



AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF THE GRAM SABHA: A STUDY OF CHAK KALAN PANCHAYAT, JALANDHAR, PUNJAB

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Abstract

The 73rd Amendment Act of 1992 established the Gram Sabha institution to promote public involvement in local administration and to overcome India's democratic deficit. This study intends to examine how the inhabitants of Gram Panchayat Chak Kalan in Jalandhar, Punjab, participate in Gram Sabha for rural development and empowerment, assess how well Gram Sabha fulfils its constitutional role, and provide ways to increase its effectiveness. A mixed-method technique is used in the study to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. The study's goals are to determine how well-informed Gram Sabha members are about their responsibilities and roles within Panchayati Raj Institutions, how actively they participate in PRI decision-making, and what obstacles stand in the way of their full participation. The study's conclusions will provide information about the purpose and significance of Gram Sabha in encouraging public participation in politics as well as suggestions for enhancing its effectiveness in rural governance.

Keywords: Gram Sabha, Panchayati Raj Institution, citizen participation, democratic decentralization, rural development, empowerment, mixed-method approach.

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INTRODUCTION

In the hamlet of Gram Panchayat Chak Kalan, Jalandhar, Punjab, this research intends to investigate the involvement of the populace in Gram Sabha for rural development and empowerment. The Gram Sabha is a direct democracy forum that offers citizens the chance to participate in the planning and execution of all local development initiatives. This research is important for understanding the Gram Sabha's function in encouraging citizen engagement in government and offering recommendations on increasing its efficiency in decentralizing rural governance. The democratic deficit resulting from declining public engagement in government and the concentration of power in a tiny minority poses a serious threat to Indian democracy. The 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution introduced the Gram Sabha institution as a forum for direct engagement of the people in managing their own affairs in order to solve this. Gram Sabha directs Panchayati Raj Institutions, encourages the responsibility of local authorities to the populace, and facilitates public participation in the planning and implementation of developmental duties. This study seeks to discover how Gram Panchayat Chak Kalan residents in Jalandhar, Punjab, participate in Gram Sabha for rural development and empowerment and offers suggestions for improving involvement.

Statement of the Problem

The efficacy of the Gram Sabha in carrying out its constitutional position, function, and role within the Panchayati Raj Institution is the issue that this research attempts to examine. The study's specific objectives are to evaluate the extent to which Gram Sabha members are aware of and participate in PRI decision-making processes, as well as to pinpoint the barriers to their full involvement. The study also intends to recommend actions to improve Gram Sabha members' efficient involvement in PRIs.

Historical Background

Local self-governance was practiced in India's ancient past through village councils or Sabhas, which is how Panchayati Raj came to be. However, a centralized administrative structure took the place of this conventional type of government with the introduction of British colonial control in India. Panchayati Raj was resurrected and included in the Indian Constitution only after India earned its independence in 1947. Gram Sabhas, the lowest unit of local self-government, received constitutional recognition via the 73rd Amendment

Act of 1992, which further reinforced the Panchayati Raj system and sought to further democratic decentralization and participatory governance at the local level.

Objectives

- To assess the awareness level of Gram Sabha members about their role and responsibilities in Panchayati Raj Institution.
- To investigate the level of participation of Gram Sabha members in the decision-making processes in PRIs.

Review of Literature

Buch Nirmala (2012) has written a paper on the background of Panchayat Raj and its organizational structure. She observes that the Panchayat Raj system's structure, authority, and influence have not been very reliable. In order to connect the populace with the local administrative responsibilities, the Royal Commission on Decentralization stated in 1907 that it is highly desirable in the interest of decentralization to seek to organize and develop village panchayats for the management of local village problems. She also addresses the B.R. Mehta Committee's proposal for a three-tiered Panchayat Raj system in her essay. Additionally, she has explained the 73rd Amendment, which establishes the Gram Sabha as the cornerstone of the three-tiered Panchayat Raj system.

