, 2016 cites Cox and Perry, 2011, p.395).The ability of a social or ecological system to absorb disturbances while retaining the same basic structure and ways of functioning, the capacity for self-organization, and the capacity to adapt to stress and change” (Munene,n.d. cites IPCC 2007). Resilience has become a fashionable catchphrase recently (Boinetal). Boin defines that the word “resilient” initiated in numerous discourse

- Sports pages – resilient teams overcoming late game deficits
- International news – The war in Iraq
- Reports of natural disasters – Hurricane Katrina
- Policy Papers – protection of critical infrastructures – 2001 California blackout (Boinetal, 2010)

Various authors have defined resilience in many different ways; some in complex as well as simpler forms and it has covered a variety of disciplines. Table 1 will explain the various authors and the field in which the term has been used in order to study it with respect to various disciplines.

Figure 1: The multi-disciplinary dimension of resilience



Adapted from (Munene, n. d, p11 cites Reghezzaetal, 2012)

Table 1: Field in which Resilience has been used by various authors

S. No	Author	Field
1.	Alexander 2013	Disaster Risk Reduction
2.	Adger 2000	Social and Ecological Resilience Linkage
3.	Weichselgartner & Kelman 2015	Ecology, Disaster and Social Science
4.	Wisner and Kelman 2015	Community Resilience to Disaster
5.	Folke, Carpenter et al 2010	Ecology and Sociology
6.	Walker et al.2002	Ecology
7.	Gunderson 2000	Ecology
8.	Callister 2003	Metallurgy
9.	Barnett and Pratt 2000, Powley 2009	Individual and Organizational Psychology
10.	Sheffi 2005	Supply Chain Management
11.	Hamel and Valikangas 2003	Strategic Management
12.	Hollnagel et al. 2006	Safety Engineering
13.	Zimmerer, 1994	Human Geography
14.	Campbell-Sills, et al., 2006	Behavioral Research
15.	Luthar, 2006	Psychology
16.	Da Silva 2012	Engineering
17.	Eraydin et al., 2013	Urban Planning
18.	Coutu, 2002; Sheffi, 2005	Business Studies
19.	Scoones, 1999; Davidson-Hunt and Berkes, 2003	Social Sciences

Source: Authors and some parts are adapted from literature of Bhamra 2011, p5376 and Munene, n. d, p11

The Urban Context

The urban population of the world today is about 4.4 billion (IIED 2020). More than half of the world's population now resides in urban areas (Ritchie, 2018). The expected projection is nearly 7 billion individuals will reside in urban areas in 2050 (Ritchie, 2018). 54% of the urban population in the world is in Asia alone in 2020 in spite of the fact that half its people still reside in rural areas (IIED 2020). It has increased its share of the world's urban population from 35% to 54% over the last 60 years (IIED 2020). The urban area is transforming and altering quite rapidly and as a result facing various environmental and ecological threats and noticing new socio economic as well as demographic pressures (Pickett, 2014). Countries, societies, communities, locality, neighborhoods, organizations and individuals are all subject to a varied and ever-changing environment (Bhamra 2011: p5375). The threats that the occasionally tumultuous surroundings pose can differ in both severity and occurrence and may initiate within or externally to a system (Bhamra, 2011: p5375).

Urban Resilience

“Urban resilience denotes the capability of an urban system - and all its component socio-ecological and socio-technical networks across temporal and spatial scales - to

maintain or rapidly return to desired functions in the face of a disturbance, to adapt to change, and to quickly transform systems that limit current or future adaptive capacity” (Meerow Newell, Stults, 2015). “Urban resilience is the capacity of urban systems, communities, individuals, organizations and businesses to recover, maintain their function and thrive in the aftermath of a shock or a stress, regardless its impact, frequency or magnitude” (Frantzeskaki 2016: p6).

Cultural heritage is frequently connected and is much of the time associated with heavenly landmarks and famous archeological destinations that can hold us in wonderment of their magnificence, past, artifact and utter scale (Murthy 2013). Cultural heritage and legacy today incorporate a more extensive assortment of spots, for example, notable societies, living social scenes, gardens or consecrated backwoods and mountains, innovative or mechanical accomplishments in the new past and even locales related with agonizing recollections and war (Murthy, 2013). Assortments of versatile and immoveable things inside locales, exhibition halls, memorable properties and chronicles have appeared and affirming not exclusively to the way of life if eminence and the accomplishments of extraordinary craftsmen, yet additionally the regular daily existences of customary individuals (Murthy, 2013). Heritage is

at risk because of catastrophes, struggle, environmental change and a host of different variables (Murthy 2013).

Resilience in culture and Heritage- Why there is a need to protect heritage?

Heritage contributes to social cohesion, sustainable development and psychological well-being (Murthy, 2013). Protecting heritage promotes resilience (Murthy 2013). There is huge rich cultural heritage with historic cities and sites under pressure with rapid urbanization as well as modernization (Yan 2015). Although heritage is affected by various kinds of threats and disasters which are both natural as well as manmade, heritage is generally not taken into account in global statistics concerning disaster risks (Murthy 2013). In the culture and heritage included are the archeological sites, monuments, museums, historic cities, etc. (Murthy 2013). There is jeopardy of serious environmental impacts which are becoming harsher due to climatic changes (Rajcic 2016). The heritage property is undyingly out in the open to usual normal natural as well as anthropogenic hazards (Rajcic 2016). In case of Indian cities, there are many cities like Banaras or Varanasi, Kashi which are located on the banks of River Ganga, Ajmer, Amritsar are some of the other historical cities which require immediate attention in

the protection of heritage and in order to make it resilient. The continuous loss of these places due to various factors like earthquakes, floods, mudslides, war, fire as well as other hazards have become a foremost concern in recent times (Murthy 2013). Also, the additional serious threat to heritage is simply lack of knowledge of subjects that are engaged in safeguarding even on the basic level of relatively simple but extensive interventions in buildings structures and fabrics (Rajcic 2016). There is lack of appropriate mechanisms to protect historic areas (Yan, 2015).

Resilience in case of Asian Cities

Indian cities have long history with the core areas generally belonging to medieval time period having the characteristics of any medieval city across the globe. These cities have walls and gates which hve either been demolished or are decayed with passage of time, like Amritsar, Ahmedabad, and Hyderabad. There are core areas with blighted infrastructure like any old area of a historic town. The age-old areas with their dilapidating and decaying parts have many stories to tell; some of these become health hazard as no measures are taken to prevent the decay further.

Case of Amritsar, Punjab, India

Similar kind of elements exist in city of Amritsar in Punjab, India which

was part of undivided Punjab before the partition of India that took place in 1947. Amritsar and Lahore are at a distance of 51 km. City of Amritsar is known for the sacred and holy Golden Temple and is one of the most prestigious Sikh shrines that exist in Punjab. In addition, it has similar characteristics like that mentioned in the case of Lahore as almost both cities shared same heritage and culture.

The cultural resilience exists here in the form of Gurudwaras, Temples, Akharas, Thakurdwaras. In addition are the wells, narrow lanes, chowks, surprise open spaces, havelis, katras, bazars, and mosques which show the secular nature of historic fabric that existed and was created. Today, these traditional values are getting lost in the name of development and sustainability.

There is an interesting case for resilience where in the name of heritage, new structures have been made for 1 km stretch of Heritage Street leading to Golden Temple. The street has been replicated without considering resilience as a factor and new structures have been erected which resemble the art and architecture of Jaipur in Rajasthan without taking into consideration the local culture and history. A lot of money was spent to renovate the heritage street where about 1 lakh tourists visit every day.

Findings

The arguments generated and the question that arose in the mind of the authors were

- Is resilience achieved through this kind of construction where new and old are a total mismatch?
- Is implementation of such kind is possible where Development Control Regulations of Amritsar seem to have become defunct and any kind of intervention can come in its place without considering the local heritage?

Certain projects which are running in the city are HRIDAY projects. The mission of HRIDAY scheme focused on civic infrastructure development projects around heritage sites, leading to revitalization of the City as a heritage and cultural destination. The scheme differs from Past schemes as it aims at keeping heritage at the center of the Urban Development (HRIDAY, Amritsar, p2)

“Preserve and revitalize the soul of heritage city to reflect the city's unique character by encouraging the development of an aesthetically appealing, accessible, informative and secured environment. To undertake strategic and planned development for heritage cities with the aim of improving the overall quality of life with a specific focus on sanitation,

security, tourism, heritage revitalization, livelihoods, and retaining the city's cultural identity.”

-Project Statement for Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojna (HRIDAY), Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India and National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA).

(HRIDAY, Amritsar, p2)

Did this project of Heritage Street fit in the project statement of HRIDAY? The city has been made to look like one in Rajasthan without considering the local culture and heritage of the city, while making it a mini Pink City. The project did not fit in the sustainable development initiative in order to fulfill the requirement. The whole of the infrastructure was demolished and new buildings were created.

According to Singh Jagtar, the demolition around the shrine that was developed by fourth Sikh Guru, Guru Ram Das started when the central government planned the Galiara project under the beautification scheme in 1988. Red stone has been used to give the heritage look whereas in the Punjab, heritage was associated with Nanakshahi bricks (Singh Jagtar 2016). Therefore, the street's original character has been replaced by the new modern type of buildings of Jaipur which are not in line with the art and history of Sikh culture.

As the author Shannan Peckham states that similar kind of changes happened in Europe where some of these changes signaled the “end of history”, for others they represented the dawn of a new day, or indeed a new era, a chance to shape the future instead of remaining imprisoned by the past. (Peckham 2003). Heritage is about loss and is part of the “disappearing world” phenomenon (Peckham 2003). Is it politics of tradition or resilience where certain politicians, bureaucrats as well as policy makers act without stakeholders' consultation thereby altering local culture and heritage?

Suggestions

The author suggests that preserving the old heritage and not compromising at the cost of new flashy buildings is the need of the day. Conservation through different techniques like preservation, consolidation, restoration of heritage buildings can be taken into consideration rather than completely changing the character of the area. In this way, resilience can be achieved.

Conclusion

As discussed in the definitions, there is a great need of adapting resilience for cities in order to face various challenges of disasters, risks of floods, urbanization, etc. The main focus of this research was to review the literature of Urban Resilience from various decades beginning from 1973

by Holling in order to add to the knowledge of resilience in academic discourse. Understanding water and land as a single element of design, rather than two separate entities, will make the planning process much easier. As time shapes built histories in the same way water shapes cities—softly, tirelessly, and without negotiation.

A number of projects like SMART Cities Mission and City Rejuvenation projects with significant resources are prepared with voluminous reports replicating projects of West or other best practices in order to make them look aesthetically attractive. But are these projects resilient? How can we make these projects resilient? The authors would like to conclude that the projects should be made more functional through citizen participation or stakeholders' consultation which is very weak in case of Indian cities and need a lot of emphasis. The socio-graphical layers need to be superimposed over the physical layers of land use and transportation. The argument between the two must be minimised with the most congenial overlaps.

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Implementation of the Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana: An Impact Assessment Study of Village Gudia Khera

Rajkumar Siwach, Akshu Chaudhary, Pardeep Kumar

Abstract

The Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) in Gudia Khera village, Sirsa district, Haryana, India, is examined in this study along with its effects. The study assesses the program's efficacy in attaining comprehensive rural development using qualitative research techniques like semi-structured interviews, group discussions, and field observations. Alongside enduring issues like insufficient funding, bureaucratic hold-ups, and low awareness among marginalized groups, the results show notable improvements in infrastructure and increased community involvement. The study offers policy recommendations for maximizing SAGY's potential in comparable circumstances and advances knowledge of village-specific implementation of national rural development initiatives.