Sushil Kumar (2011) argued that rural development is the cornerstone of national development in an article titled Poorna Swaraj Through Gram Swaraj. The foundation of the Indian economy is agriculture. The rural area includes agriculture. So why does India's progress in all areas of social, economic, and cultural development depend on rural development? He also noted the abundance of natural resources we currently have, including brainpower, energy, and regional experience. even though work is not yet producing observable results. Why is it crucial to look into the facts, then? achieving significant results for the overall growth of the hamlet, its citizens, and the country.

Mandal, written a research paper on rural development through gram sabha, and in this research article the researcher has described the issues related to gram sabha such as the lack of provisions for mandatory attendance of gram sabha affects villagers' lack of participation in gram sabha, and the non-payment of meeting allowance to villagers has a negative impact on villagers'

attendance at gram sabha as they go to work for daily livelihood earning.

Jadhav Abhay M. (2011) According to his study, "73rd Amendment Act: An Instrument of village development through Gram Sabha," the Panchayat System is crucial and has been the foundation of Indian communities from the beginning of written history. The nation's founder, Mahatma Gandhi, asserted in 1964 that every village should be a republic or panchayat with authority and that Indian liberation must start at the bottom. With the establishment of the three-tier Panchayat Raj system to guarantee community involvement in rural reconstruction and the passing of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, Mahatma Gandhi's objective has been realized.

Hegde N. G. (2005) According to his book, "Linkage of Grassroots Level Organizations for Empowering Rural Community," over 35% of Indians who reside in rural areas are impoverished. Even though most of the poor find work in agriculture, the essential natural resources needed to boost agricultural productivity are scarce and rapidly running out. As a result, the main responsibility of rural development organizations is to provide employment and food security through the wise use of natural resources and the growth of non-agricultural sectors.

Research Gap

Absence of empirical research that systematically evaluates the degree of engagement and awareness of Gram Sabha members in Panchayati Raj Institutions' decision-making processes. While some studies have looked at the role and duties of Gram Sabhas and PRIs generally, there may be a need for a more focused study that looks at the precise elements that either permit or restrict the effective participation of Gram Sabha members in the decision-making process. Furthermore, there could be a research gap that has to be filled in terms of studies that offer specific advice or steps to improve Gram Sabha members' effective engagement in PRIs.

Research Methodology

A descriptive research design will be used for the purpose of research. When describing a specific phenomenon or group, descriptive research designs are utilized. This style of design will work well for this study's objectives, which include outlining the Gram Sabha's role and duties as well as measuring members' levels of understanding and engagement in the decision-making process. An online poll will

be used to gather the data for this investigation. The members of the Gram Sabha will complete a standardized questionnaire that will be used to gather data. There will be both open-ended and closed-ended questions on the survey. Before being used, the questionnaire will undergo pre-testing to guarantee its validity and reliability. Ethics-related standards like informed permission, confidentiality, and anonymity are upheld in this study. The goal of the study, the benefits of participating, and the possibility of withdrawing at any moment will all be explained to participants. The data collected will be kept confidential and anonymous.

Findings & Results

The survey shows that Rep. Graham is unaware of his role and responsibilities. Gram Sabha is the cornerstone of her PRI system, but only 35% of respondents were aware of him. Additionally, only 30% of respondents indicated that they were contacted prior to choices being made, demonstrating the minimal involvement of Gram Sabha members in decision-making. The study also highlighted a few impediments to Gram Sabha members' full engagement, including poor literacy rates, social and cultural barriers, and a lack of openness in the decision-making process. The current study has found several obstacles to Gram Sabha members effectively participating in local administration. There is a need to increase the awareness level of Gram Sabha members regarding their roles and responsibilities. Additionally, there is a need to improve their participation in decision-making, and measures should be taken to address the constraints they face in effective participation. The study recommends capacity building, awareness campaigns, and greater transparency in the decision-making process to improve Congressman Graham's effective participation.