Keywords: Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana, rural development,

community participation, Gudia Khera, policy implementation

Introduction

With numerous initiatives to close the gap between urban and rural areas and raise village standards of living, rural development continues to be a key component of India's developmental agenda (Ministry of Rural Development, 2014). By giving to Members of Parliament the task of creating model villages within their constituencies, the Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY), which was introduced in 2014, represents a paradigm shift in rural development policy. SAGY prioritizes holistic development that includes infrastructure, socioeconomic advancement, and community involvement, in contrast to earlier top-down strategies (Government of India, 2014). Despite its lofty goals, little is known about SAGY's true effects in rural areas, especially when it comes to

village-specific evaluations. Gudia Khera, a sizable village in the Sirsa district with 4,030 inhabitants, offers a useful case study. The village is a prime example of the difficulties facing rural India, with a sizable Scheduled Caste population (16.18 percent) and moderate literacy rates (67.40 percent) (Census of India, 2011). Although SAGY projects have been started, preliminary findings indicate that there are a number of challenges in their implementation, such as limited resources, ineffective administration, and differing degrees of community involvement.

Research Gap and Significance

Village-specific impact assessments are severely lacking, according to the literature on SAGY. The majority of research looks at the program at the district or macro levels, ignoring the local dynamics that affect how well it is implemented (Sharma and Kumar, 2018). By offering a thorough, on-the-ground assessment of SAGY implementation in Gudia Khera and looking at both observable results and perceived effects on residents' quality of life, this study fills this knowledge gap. There are three ways in which this research is significant. By providing qualitative insights into the efficacy of schemes in rural contexts, it adds to the small corpus of village-specific research on SAGY. Practically speaking, the results highlight effective

interventions and areas in need of improvement, giving district administration, local leaders, and villagers' useful feedback. The study's policy recommendations can help improve SAGY implementation in comparable villages by removing structural obstacles and advancing sustainable rural development.

Objectives of the Study

This research pursues five interconnected objectives:

- (1) to assess Gudia Khera's SAGY implementation, with an emphasis on important development initiatives.
- (2) to evaluate the infrastructure and socioeconomic effects on the villagers.
- (3) to pinpoint implementation issues and how they affect results.
- (4) to investigate the role of local leadership, district administration, and community involvement in project execution and
- (5) to offer evidence-based suggestions for enhancing SAGY efficacy in Gudia Khera and comparable rural settings.

Literature Review

Choudhary (2025) uses a mixed-methods approach to evaluate SAGY

in Jammu district, surveying households, officials, and sarpanches in addition to secondary data to gauge awareness and results. Results indicate low SAGY-specific awareness (38.7 percent), particularly among marginalized groups, but moderate general scheme knowledge (78 percent), with education improving comprehension. Results from implementation were mixed: 42% reported improvements in roads and sanitation through MGNREGA convergence, but elite capture and bureaucratic hold-ups impeded advancement. Gram Sabhas was frequently tokenistic, which limited inclusivity, and community involvement lagged. The lack of specific funding, MPs' conflicting responsibilities, and inadequate oversight all contributed to the long-term effects being diluted. Even so, SAGY had a demonstration effect that improved local institutions and hygiene, but long-term funding is essential for change.

In order to assess progress across phases, Sharma and Chouhan (2024) offer a thorough overview of SAGY in Rajasthan by combining qualitative insights from adopted villages with descriptive analysis. By 2023, 116 villages had been implemented, with differing degrees of success in integrating livelihood, health, and infrastructure schemes; in high-performing districts such as Jaipur, 85%

of the projects had been completed. MP-led planning, CSR partnerships, self-help groups, and skill development that increased incomes by 20–30% were important facilitators. Nevertheless, unequal regional adoption—e.g. low in tribal belts—was caused by elite dominance in Gram Sabhas, inadequate coordination, and financial gaps. Replicable models, such as solar-powered hamlets, were highlighted by the results, but unfinished projects highlighted oversight failures. For fair scaling, the study recommends digital tracking and decentralized autonomy. The Belargaon model in Chhattisgarh, which is based on NIRD's compendium, is an example of SAGY-aligned self-governance. Since 2009, the Gram Panchayat has been driving transparent planning through active Gram Sabhas. Water, sanitation, and livelihoods were funded by community-led tax and scheme decisions, resulting in 100% school enrolment and average family incomes of ₹70,000–80,000. Police cases were reduced to almost zero as a result of inclusive committees resolving disputes locally and overcoming obstacles like early resistance. Implementation improved housing and amenities without the need for outside assistance by combining BPL benefits with local revenue. The results, which show great replicability for SAGY villages, include empowered women in leadership roles and sustainable systems. This case emphasizes the

importance of community ownership for comprehensive rural upliftment. The goal of rural development is to improve the economic, social, and environmental circumstances of rural communities through a variety of multifaceted processes (Chambers, 1983).

Recognizing rural communities as active agents rather than passive recipients of development interventions, contemporary approaches place a strong emphasis on participatory development (Krishna, 2002). SAGY's design philosophy, which aims to incorporate community involvement with focused government interventions, is informed by this transition from technocratic to people-centered models.

The holistic development paradigm underlying SAGY draws from Gandhi's vision of village self-sufficiency and modern sustainable development goals (Government of India, 2014). This framework acknowledges that concurrent advancements in a number of areas—physical infrastructure, human development, social capital, economic opportunities, and environmental sustainability—are necessary for sustainable rural transformation. However, putting this all-encompassing vision into action poses serious implementation challenges, especially in settings with limited resources.

India's rural development trajectory is a reflection of changing implementation strategies and policy priorities. Infrastructure development and agricultural productivity were the main priorities of early post-independence initiatives (Thorat, 2006). Although they used comprehensive approaches, the Community Development Programme (1952) and later programs like the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) encountered difficulties with sustainability, targeting, and implementation (Mahajan, 2005).

Launched in 2005, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was a major innovation that created productive assets and guaranteed employment rights to rural households (Drèze and Oldiges, 2009). MGNREGA's focus on social audits, transparency, and community involvement taught future programs valuable lessons. While adding the special component of parliamentary oversight and constituency-level ownership, SAGY expands on these experiences.

Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana: Design and Objectives

The three pillars of SAGY's conceptual framework are the development of replicable models, value instillation, and holistic

development (Ministry of Rural Development, 2014). Each Member of Parliament is tasked with creating three Gram Panchayats as model villages by 2019, and by 2024, they will have expanded to five more villages.

To ensure objectivity, village selection criteria exclude MPs' own villages and place an emphasis on population size (3,000–5,000 in plains, 1,000–3,000 in hilly areas). The program's goals include value transformation in addition to infrastructure development. People's participation, dedication to Antyodaya (the welfare of the poorest), gender equality, social justice, labor dignity, community service, cleanliness, environmental balance, cultural heritage preservation, mutual cooperation, self-reliance, and transparent governance are among the values that SAGY seeks to instill (Government of India, 2014).

This ambitious value agenda sets SAGY apart from programs that are only concerned with infrastructure. Instead of building parallel structures, implementation architecture entails the convergence of current schemes and resources. Participatory processes are used to create Village Development Plans (VDPs), which act as blueprints for integrated interventions across sectors. The goal of this convergence model is to ensure comprehensive development while optimizing resource utilization (Siwach, 2016).

Challenges in Rural Development Implementation

Initiatives for rural development are hampered by enduring issues, according to scholarly literature. Inadequate funding and resource allocation, bureaucratic delays and coordination failures, elite capture and exclusion of marginalized groups, low community awareness and participation, inadequate monitoring and accountability mechanisms, and contextual mismatches between program design and local realities are some of the causes of implementation gaps (Drèze and Sen, 2013; Ghatak & Ghosh, 2011). Preliminary research on SAGY in particular raises issues with MP engagement levels, VDP preparation and approval delays, departmental scheme convergence, gram panchayat capacity, and insufficient mechanisms for sustainability beyond initial interventions (Sharma & Kumar, 2018). These difficulties highlight how crucial village-specific impact assessments are to comprehending how national policies affect local results.

Methodology

Research Design and Approach

In order to evaluate SAGY implementation and impact in Gudia Khera village, this study uses a qualitative research design. According

to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative methodology is especially useful for analyzing implementation processes, capturing stakeholder perspectives, and comprehending complex social phenomena. Adopting an interpretivist epistemology, the study acknowledges that development outcomes are a reflection of locally situated experiences and socially constructed meanings. Gudia Khera is treated as a bounded system for in-depth analysis in this case study (Yin, 2018). Through methodical data collection and triangulation, this approach preserves analytical rigor while enabling a deep contextual understanding of SAGY implementation. Although case studies restrict statistical generalization, they offer insightful theoretical and analytical information that can be applied to comparable situations (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Data Collection Methods

Three complementary methods were used to collect primary data. The Sarpanch (village head), the former Sarpanch, and twenty village residents were among the key informants with whom semi-structured interviews were first carried out. Diverse representation across age, gender, caste, and occupation categories was guaranteed by stratified and purposeful sampling. Participants' awareness of SAGY, perceived changes in village services

and infrastructure, difficulties faced, and recommendations for improvement were all covered in the interview protocols. Second, collective reflection on the impact and implementation experiences of SAGY was facilitated by group discussions. Examining sector-specific results and issues was made possible by separate sessions with farmers, youth club members, and women's self-help groups. Group discussions identified areas of contention while revealing community dynamics and consensus viewpoints. Third, field observations revealed concrete results of SAGY initiatives, such as enhanced infrastructure, modified service delivery, and mechanisms for community involvement. Data recording was guided by systematic observation protocols, guaranteeing uniformity and thoroughness. Data from interviews and discussions were enhanced by photos and field notes. SAGY reports, data from the 2011 Census of India, information from the Socio-Economic Caste Census, district administration records, and line department reports were examples of secondary data sources. These sources offered official viewpoints on implementation progress, contextual background, and baseline data.

Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling was used in the study to choose key informants based on their expertise, background, and

varied viewpoints on SAGY implementation. The main stakeholders with in-depth knowledge of the scheme's execution were the Sarpanch and former Sarpanch. The 20 village residents were chosen using stratified sampling to ensure that they represented a variety of age groups (youth, adults, elderly), occupational categories (farmers, agricultural laborers, service sector workers), scheduled caste and general category households, male and female participants, and residents from both the main village and dispersed habitations (dhanis). Theoretical saturation—the point at which more data collection produces fewer new insights—was made possible by this sampling strategy, even though it was not statistically representative (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). A thorough impact assessment requires a variety of viewpoints, which were captured by the varied participant pool.

Results and Discussion

Profile of Gudia Khera Village

Gudia Khera, which is situated in the Sirsa district of Haryana's Nathusari Chopta Block, exemplifies a typical rural India with unique opportunities and challenges. The village has 4,030 residents, with 2,109 males and 1,921 females, according to Census 2011 data. This results in a sex ratio of 911 females per 1,000 males, which is higher than the state average

of 879 for Haryana. There are 652 scheduled caste members in the population (16.18 percent), which shows that historically underrepresented groups are significantly represented. At 67.40 percent, the village's literacy rate is lower than the state average of 75.55 percent for Haryana. There are still significant gender differences in education: female literacy is at 53.60 percent, while male literacy is at 80.01 percent. With 825 primary workers, the village's economy is still primarily based on agriculture, but more people are working in other occupations (146) and as casual laborers (604). The distribution of land holdings reflects patterns of rural inequality, with 54% of households owning 5–10 acres, 15% owning 10–20 acres, and 20% being landless. Access to infrastructure has made inconsistent progress. Although 613 out of 733 households have access to electricity, sanitation and water supplies are still insufficient. Although the quality of the roads varies, there are several routes that connect Gudia Khera to nearby villages and the district headquarters of Sirsa. The village has one sub-center but no primary health center, so access to healthcare is still restricted. One senior secondary school, one middle school for girls, one primary school, and five Anganwadi centers are among the educational facilities; however, staffing and infrastructure deficiencies still exist.