Population of Chak Kalan Panchayath

PARTICULARS	GENERAL POPULATION	MALE	FEMALE
TOTAL POPULATION	2283	1144	1139
KNOWLEDGEABLE POPULATION	1531	793	738
ILLETERATE POPULATION	752	351	401

Source- According to census, 2011, There are 2283 Chak Kalan Panchayat's population, 1144 of which are male and 1139 are female.

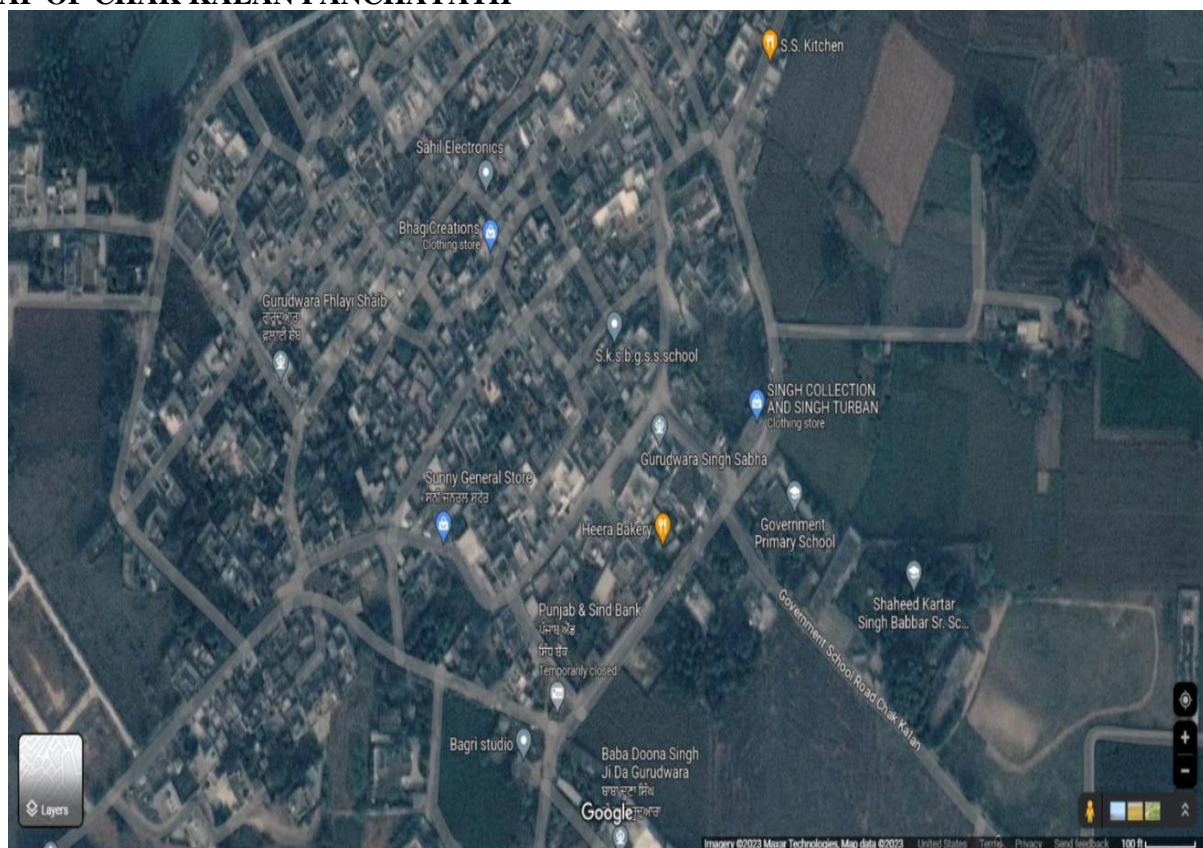
The Gram Sabha is a constitutional body consisting of all the adult members of a village, and its main role is to ensure people's participation in local governance. It acts as a forum for discussing and approving development plans, monitoring government schemes, and resolving disputes at the village level. The awareness level of Gram Sabha members about their roles and responsibilities in the Panchayati Raj Institution system varies widely, with some members having a good understanding of their roles and others having little or no knowledge. The lack of awareness can be attributed to several factors, including illiteracy, language barriers, and inadequate training. The level of participation of Gram Sabha members in the decision-making process in PRIs varies across different regions and villages. In some cases,

members are actively involved in the decision-making process, while in others, their participation is limited to attending meetings and listening to discussions.