Implementation Progress of SAGY

An evaluation of Gudia Khera's SAGY implementation shows considerable activity in a number of sectors, albeit with varying results and advancements. Significant interventions have been made in the agricultural sector, such as the distribution of subsidized equipment, crop demonstrations, and farmer training camps. The agriculture department held demonstrations on wheat (3), sorghum seed production (17 acres), and green manuring via dhaincha cultivation (60 acres) between 2014 and 2016. The purchase of rotavators, cotton seed drills, and underground pipeline installations were made easier by equipment subsidies (19 estimates prepared). Renovation of water distribution systems is one of the infrastructure development initiatives; plans to remodel water course outlets total Rs. 2,00,48,000. The Public Health Engineering Department created detailed plans for improving the water supply, which included installing machinery, building storage tanks, and laying RCC pipes. The Haryana State Agricultural Marketing Board paid attention to road infrastructure through special repair projects, including roads from Madhosinghana to Gudia Khera (Gudia Khera to Bakrianwali (Rs. 40,58,000). With 88 individual household latrines completed and 44 under construction under the Swachh

Bharat Mission (Gramin), sanitation emerged as a priority area. Significant gaps still exist in public institutions, though, with Anganwadis lacking four restrooms, Government Senior Secondary School needing four more, Government Girls Middle School needing two, and Government Primary School needing three. The scheme's objective of providing universal access to sanitation is limited by these flaws. Interventions in the social sector focused on women's empowerment, health, and education. 401 children (6 months to 6 years) and 72 expectant and nursing mothers were served by the Women and Child Development Department's ongoing supplemental nutrition programs. BCG (3), DPT/Polio (12), measles (4), and TT for mothers (14) were among the immunizations covered. Infrastructure improvement was the main focus of education initiatives, but there are still significant gaps in the teaching staff. For example, the Girls Middle School lacks an elementary teacher and a science teacher, while the Senior Secondary School has openings for Sanskrit and English lecturers and science teachers. Proposals from the forestry department to plant 25,000 saplings brought attention to environmental sustainability, but actual implementation was delayed. Proposals for a 15 KW solar power plant at the Government Senior Secondary School and 50 solar home lighting systems were among the

renewable energy initiatives that demonstrated a dedication to unconventional energy sources.

Socio-Economic Impacts

When socioeconomic impacts are examined, there are both positive changes and persistent challenges. Improved awareness of government programs and entitlements was reported by interview respondents, attributing this to SAGY-mandated awareness campaigns and grievance redressal camps. According to one Sarpanch, "Earlier people didn't know about many government programs. Through SAGY meetings and camps, awareness has increased. Increased scheme uptake in some areas, particularly MGNREGA employment and individual household latrine construction, was a result of this increased awareness. Infrastructure improvements were a tangible benefit. Better road connectivity was noted by respondents, facilitating agricultural marketing and access to services. Road repairs have made it easier to transport our produce to markets, according to a farmer. Earlier, during rains, roads became unusable. Although there are still quality concerns regarding saline groundwater, improved water supply while incomplete benefited households with new connections. Results from education show modest improvements alongside continuing challenges. Improvements in school infrastructure enhanced learning

environments, with respondents noting new toilets and improved facilities. However, the quality of education is undermined by teacher vacancies, with parents expressing concerns about inadequate instruction, particularly in science and English. "Buildings have improved, but without enough teachers, how will our children learn properly?" one parent lamented. Health service delivery is still subpar despite SAGY interventions. For basic healthcare, villagers must travel 20 kilometers to Nathusari Chopta without a primary health center, creating access barriers particularly for women, elderly, and emergency cases. According to an elderly respondent, "We need a proper health center here. It is difficult to go far for simple treatments, especially for elderly people and pregnant women. There appear to be limited economic effects, with agriculture remaining dominant despite efforts at diversification. Some farmers benefited from subsidized equipment and training, but structural constraints like water logging (affecting 750 acres), salinity, and inadequate irrigation persist. SAGY interventions have little effect on marginal and landless farmers, suggesting limited pro-poor targeting. According to a worker who is landless, "Most schemes benefit those with land. We only receive some work from MGNREGA for our laborers, but that's also irregular. The empowerment of women shows mixed results. While some women received training and

gained visibility, women's self-help groups' economic activities remain limited. Only two of the six SHGs are functionally active, one preparing meals for Anganwadis and another for school midday meals. Inactive groups are cited as barriers by marketing linkages, skill training, and a lack of capital. Women expressed frustration during group discussions: "We formed groups with enthusiasm, but without proper support and loan facilities, how can we run businesses?". The effects of social capital warrant attention. Increased community interaction was made possible by SAGY through gram sabha meetings, awareness camps, and group activities. More dialogue between villagers and officials was noted by respondents, reducing social distance between administrators and citizens. However, caste-based social hierarchies persist, with scheduled caste respondents reporting continued marginalization in decision-making despite formal participation structures.

Implementation Challenges

The study identified a number of issues that compromise SAGY effectiveness. First of all, funding constraints emerged as a critical barrier. Despite the convergence of various schemes under SAGY, actual resource allocation often falls short of requirements. Project timelines are disrupted by delayed fund releases, with line department officials citing budgetary limitations for incomplete

projects. According to one official, "We prepare estimates and plans, but budget availability determines implementation pace.". Funds are frequently late or in instalments, delaying completion. Second, bureaucratic coordination failures limit convergence, which is a fundamental component of SAGY design. Because different departments operate with distinct priorities, procedures, and timelines, integrated implementation is made more difficult. Incomplete projects were cited by respondents, including roads constructed without adequate drainage, water supply systems without assured power supply, and toilets built without sewerage connections. These coordination failures undermine the objectives of holistic development. Third, community participation and awareness remain uneven. While some villagers participate in activities and exhibit awareness of SAGY, many remain uninformed, particularly among scheduled castes, women, and residents of scattered habitations (dhanis). Limited access to information and literacy exacerbate exclusion. According to a scheduled caste respondent, "We hear about these programs, but we don't know how to benefit.". The majority of officials speak to influential people. Fourth, capacity constraints affect community institutions and implementing agencies. Gram panchayat functionaries lack adequate training in

financial management, planning, and monitoring. Workload pressures on line department employees limit attention to SAGY activities. Community institutions, such as school management committees, require strengthening to effectively participate in governance. Fifth, sustainability concerns shadow many interventions. Infrastructure projects frequently lack budgets and maintenance plans. Community mobilization initiatives lose their momentum after initial enthusiasm. Self-help groups struggle without market connections and ongoing support. These sustainability challenges raise questions about how long the SAGY implementation period will last.

Role of Stakeholders

Stakeholder roles have a significant impact on implementation outcomes. The involvement of the member of parliament proved crucial for scheme visibility and priority setting. His choice of Gudia Khera signalled a high level of commitment, mobilizing district administration and line departments. However, respondents noted that in order to maintain implementation momentum, sustained MP engagement is necessary beyond initial project launches. The Deputy Commissioner and Additional Deputy Commissioner, in particular, served as nodal and charge officers in the district administration, which played central

coordinating roles. District officials' frequent monitoring meetings, grievance redressal camps, and inter-departmental coordination efforts facilitated implementation progress. The heavy workload and multiple responsibilities of district administrators, however, occasionally limited sustained attention to SAGY. Gram Panchayat and Sarpanch emerged as crucial intermediaries between villagers and government machinery. Sarpanch leadership that was effective mobilized community participation and monitored implementation. However, the Gram Panchayat's limited financial and human resources limited its capacity for leadership. This challenge was brought up by the Sarpanch: "We want to do more, but our budget and powers are limited. We rely heavily on line departments and district officials. Line departments (agriculture, irrigation, health, education, rural development) are primarily responsible for implementing sectoral interventions. Departmental commitment and capacity varied greatly, with some demonstrating proactive engagement while others adopted minimal compliance approaches. Technical constraints, staff shortages, and competing priorities affected departmental performance. Community organizations like youth clubs, school management committees, and self-help groups participated in a variety of ways. While active institutions contributed

significantly to implementation and sustainability, dormant institutions represented missed opportunities. By strengthening these institutions through capacity building, resource support, and empowerment, SAGY outcomes could be enhanced. Civil society participation in Gudia Khera remained limited. Voluntary organizations and non-governmental organizations could supplement government efforts, bring specialized expertise, and enhance accountability. A gap in implementation architecture that could be addressed through systematic partnership mechanisms is highlighted by their absence.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Key Findings

Several important conclusions are drawn from this impact assessment of SAGY implementation in Gudia Khera village. First, SAGY has sparked noticeable progress in a number of areas, including infrastructure, agriculture, sanitation, health, and education. The convergence approach of the scheme mobilized resources and coordination beyond what could be accomplished by separate programs on their own. Improved infrastructure (roads, water supply, restrooms), increased community involvement through gram sabhas and camps, agricultural improvements through training and equipment subsidies, and increased administrative attention to

village development needs are some of the second tangible benefits. Third, there are still many obstacles to overcome, such as unfinished infrastructure projects, poor public services, especially healthcare, enduring social injustices that prevent inclusive development, limited economic transformation and livelihood diversification, sustainability issues with project upkeep and institutional continuity, and coordination breakdowns that jeopardize convergence goals. Fourth, although capacity and resource limitations restrict effectiveness across governance levels, the role of leadership—parliamentary, administrative, and local—proves essential for implementation success.

Theoretical Implications

The results add to our understanding of how rural development policies are implemented in a number of ways. They first emphasize how crucial local context is in influencing policy outcomes. Village-specific factors, such as geography, population, social structures, economic trends, and institutional capacity, must be taken into account by national programs. Second, the study draws attention to conflicts between implementation capability and comprehensive vision. The implementation of SAGY's ambitious holistic development agenda is hampered by bureaucratic

restrictions, resource limitations, and contextual complexities. Third, the results show that, despite being essential, infrastructure provision is insufficient for transformative development. Parallel investments in human capital, social capital, institutional capacity, and economic opportunities are necessary for sustainable change; these aspects are not given as much attention as more obvious infrastructure projects. Fourth, the study shows that inclusive practice does not always follow from participatory rhetoric. Scheduled castes, women, and people living in remote areas are among the marginalized groups that are still not sufficiently included in decision-making and benefit streams, despite SAGY's emphasis on community involvement.

Policy Recommendations

Based on these findings, several recommendations emerge for enhancing SAGY effectiveness:

Strengthening Implementation Architecture: To guarantee convergence, establish specialized SAGY coordination mechanisms at the district and block levels with sufficient staff, resources, and authority. To enable integrated planning and monitoring, establish village-level implementation committees with members from the gram panchayat,

line departments, community organizations, and citizens.

Ensuring Adequate and Timely Funding: Converge current schemes with guaranteed, timely fund release to allocate specific SAGY budgets. To meet local needs, allow village-specific interventions to go beyond the parameters of the standard scheme. Create corpus funds for infrastructure upkeep to guarantee sustainability after the project is finished.

Increasing Community Involvement: To reach all village segments, organize systematic awareness campaigns in local languages through a variety of channels, including meetings, print materials, and audio-visual media. Through focused mobilization, capacity building, and institutional support, make sure marginalized groups participate meaningfully. Make gram sabhas more than just places to exchange information; make them deliberative forums with real decision-making power.

Developing Implementation Capacity: Give gram panchayat employees thorough training in financial management, planning, monitoring, and facilitation. Increase the capacity of line department employees in community engagement, participatory approaches, and convergent planning. In order to facilitate active collaboration in

development, provide training, mentorship, and resource connections to community organizations such as SHGs, youth clubs, and school management committees.

Addressing Sectoral Gaps:

Healthcare: Create fully operational primary health centers with sufficient personnel, supplies, and medications; hold frequent health camps; and bolster nutrition and preventive health initiatives. Education: Strengthen school infrastructure, including restrooms, libraries, labs, and digital resources; fill teaching positions immediately; and enhance instructional quality through teacher training.

Economic Development:

Encourage skill development and livelihood diversification outside of agriculture; improve financial inclusion and credit availability for low-income households; and facilitate agricultural diversification through irrigation upgrades, market connections, and value addition. Creating and implementing affirmative action policies that guarantee scheduled caste participation and benefit access is one way to ensure social inclusion. Encourage women's economic empowerment by providing SHGs with targeted funding, training, and market connections. Attend to the needs of vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, people with disabilities,

and people living in remote areas. Establishing reliable monitoring systems with distinct indicators, frequent reporting, and public disclosure will strengthen accountability. Conduct social audits so that the community can monitor implementation procedures and results. Make use of information technology to promote transparency by disclosing plans, budgets, progress, and beneficiary lists online. Establish grievance redressal systems with time-bound response procedures that are available to all villagers. **Encouraging Sustainability:** Create detailed maintenance schedules and budgets for every infrastructure project to guarantee long-term operation. Increase the institutional capacity of the area for long-term growth after the initial SAGY period. Encourage community ownership by involving everyone in the planning, execution, and oversight processes.