Geographical details of Chak Kalan Panchayat

- 322 hectares of territory
- 2,283 people in all.
- Population of men: 1,144
- Population of Women: 1,139
- Ratio of Literacy: 67.06%
- 69.32% of men are literacy rate.
- Rate of Female Literacy: 64.79%
- There are 469 houses.
- Pin number 144042

MAP OF CHAK KALAN PANCHAYATH



There are several constraints in the effective participation of Gram Sabha members in PRIs. These include inadequate awareness and training, lack of representation of marginalized groups, political interference, and corruption.

To enhance the effective participation of Gram Sabha members, several measures can be taken, such as organizing capacity-building programs and

awareness campaigns, ensuring the representation of marginalized groups, promoting transparency and accountability in decision-making, and creating mechanisms for addressing grievances and complaints. Additionally, the government can encourage the active participation of Gram Sabha members by providing incentives and recognition for their contributions to local governance.

Influence of Gram Sabha over Chak Kalan Panchayat

Sr No	Unions	Members	Total Vote Share	Information on Current Issues
1	Anganwadi staff	50,789	2,03,156	Protested for better wages, benefits, and working conditions in March 2020.
2	Asha employees	2,025	84,100	Experienced delayed receipt of rewards, wage raises, and other perks. Late payments and inadequate pay also issues, as of March 2020.
3	MGNREGA	3,77,657	15,10,628	People were denied unemployment benefits. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of April 23 2023. Support for landless workers.
4	Farm employees	5,00,000	20,00,000	Protested the new agricultural legislation on April 23, 2023. Union demands include better pay, social security, and debt reduction.
5	Number DARS	11,500	46,000	Promotes the well-being of lamberdars and protects their rights and interests, as of July 2022.
Total		9,60,971	38,43,884	

Source- Complied from different sources

Suggestions

- **Awareness programs:** It is essential to run awareness programs to inform Gram Sabha members of their obligations in Panchayati Raj institutions.
- **Building Capacity:** To improve the knowledge and abilities of Gram Sabha members about the operation of PRIs, capacity-building programs should be set up.
- **promote Active engagement:** By giving Gram Sabha members the required tools, infrastructure, and training, efforts should be made to promote their active engagement in PRI decision-making.
- **Institutional structures** should be reinforced to make sure that members of the Gram Sabha are heard and that their recommendations are taken into consideration when decisions are being made in PRIs.
- **Reviewing Constitutional Provisions:** To make sure that the constitutional provisions governing the operation of Gram Sabhas and PRIs are current and successful in empowering rural people, they should be reviewed on a regular basis.

Conclusion

The Gramme Panchayat of Chak Kalan is crucial to the governance and growth of the village. The Panchayat has successfully carried out several initiatives for the benefit of the community, including agricultural and industrial exhibits, land

reclamation and development, and water supply schemes, although confronting difficulties with connection and resource allocation. The Panchayat must concentrate on enhancing connection and infrastructure, advancing literacy and education, and encouraging social inclusion if it wants to guarantee the village's long-term growth. The Chak Kalan Panchayat may continue to serve as an example of efficient local administration with the active participation of the Gramme Sabha and the backing of higher authorities. In conclusion, the Gram Sabha is an essential component of India's Panchayati Raj system, and the success of local administration depends on its successful involvement. According to the study, despite being aware of their duties and responsibilities, Gram Sabha members' engagement in decision-making is restricted. The Gram Sabha's members face obstacles to successful participation, such as a lack of knowledge of the processes, restricted access to resources, and social and cultural hurdles. To increase the effective engagement of its members, the report recommends actions including capacity training, bolstering the Gram Sabha's administrative and financial authority, and fostering social inclusion.

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