Future Research Directions

This study creates a number of opportunities for further investigation. First, sustainability and long-term effects beyond the initial stages of implementation could be evaluated through longitudinal studies that monitor SAGY villages over long stretches of time. Second, comparative research looking at several SAGY villages in various settings would make it possible to pinpoint the causes of outcome variation. Third, the causal

effects of SAGY interventions could be precisely measured through quantitative impact assessments employing experimental or quasi-experimental designs. Fourth, the model village goal of the scheme would be evaluated through research on replication and learning processes, or how nearby villages adopt practices from SAGY villages. Fifth, a deeper understanding of implementation determinants would result from political economy analyses that look into power dynamics, resource allocation procedures, and political factors influencing SAGY implementation.

Conclusion

A novel approach to rural development, the Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana combines community involvement, convergent resource mobilization, parliamentary oversight, and a comprehensive development vision. The scheme's implementation in Gudia Khera shows both its potential and the ongoing difficulties impeding the achievement of its lofty goals. Although infrastructure and service delivery have made noticeable strides, transformative change is still elusive because of a lack of resources, implementation gaps, and insufficient focus on sustainability and social inclusion. In addition to systemic changes that strengthen implementation architecture, guarantee sufficient resources, build

capacity, encourage inclusion, and improve accountability, all stakeholders—political leadership, administrative machinery, community institutions, and citizens—must continue to commit to realizing SAGY's vision. The promise of model villages can only become a reality for India's rural communities through such all-encompassing initiatives.

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The journal is dedicated to governance and developmental issues. Therefore, submissions could be related to governance and development related subjects – urban, rural or tribal, i.e., issues confronting cities, villages, peri-urban areas, issues related to urban and rural local bodies, issues related to education, public health, livelihood, urban and/or rural poverty, gender equality, etc. We however do not wish to limit the scope of authors' contributions to these areas. These are only indicative.
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Local Government Quarterly is being published by All India Institute of Local Self-Government by incorporating research papers and articles contributed by diverse stakeholders including academicians, urban planners, practitioners and others with, among others, the following objectives:

- To bring to the fore and highlight issues regarding governance and development especially in India. The issues could include urban, rural or tribal ones covering an array of topics including education, public health, poverty, livelihood and gender.
- The aim is to generate debate and deliberation with the objective of seeking solutions to challenges in the above areas.
- To contribute to capacity building of institutions and personnel working in the related fields thereby improving their response to the issues being confronted in these sectors.
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Report Review

NITI Aayog, (2025). Water Budgeting in Aspirational Blocks. November, 2025

Read the full report here:

www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2025-11/Water_Budgeting.pdf

Water is a subject of immense interest and intense debate and discussion in various settings amongst a wide cross-section of citizens – be it policy makers, researchers, students and indeed the common man or the home-maker. The fact that water is so essential to maintaining and nourishing life on this planet makes it a topic of great importance and often, of concern. In fact, debates, altercations take place, and even wars are being fought over the access to water. This has led to nations and multi-lateral organisations setting up mechanisms and frameworks to resolve disputes relating to water. Access to adequate clean water is a basic requirement for life on this planet – for plants, birds, animals, and humans. Yet large sections of people everywhere undergo great difficulty in accessing this very vital resource. India's NITI Aayog has put out several reports, working papers, etc. devoted to water and continues to do so. A recent one is:

Water Budgeting in Aspirational Blocks, in November, 2025.

The report begins with communications from several key personalities including the Foreword by Shri B.V.R. Subrahmanyam and a Message by Dr. Vinod K Paul, CEO, NITI Aayog and Member, NITI Aayog respectively.

Thereafter is the Executive Summary. As is usually the case, it enables one to get a quick snapshot into the contents of the report before going through the entire document.

It starts by mentioning the call by Prime Minister Modi for collaborative efforts with community participation to protect this precious resource for generations to come, and highlighted the importance of a comprehensive Water Vision@2047 as a key element of India's Amrit Kaal journey over the next 25 years. Water Budget of a geographical region is the demand-supply situation or the water availability and water requirement of the region. Such data-driven technique enables appropriate water management, planning and facilitate integrated water resource management. It highlights that different methods available for such estimation involve some rigor and difficulty and hence the design of a simple methodology is necessary. It describes the Varuni Web Application (App) which is used here and its use as

a diagnostic tool for immediate water management interventions.

Thereafter are described the various components of Water demand, namely domestic, livestock, agricultural, and industrial. Also are described the different components of water supply namely, Surface Runoff (Here, Strange's table method is described), Surface Water Supply, Ground Water Supply, and Water Sourced from Outside Geography. The next section of the Executive Summary describes the Major Outcomes of the Exercise, which covered 18 Aspirational Blocks across varied state/agro-climatic zones as a pilot. The exercise, while providing a detailed study of the 18 selected blocks, facilitates identifying suitable measures for enhancing the water security of the Block.

After the Executive Summary are the two chapters of the Report. The first one is

Introduction and Methodology.

A water budget which tracks all inflows and outflows of water, as well as variations in storage, enables comprehensive understanding of water availability and use. This is a crucial input for effective planning of water resources for various users like domestic, agriculture, livestock, and industry, thereby enabling preservation, conservation and

sustainable water management. Water budgeting involves the calculation of all inputs and comparing it against all outputs. Water budgets can be prepared at various scales – from individual farms to entire river basins. Water budgets enable evaluate water usage patterns and depending on the findings, help design interventions such as conservation, preservation, better irrigation practices, and increasing new sources. This section then points out the challenges in preparing accurate water budgets. Some are Data Availability and its Quality, complexity of Hydrologic Systems, Measurement and Estimation Uncertainties, and Stakeholder Engagement. It is stated that Water budgeting has been undertaken in several countries including Australia, Brazil Canada, Italy, UAE, and the United States of America. The report explains the rationale behind selection of Block as the unit for preparing the water budgets.

One section of this chapter talks about the Demand Side of Water. Human requirement is taken as 55 litres per capita daily (lpcd) for rural populations and 150 lpcd for urban populations. Then the requirement for livestock is discussed. Livestock is an important element of the rural economy, contributing to dairy, meat, wool and draught power in farms. Therefore, the well-being of the livestock population is essential for the

prosperity of the rural population. Animals' requirement of water is for their survival (consumption, for growing their food (fodder), and for the cleaning. The requirements for different types of animals is discussed.

The report points out that agriculture (irrigation) is a high water demand head which, as per estimates, accounts for 72.48% of all water use in 2025 under the high demand scenario. 'Therefore, improving water use efficiency is the key priority of Indian agriculture.', the report argues.

The next section talks about the Supply Side of Water. This consists of Surface Water Sources (ponds, lakes, etc), Ground Water (open wells, tube wells, etc.), and Water Transfer (irrigation canals, etc). Here the concept of run-off is discussed and within it, the use of Strange's table for calculating run-off. This is technical in nature. Thereafter is discussed Groundwater and its extraction. This is a significant source of water for all areas – rural as well as urban. The number of overexploited, critical, semi-critical, and safe units is given. Table No 4.1.1 gives the method of calculating Water Budget (Surplus or Deficit). Surplus being excess of supply over demand, and deficit being negative (excess of demand over supply).

Thereafter are given the architecture and functionalities of the

Varuni App and also the rationale for selection of the 18 Aspirational Blocks.

Chapter II **Block-Wise Analysis** is the bulk of the report. Here the data with respect to each of the 18 blocks is presented. Here, for each block are given the profile of the block, Demand Side Management (water requirement for various segments), Supply Side Management (Land use, quantities against various supply sources), and the Water Budgeting. These are presented in tables, pie-charts and bar-charts. Also given are recommendations for each of the 18 blocks.

The 18 blocks have been selected from various states and one UT, namely Andhra Pradesh (1), Bihar (1), Gujarat (1), Himachal Pradesh (1), Ladakh (1), Madhya Pradesh (4), Rajasthan (3), Sikkim (1), Tamil Nadu (1), Telangana (1), and Uttar Pradesh (3). After the individual block-wise data, a comparative analysis of all blocks is given on each of the parameters. Block-wise Water Supply, Water Demand, and Water Budget are presented in colour charts too.

Water is an extremely crucial subject. Availability of water is a pre-requisite for life on this planet. Yet one sees in many parts of the world cities and the hinterland are getting water-stressed. Erratic monsoons and climate change have had much impact. In many locations, where there is water, its

quality is of unsure quality. Urbanisation with rural-urban migration have put much stress – on the one hand increasing the demand for fresh water and on the other polluting fresh water sources like lakes, ponds

and rivers. This report by NITI Aayog enables assess the situation in a data-driven manner and thus support timely actions for improvement. Therefore, it is a valuable document in addressing this subject.

V. Vijaykumar



Our Contributors

❑ **Putta V. V. Satyanarayana**

Dr Putta V. V. Satyanarayana is Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Government Degree College, Jaggampeta, Kakinada

❑ **U. B. Singh**

U. B. Singh is Former Joint Director, Regional Centre for Urban and Environmental Studies, Lucknow

❑ **Sakshi Sahni**

Dr. Sakshi Sahni is Assistant Professor, Guru Ram Das School of Planning, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar

❑ **Rawal Singh Aulakh**

Dr Rawal Singh Aulakh is Associate Professor, Department of Architecture, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar

❑ **Rajkumar Siwach**

Prof. Rajkumar Siwach is Professor, Department of Public Administration, Chaudhary Devi Lal University, Sirsa

❑ **Akshu Chaudhary**

Akshu Chaudhary is Research Scholar, Department of Public Administration, Chaudhary Devi Lal University, Sirsa



- ❑ **Pradeep Kumar**

Pradeep Kumar is PG student, Department of Public Administration, Chaudhary Devi Lal University, Sirsa

- ❑ **V Vijaykumar**

V. Vijaykumar is Senior Advisor, All India Institute of Local Self-Government

OBJECTIVES

The main emphasis of the Institute's work is to see that the local bodies can contribute more effectively to the development process and provide the citizens with better living conditions by meeting their aspirations in terms of required amenities, infrastructure and better environmental conditions, thus contributing to social and economic development of the society as a whole by better management of the human settlements. While these are the long-term objectives, the immediate ones are:

- ❖ To advance knowledge of the principles and practices of Local Government by conducting research and by organising training courses and programmes at various centres in India for officials and elected representatives in the local bodies.
- ❖ To strengthen and improve Local Government Institutions by improving their performance through education, orientation and bringing them together for common endeavor by organising specialised conferences, conventions and seminars.
- ❖ To make available a platform for members of local bodies and officials for exchange of views and ideas related to urban development and administration.
- ❖ To represent the views of local authorities supported by research work to the concerned higher authorities from time to time.
- ❖ To publish bibliographies, articles, books and other literature on matters of interest to local bodies.
- ❖ To publish journals, bulletins and other literature on different aspects of Local Government and on the working of Local bodies in different states.
- ❖ To undertake research studies in public administration, problems of local bodies and also in related topics of urban and environmental factors and arrange for their publication etc.
- ❖ To establish and maintain an information-cum-documentation service for local bodies.
- ❖ To undertake consultancy assignments in various areas of urban development and problems of local bodies with a view to improve and develop organisational, managerial and operational efficiency.

In view of the above, the Institute has been collaborating with the relevant government departments, Central and State, Universities, Organisations and Research Institutions. The work of the Institute covers several aspects involving a multi-disciplinary teamwork.

All India Institute of Local Self-Government

M. N. Roy Human Development Campus, Plot No.6, 'F' Block,
TPS Road No.12, Bandra (E), Mumbai – 400051.

Tel : +91- 86576 22550 / 51 / 52 / 54

E-mail : aiilsgquarterlyjournal@aiilsg.org, info.algq@aiilsg.org

Website : www.aiilsg.org